

**RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:
AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACTHAS**



Oxfam staff responding to COVID-19 in the Gaza Strip receive hygiene and protective gear items that will be distributed in quarantine centres. Photo: Sami Alhaw/Oxfam



OXFAM
Ireland

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 crisis has created a new world. Old certainties are quickly becoming outdated while new challenges and possibilities abound. Ireland is being challenged to define its role and place in this new world. We are all familiar with the enormous challenges faced by Ireland in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. The situation in poorer countries is even more daunting, where COVID-19 has the potential to have a devastating impact, as access to healthcare and social protection mechanisms are already extremely limited. In addition to causing loss of life and unprecedented human suffering, COVID-19 will exacerbate existing inequalities between rich and poor. This crisis also exploits inequality between nations, as poor countries with weak healthcare systems are drowning in debt while rich nations unlock funds to build new hospitals and support their economies. Lastly, the pandemic entrenches gender inequality. It threatens the livelihoods, safety and equality of women who are disproportionately represented in the most insecure, poorly paid jobs, who carry the vast burden of unpaid care, and who are now at increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence in their homes.

In providing solutions to COVID-19 we must not forget the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). Even in times of COVID-19, politicians must not lose sight of their other responsibilities on human rights and environmental protection. During the pandemic, the climate crisis has taken a back seat. However, in many ways COVID-19 is a dress rehearsal for climate breakdown, pointing to the need for decisive and collective action that is just, sustainable and based on feminist principles. A just approach to tackle underlying multiple inequalities. A sustainable approach to ensure that we live within the [Nine Planetary Boundaries](#) – scientific “tipping points” that focus directly on environmental wellbeing rather than societal wellbeing, with the understanding that improving environmental wellbeing will both directly and indirectly improve societal wellbeing also. And a feminist approach to challenge patriarchal structures and put women’s leadership front and centre. [History has shown](#) that gender inequality holds back progress on governance, peace, economic performance, food security, health, wellbeing, environmental protection and social progress. The security and stability of our nations literally [depends on the](#) status of women.

To date, Ireland has played an important role in contributing to the international response to COVID-19. We particularly welcome the Irish Government’s announcement of €10 million in funding to the UN’s Global Humanitarian Response Plan to the pandemic, and are grateful for the ongoing support through Irish Aid in responding to this crisis, including the recent mobilisation of Emergency Response Funds to Oxfam Ireland to urgently scale up our response in the Gaza Strip. Ireland has also shown leadership by financially and politically supporting multilateral responses, pledging €18 million to GAVI (the Vaccine Alliance) over five years and €60 million to the UN including, €9.5 million to the World Health Organisation (WHO). However, the scale and complexity of this crisis is unprecedented. So far, the epicentre of the virus has been in powerful economies. Despite their deep pockets, they are facing huge challenges and high numbers of fatalities. Yet the virus is catching up fast in developing countries. With chronically weak health systems and hundreds of millions living in closely packed slums and refugee camps with minimal access to soap or water, containing the spread of the disease is an unprecedented public

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

health challenge. If we don't take more urgent preventative measures now and on an unprecedented scale, this could easily become the biggest humanitarian crisis the world has seen since World War Two.

Yet the devastation will not end there. All over the world, the virus is having a major economic impact as governments shut down economies to try to stop the spread of the disease. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has estimated that nearly half the jobs in Africa could be lost. Global supply chains are transmitting the economic slowdown throughout the world. Investors have already removed \$83 billion from emerging markets since the beginning of the crisis, the largest capital outflow ever recorded.

Curfews and lockdowns are causing untold economic hardship. Workers are projected to lose as much as \$3.4 trillion in income. In countries like Kenya and Cambodia, tens of thousands of factory and farm workers are being told to go home. Female workers will be among the hardest hit, as they are more likely to be engaged in informal and precarious work. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has already said that the world is heading for a recession bigger than that caused by the global financial crisis in 2008. Unless dramatic action is taken to shore up the economies of developing countries, the crisis could push as many as half a billion people into poverty, or eight per cent of the world's population. This could set back the fight against poverty by a decade, and in some cases by as much as 30 years.

