

Trócaire: Towards more reliable delivery of aid

Joanne McGarry and Brendan Riordan, October 2010

Following the Millennium Development Summit, Ireland undertook to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2007, and in 2008 Irish Official Development Assistance (ODA) reached 0.6 percent of GNP. By that year, however, the government had moved the MDG target to 2012, and following the ramifications of the economic crisis, a revised target date of 2015 was subsequently declared. The Report notes that Ireland has also made significant commitments on aid effectiveness by virtue of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (Paris Declaration) and the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA).

As part of its aid programme, Ireland is party to a number of multi-annual programmes (MAPs). MAPs are agreements between governments on the one hand and low income countries and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) on the other. MAPs, as emphasised by the report, are essential for building strong partnerships and for the efficient use of aid. Since 2008, Ireland has reduced significantly its ODA commitments to MAPs. The report reflects upon the damage caused by these funding cuts.

Arising out of these considerations, the report highlights the fact that a failure to fulfil aid commitments results in a breach of trust, which severely injures relations between developed and developing nations and impairs teamwork within development partnerships. Unpredictability in the provision of aid ultimately reduces its effectiveness.

The report provides six options for Ireland, three of which are reflected in the 2006 *White Paper on Irish Aid*. It emphasises that actions on these suggestions would ensure fulfilment of the nation's commitments to the UN, to MAPs, to the Paris Declaration and to the AAA. These options consist of:

- a) Prompt publication of payment schedules of Irish Aid's multi-year commitments;
- b) Annual publication of statistics on Ireland's performance in meeting its ODA commitments;
- c) Publication of annual assessments of the performance of Irish Aid in meeting its targets;
- d) Use of contracts (promissory notes or legally binding programme contracts) to ensure the delivery of aid pledges in MAPs;
- e) Drafting of legislation to oblige the Irish government to provide comprehensive and timely reports on its delivery of aid (in particular, on issues a, b and c);
- f) Drafting of legislation to reflect government commitments on the size of ODA.

The report contends that positive action on this front will have a stronger impact on developing nations, encourage a wider appreciation of the accomplishments of Irish Aid, and increase Ireland's ODA such that the Millennium Development Goals may be realised by 2015.