“THIS VIRUS WILL STARVE US BEFORE IT MAKES US SICK...”

This crisis risks heavily impacting food value chains, causing immediate concerns for food and nutrition security in developing countries. COVID-19 will likely expose the risks of long global value chains, as happened during the 2008 food and financial crisis. If COVID-19 infects large populations in rural areas it will reduce the ability of food producers to plant and harvest, while movement restriction policies impact the agricultural labour force and lead to reduced production and access to markets. The impacts on workers in urban areas may be greatest for the informal sector where people have no safety nets and work every day to sustain themselves – which confinement will not allow. For ordinary people in the poorest countries, for refugees, internally displaced people and people trapped in conflict zones, access to running water, uncongested spaces, and staying in their own homes to quarantine are impossibilities. Around a quarter of the world's urban population lives in slums - 880 million people.

Low-income country governments are trying to act now to protect their people, but endemic poverty makes this a hugely challenging task. Sadly, in a number of these countries, leaders have been failing their citizens, providing poor governance and engaging in corrupt actions. Many more have not acted to deliver universal healthcare or protect their citizens with cash payments, to ensure they can keep purchasing essential goods like food or medicines. They have not acted to tackle growing inequalities. In the light of this crisis, this has to change, and low-income countries must ensure health and economic security for all.

The pandemic occurs in a context of growing erosion of human rights. In at least 111 countries, governments are silencing dissent and limiting civil society activity, including through unclear

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

and broad legislation and restrictions on funding sources. The pandemic is making it worse. All over the world, lockdowns imposed to stop the spread of the virus are beginning to cause significant economic hardship and hunger and the poorest people are being violently suppressed, in countries such as Kenya and India - an abuse of people's civil rights. Extraordinary measures are necessary to stop the spread of the disease, but they must be balanced by extraordinary protections. Emergency measures to combat the pandemic must be proportionate and based on health needs, and remain in place only for as long as is necessary. In all phases, the ability of civil society groups and active citizens to shape decisions and monitor the implementation of programmes is critical.

BUILDING A BETTER WORLD

The response to COVID-19 so far has shown that we are able to mobilise collectively on a huge scale. It is making the impossible possible. It is revealing that what truly matters is human lives. It has forced us to reconsider what is essential to keeping our economies and societies functioning. It is shedding a light on the essential role of care in terms of our healthcare, nursing care and childcare systems. Yet many workers in the care sector are still paid poverty wages. It is also emphasising the equally important role of unpaid care. Irish women spend 38 million hours a week on unpaid care work, contributing at least €24 billion to the economy every year - the equivalent of 12.3 per cent of the entire annual Irish economy. Globally, women do more than three-quarters of all unpaid care work. Women and girls are putting in 12.5 billion hours of unpaid care work every day, which amounts to a contribution to the global economy of at least \$10.8 trillion a year - more than three times the size of the global tech industry. The crisis is also highlighting the important role of low-wage workers in terms of the provision of essential goods and services. Most importantly it is emphasising the hugely important role women play in our economy, despite the unequal rewards and recognition they receive. A study of essential workers by the ERSI has found that the majority (almost 70 per cent) of essential employees in Ireland are female. This trend is replicated worldwide, with more than 70 per cent of healthcare workers worldwide being female. If not all heroes wear capes in this crisis, most cape-less heroes are women - their voices and considerations should now become central to how we plan for the future.

The response to the COVID-19 crisis has also shown the incredible power of solidarity and collective action, led by governments - though while governments have started to act decisively domestically, international solidarity has yet to materialise on a grand scale. After the financial crisis of 2008, few lessons were learned. A decade of austerity and failed economic policy has undermined our societies and led to the rise of dangerous right-wing nationalism, a regression of democracy and a violent backlash against feminist movements. It does not have to be this way. We can rebuild a better world. A fairer world. A more sustainable world. One that radically reduces the gap between rich and poor. One where we do not jeopardise the lives of our children and future generations. One where the richest pay their fair share to contribute to collective solutions to the challenges facing humanity. One where feminist principles are central. One where governments are held accountable by their citizens. This must of course mean universal healthcare for all and universal social protection. But beyond this, it must also enable us to take

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

action to stop climate breakdown. Together we can learn the lessons from this unprecedented crisis, to build a more human economy and a fairer world.

This is the new global reality facing the incoming Government and Oireachtas. If Ireland is to fulfil the ambition to increase Ireland's international influence as set out in [Global Ireland](#) and [A Better World](#), it must be through contributing to a fairer, more peaceful and sustainable world. It is understandable that Irish leaders are focused on tackling this crisis in Ireland, yet it is to be welcomed that they have found the space to support poorer nations. This approach has to be maintained, if we are to successfully beat this disease. This virus affects us all, rich and poor alike, but not equally. By exploiting the extreme inequalities between rich and poor people, rich and poor nations and between women and men, this crisis, if left unchecked, will cause immense suffering.

We call on all members of the new Oireachtas, but especially political leaders and the new Government, to use their position to ensure that Ireland's contribution to the international response to COVID-19 continues to extend to the most vulnerable countries. Unless we defeat this virus everywhere, we won't defeat it anywhere. We also call on the new Oireachtas to continue to uphold their commitments and responsibilities to human rights and environmental protection under the Sustainable Development Goals. Now is the time for Ireland to demonstrate principled, enlightened and courageous international leadership. Over the next five years we call on the next Government and Parliament to concentrate to concentrate on the following areas:

1. RESOURCE LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES' DEVELOPMENT NEEDS IN A CHANGED WORLD

- Achieve cross-party support for a realistic published road map on overseas development aid (ODA) that will show **a genuine commitment towards reaching 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income in line with our international commitments.**
- At a minimum **maintain, and preferably increase, our existing aid investment as recommended by the [OECD's DAC review](#)** in the short term and ensure that NGOs have effective and timely access to that funding both nationally and internationally.
- Support **the cancellation of all developing country debts due to be paid in 2020 and 2021** and ensure that new emergency funding is provided by means of grants not loans.
- Ensure that EU adequately responds to the short and long-term development needs of poorer countries, including ensuring that **the level of resources under Heading VI ("Neighbourhood & the World") is maintained at no less than ten per cent of the overall Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) in the EU.**
- Support initiatives aimed at **creating additional finance flows** including the issuing of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) as once off global stimulus.

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

- Maintain Ireland's commitment to development effectiveness by **implementing the recommendations of the OECD DAC review of Ireland's ODA programme in full.**

2. Support system change in healthcare, food production and protection of the vulnerable

- Support the development of an effective **Global Public Health Plan and Emergency Response** to tackle COVID-19 head on, including scaling up investments in public health promotion and communication, community engagement and education, and in access to water and sanitation, especially handwashing, as well as free testing for all. Advocate for and support the recruitment of ten million health workers.
- Ensure Ireland's ODA **supports the move to universal public healthcare in low-income countries** to help ensure that everyone has access to healthcare and that humanity is prepared for future outbreaks.
- **Advocate for the development of a global agreement that vaccines and treatments, when approved for use, will be a global public good**, available to all who need it free of charge and that rich countries will provide enough funding to make it available rapidly to the whole of humanity.
- **Maintain and increase Ireland's ODA support for agriculture and food security**, while promoting the functioning of food supply chains, with a view to strengthening food security and resilience against shocks in the short and medium term, especially due to climate breakdown.
- **Support efforts to implement a global ceasefire** in armed conflicts that lay the foundation for long-term peace in the future.
- Ensure that both ODA monies and diplomatic missions are used **to promote fundamental freedoms and strengthen civic and political space**, ensuring measures needed for the pandemic control are proportionate, time-bound and non-discriminatory.
- Recognise the crucial roles that women and women-led organisations will play in delivering the response to the COVID-19 crisis and to development work in general and work in partnership with them.
- **Support and protect vulnerable populations, especially migrants and refugees**, including by amending the overly restrictive nature of Ireland's current family reunification legislation and fulfilling our commitment to bring unaccompanied minors being held on the Greek Islands to safety in Ireland.

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

3. Build a more sustainable and just world

- Reform the 'care system'.
- **Bail out businesses responsibly.** Priority must be given to supporting small businesses that have the least ability to cope with the crisis. Any public support for large corporations should be conditional on measures that uphold the interests of workers, farmers and taxpayers and build a sustainable future.
- Support the **EC COVID-19 Rescue Package**.
- **Reform the corporate tax system.**
- Pass mandatory **human rights and environmental due diligence legislation** in Ireland and support the efforts to pass such legislation at the EU level.
- **Reform the EU macroeconomic framework.**
- **Implement faster and fair climate action** as set out by the [One Future Campaign](#), including reducing Ireland's greenhouse emissions by eight per cent a year in line with Ireland's Paris Agreement commitment.
- **Help poorer countries to cope with the climate emergency** by reaching the target of spending 20 per cent of ODA on climate finance by 2025. Increased ODA spending on climate finance should **receive an additional budgetary allocation** rather than being diverted from the existing ODA budget.
- Support the development of the **Circular Economy as set out in the government's Climate Action Plan**.

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

RESOURCE POOR COUNTRIES' DEVELOPMENT NEEDS IN A CHANGED WORLD

- Achieve cross-party support for a realistic published road map on overseas development aid (ODA) that will show **a genuine commitment towards reaching 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income in line with our international commitments.**
- At a minimum **maintain, and preferably increase, our existing aid investment as recommended by the OECD's DAC review** in the short term and ensure that NGOs have effective and timely access to that funding both nationally and internationally.
- Support **the cancellation of all developing country debts due to be paid in 2020 and 2021** and ensure that new emergency funding is provided by means of grants not loans.
- Ensure that EU adequately responds to the short and long-term development needs of poorer countries, including ensuring that **the level of resources under Heading VI ("Neighbourhood & the World") is maintained at no less than ten per cent of the overall Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) in the EU.**
- Support initiatives aimed at **creating additional finance flows** including the issuing of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) as once off global stimulus.
- Maintain Ireland's commitment to development effectiveness by **implementing the recommendations of the OECD DAC review of Ireland's ODA programme in full.**

A key lever for Ireland to help address the COVID-19 crisis and contribute to a fairer, more peaceful and sustainable world is our Overseas Development Aid (ODA) programme. Ireland has committed to spend 0.7 per cent of national income on ODA for a number of decades. This commitment was reiterated by the outgoing Government who agreed to spend 0.7 per cent of national income on ODA by 2030. However, given the scale of the challenges facing low-income countries we are calling on the next government to reach this commitment within its lifetime, in 2025. Budget 2020 allocated €837 million to Ireland's ODA programme; an increase of approximately €21 million on the amount pledged in Budget 2019. The ODA committed in Budget 2020 was approximately 0.41 per cent of national income using a new modified measure of the size of the Irish economy known as GNI*. While welcome increases in ODA spending have happened in the last few years, the current ODA contribution still leaves Ireland a long way from reaching the 0.7 per cent pledge. Given the ECB's commitment to guarantee cheap credit through sovereign bond purchases, 'responsible financial management' needs to concentrate on stimulating a just recovery. Reducing aid budgets would be not only be inexcusable, but also self-defeating, because if poor countries aren't able to control the spread of COVID-19, the virus could circle back to rich countries undermining their efforts to address the health crisis and prolonging negative economic outcomes.

[The review of Irish Aid by the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2018](#) demonstrated

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

cross-party support for restoring Ireland's ODA budget and called for a multiannual plan to increase the aid budget on an incremental, phased basis. The Government should also commit to replicating the progress in other EU Member States to protect the aid budget by legislating for 0.7 per cent and take steps to ensure that Irish Aid is appropriately resourced to oversee and manage these funds effectively. At a minimum Ireland should maintain, and preferably increase, our existing aid investment in the short term. Most importantly, Ireland's financial assistance in response to COVID-19 must be additional, so as not to divert existing aid budgets away from other pressing humanitarian and development needs. Some donors, such as [France](#), have started reallocating existing aid budgets to the COVID-19 response. This short-sighted approach should be avoided, as it will divert funds away from other vital programmes, undoing efforts to fight other deadly diseases or child malnutrition for example. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) has warned that if resources were diverted away from sexual and reproductive health, for instance, it could fuel [a rise in pregnancy complications, maternal deaths and unsafe abortions](#). During the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone, there were [nearly as many additional maternal and neonatal deaths as deaths from Ebola](#), due to reductions in life-saving care for pregnant women. Situations like this must not be repeated.

Alongside quantity, the quality of aid is key. Ireland has been recognised internationally as a donor that provides [effective aid](#). The policy of providing untied aid and compliance with the [Busan aid principles](#) must be maintained and Ireland's aid should continue to be used for its intended purpose to alleviate poverty and reduce vulnerability. The next Government should build on Irish Aid's effective aid approach by committing to implementing the recommendations of the [OECD's Development Assistance Committee review of Irish Aid in full](#). Ireland must also advocate for the protection and integrity of aid in multilateral instruments, particularly in ongoing negotiations on the EU's Multi Annual Financial Framework. Ireland must defend principled EU development cooperation that maintains integrity, accountability and a development focus. Moreover, when helping low-income countries respond to the immediate crisis, donors like Ireland must not only uphold development effectiveness principles but provide feminist humanitarian assistance, while working towards protecting civic space. In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic offers an opportunity to strengthen a "nexus" approach, that not only deals with immediate humanitarian needs but also addresses the underlying causes of vulnerability (for example conflict and inequality) to support long term development.

Need for international aid increases

By committing to increase its aid budget while maintaining effective aid principles Ireland will be in a stronger position to influence other donors as to the need for massively increased international aid funds to help poor countries face the crisis. The UN is calling for [\\$500 billion in aid to help low and middle income countries](#) face the pandemic. Oxfam has calculated that OECD DAC donor countries' fair share of this response would amount to nearly \$300 billion - this fair share is just six per cent of what the world's richest countries have pledged for domestically-focused economic packages and also [less than the combined wealth of the world's three richest men](#).

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

A key start will be to immediately fully fund [the \\$6.7 billion UN Humanitarian Response Plan](#), and plan for a massive scaling up of global humanitarian efforts as the virus starts to impact the poorest countries. This must include steps to provide clean water, public health education, and cash grants. Much of this funding needs to go directly to local NGOs, and special care must be taken to address the gendered impacts this crisis will have. Donors and multilateral institutions should also rapidly scale up other aid, building on initial moves from the World Bank, IMF and others, and especially provide support to developing country health budgets.

Negotiations around the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) - financial framework for the EU's budget for the next seven years (2021-2027) - have been pushed back due to the COVID-19 crisis. The MFF negotiations will set the volumes and priorities of the EU's external development cooperation. The decisions made will influence the quality, quantity and character of the EU's development finance and its ability to deliver on reducing inequality and eradicating poverty in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. With Ireland channelling over 25 per cent of ODA through EU institutions – €209 million of a budget of €791 million in 2019 – it is essential that any changes to the MFF maintain the level of spending ODA (Heading VI ("Neighbourhood & the World")) at ten per cent of the overall MFF budget and that it is used for its intended purposes to alleviate poverty and reduce vulnerability.

Debt Moratorium

As well as increasing ODA budgets all bilateral and multilateral donors need to agree to an immediate [moratorium on debt interest payments for poor country governments](#) without conditions. [This has already been called for by the World Bank and the IMF in an unprecedented move](#). In Africa alone, this act would [free up an estimated \\$44 billion this year to help finance their public health response](#). Cancelling debt payments is the fastest way to keep money in countries and to free up resources to tackle the urgent health, social and economic crises resulting from the global pandemic. In 2018, the total debts of developing countries – private, public, domestic and external – had reached [191 per cent of their combined GDP](#), the highest level on record, with the world's [low and middle income countries due to make approximately \\$400 billion of debt repayments this year](#). As the pandemic will require a massive injection of resources to support economies, it makes no sense for poorer countries to transfer vital resources to the rich world. Faced with these debts, many countries were [embarking on austerity measures](#) when the virus hit. A total of 46 countries were spending on average [four times more money on paying debts than they were on public health services at the beginning of 2020](#), when COVID-19 was spreading. Ghana is spending [11 times more on servicing its debts than it is on health](#). [The costs of the debt burden are paid by the poorest people, in cuts to government services, and women are the hardest hit](#). If we're going to fight this virus, poorer governments can't do it with one hand tied behind their backs. The money they're set to pay back in debt payments must be made available to provide the healthcare people desperately need. The IMF must help to assess the debt situation, clear obstacles for these measures and ensure that agreements involve all parties in good faith – bilateral, multilateral and private creditors. The Fund must not impose any macro-economic or structural adjustment conditions attached to this exceptional debt moratorium. To help fund debt cancellation the IMF should look at making use of the sales from its gold reserves.

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

Role of IMF

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has called for [\\$2.5 trillion to rescue the economies of developing countries](#). This would be made up of \$1 trillion in debt relief, \$1 trillion in additional liquidity mobilised through SDRs and \$500 billion in aid to support developing country health systems. Some 20 experts, among them four Nobel Prize winners, including Joseph Stiglitz, Lord Nicholas Stern and seven chief economists from the World Bank and other development banks, have written to G20 leaders to warn of ‘unimaginable health and social impacts’ and have called for “trillions to be mobilised.”

Only investments of this scale will stave off a global depression that will cost the world far more economically and will cause huge suffering. Steps such as the issuance of SDRs, a type of global currency, can stimulate the world economy quickly. [SDRs](#) are an international reserve asset, created by the IMF and defined as a weighted average of five convertible currencies. Although SDRs are not themselves a currency, they are convertible, and by boosting the reserves of countries they can help free up vital fiscal space to allow greater health spending and spending to support the economy. Rich countries have shown that at this time of crisis they can mobilise trillions of dollars to support their own economies. Yet unless developing countries are also able to fight the health and economic impacts of the crisis it will inflict even greater harm on all countries, rich and poor.

This injection of finance must be done in ways that underpin a new social contract between people, governments and the market and that radically reduce inequality and lay the foundations for a more human economy. The choices being made now will have profound implications for our collective future. They can lay the foundations for a more equal, feminist and sustainable world, or they can accelerate inequality and environmental destruction.

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

SUPPORT SYSTEM CHANGE IN HEALTHCARE, FOOD PRODUCTION AND PROTECTION OF THE VULNERABLE

- Support the development of an effective **Global Public Health Plan and Emergency Response** to tackle COVID-19 head on, including scaling up investments in public health promotion and communication, community engagement and education, and in access to water and sanitation, especially handwashing, as well as free testing for all. Advocate for and support the recruitment of ten million health workers.
- Ensure Ireland's ODA **supports the move to universal public healthcare in low-income countries** to help ensure that everyone has access to healthcare and that humanity is prepared for future outbreaks.
- **Advocate for the development of a global agreement that vaccines and treatments, when approved for use, will be a global public good**, available to all who need it free of charge and that rich countries will provide enough funding to make it available rapidly to the whole of humanity.
- **Maintain and increase Ireland's ODA support for agriculture and food security**, while promoting the functioning of food supply chains, with a view to strengthening food security and resilience against shocks in the short and medium term, especially due to climate breakdown.
- **Support efforts to implement a global ceasefire** in armed conflicts that lay the foundation for long-term peace in the future.
- Ensure that both ODA monies and diplomatic missions are used **to promote fundamental freedoms and strengthen civic and political space**, ensuring measures needed for the pandemic control are proportionate, time-bound and non-discriminatory.
- Recognise the crucial roles that women and women-led organisations will play in delivering the response to the COVID- 19 crisis and to development work in general and work in partnership with them.
- **Support and protect vulnerable populations, especially migrants and refugees**, including by amending the overly restrictive nature of Ireland's current family reunification legislation and fulfilling our commitment to bring unaccompanied minors being held on the Greek Islands to safety in Ireland.

Healthcare

To be effective in the short and long term, the response to the health crisis as a result of the spread of COVID-19 will need to **be globally coordinated and locally led**. There is an obvious need to prioritise prevention measures, health, social protection and food security in order to save

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

lives and limit the outbreak and its economic impacts. While respecting principles for quality assistance, such as supporting locally led responses, Ireland should give priority to humanitarian aid. Measures to support low-income countries' public health systems will be paramount, including investments that prevent the spread of the disease, notably water and sanitation programmes, hygiene promotion and effective communication programmes. To ensure success, such programmes should be locally led. Yet in doing so long-term development priorities that increase collective resilience such as delivering universal social protection for citizens, including helping partner countries give cash to those in need, should not be forgotten.

According to the WHO, at least [half the world's 7.6 billion people cannot access the essential healthcare](#) they need even in normal times. In low-income countries, the disease burden is already far higher than in rich nations. Each day [nearly 4,000 people die from tuberculosis](#); a further [1,500 are killed by malaria - most of them children](#). These numbers are at risk of rising dramatically as the pandemic response competes with stretched healthcare resources. Weak, under-funded and unequal health systems in low-income countries are already completely unable to cope. The systems are ill-equipped, both in the numbers of health workers and in the medical material necessary, for effective response.

In poor countries, health systems are not able to cope with a COVID-19 outbreak and urgent action is needed to save lives, including doubling health spending through a Global Public Health Plan and Emergency Response. A coordinated and massive investment in public health is desperately needed now if we are to stop the spread of this deadly virus and prevent millions of deaths. It would cost approximately [\\$159 billion to double the public health spending of the world's 85 poorest countries](#). These countries are home [to 3.7 billion people](#). This is less than eight per cent of the latest US fiscal stimulus alone. This money should be used to ensure health systems have the capacity to treat, test and trace contacts properly, providing free testing and healthcare for the poorest people. There is also an urgent need for adequate healthcare equipment to respond to the virus: [in Mali, the government has only three ventilators per one million people](#). The number of health workers is also distressingly inadequate: [in Africa, there are 2.8 doctors and 11 nurses for every 10,000 people](#), compared with 33.8 and 80.6 respectively in Europe.

Moreover, containing the virus in poorer countries provides huge challenges. In 42 countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, [less than half of the population has access to basic handwashing facilities such as soap and water in their homes](#). Social distancing is also not an option for the [880 million people](#) who live in [overcrowded slums](#) and less than [half of the world's population has access to basic healthcare services](#). In addition, the virus poses a particular threat to the livelihoods of people who work informally - [two billion people worldwide, most of them in low and middle income countries - who therefore have no access to sick pay](#). The 400 million Africans living on less than \$2 a day cannot afford to stay confined, and will have to continue working to feed their families - at the risk of their lives. With the increase in care work resulting from children being out of school and the need to care for sick relatives, many women will likely have to give up paid work to focus on unpaid care tasks, bearing the brunt of the impact.

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

Ireland should support actions to shore up public health systems in poorer countries now and for the long-term, making them fair and accessible to all and saving millions of lives, as laid out in Oxfam's report ['How to confront the coronavirus catastrophe'](#), including:

- 1. Prevention:** Huge investments must be made in prevention - public health promotion and communication, community engagement and education, and in access to water and sanitation, especially handwashing, as well as free testing for all.
- 2. Ten million health workers:** Ten million new paid and protected health workers should be recruited to help slow the spread of this virus and to be there to treat and care for those affected.
- 3. Free healthcare:** Governments must remove all financial barriers to people accessing healthcare and deliver free testing and treatment to all who need it.
- 4. Private must work for public:** Governments must requisition or find other means to utilise all private healthcare facilities to increase capacity to treat and care for infected patients and to meet ongoing essential health needs. The practice of using aid to subsidise or promote the privatisation of healthcare should stop.
- 5. Vaccines and treatment for all:** Global agreement must be reached that vaccines and treatments, when approved for use, will be a global public good, available to all who need it for free and that rich countries will provide enough funding to make it available rapidly to the whole of humanity.

Food

There is also a need to prevent countries slipping into food insecurity as a result of reduced income, agricultural production and increases in food prices. [In 53 countries around the world, 113 million people are already suffering from acute hunger. Millions more are currently at risk of going hungry due to swarms of locusts sweeping across East Africa](#) - devastating crops. These countries have weak health and social protection systems. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic could [increase the number of people at risk of food insecurity and malnutrition in West Africa from 17 million people to 50 million people between June and August 2020](#). Protecting food security and implementing policies and support programmes that promote agricultural development must be supported, while taking into account the challenges of climate breakdown.

As food markets are shut down, producers lose access to their fields, and labourers can no longer travel to work - the result will be broken supply chains with fewer consumers being able to access food. If the virus hits rural areas hard, the impact on food production could be substantial. [Most people suffering from food insecurity live in rural areas](#), but the pandemic risks impacting [urban populations' food security as well](#), in particular those working in the informal economy and who depend on essential daily income to sustain themselves. For these people, any increase in the price of food will be catastrophic. Taking into account gender is crucial: many food producers are women, and they will require support that responds to their specific needs. [Women are often also responsible for providing food for their family in low and middle income countries, due to existing social norms, and may therefore eat last and least](#).

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

Ireland should support efforts to maintain food availability by ensuring food can move from the countryside, and from ports to urban centres, and avoid harmful actions like export restrictions and tying food to national food producers. Countries imposing export restrictions or hindering the flow of food in response to COVID-19 risk creating price volatility and other adverse impacts especially on countries already food-deficit. Ireland should also invest in social protection programmes to meet people's immediate food needs especially for women, dislocated workers, people with a disability and older people who are vulnerable due to the pandemic.

Addressing vulnerabilities

The immediate response to COVID-19 must not exacerbate the many other vulnerabilities faced by low-income populations nor divert efforts to address the many structural issues that have made low-income countries so vulnerable to a global pandemic like COVID-19.

Extraordinary measures are necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19, but they must be balanced by extraordinary protections of human rights. Emergency measures to combat the virus must be proportionate, non-discriminatory and in place only for as long as necessary. From suspension of parliamentary oversight in some countries to the [excessive use of force by security bodies and increased surveillance of citizens](#) - Oxfam is alarmed that emergency measures undertaken in response to COVID-19 are being used by opportunistic governments to repress those with opposing views and manipulate the socio-political environment. The efforts of humanitarian and civic actors, both formal organisations and informal groups that have arisen to meet urgent needs during the crisis, add essential strength to the collective response. Civil society will fill gaps in services and connect with marginalised communities in distress that overburdened official institutions cannot reach. Accordingly, donors like Ireland must protect humanitarian access and work to ensure that governments do not use emergency measures and special legislation as a tactic to criminalise civil society organisations (CSOs), humanitarian actors and human rights defenders, and obstruct their legitimate work.

The prospects are particularly bleak in conflict-affected zones, and for forcibly displaced people and refugees. The equation is simple: we cannot effectively respond to a global pandemic when millions of people are still caught in warzones. We cannot treat sick people when hospitals are being bombed, or prevent the spread of COVID-19 when tens of millions are forced to flee from violence. There is an immediate need for a global ceasefire with intensive diplomatic efforts needed to make that ceasefire a reality. Ireland's potential election to the UN Security Council provides a unique opportunity to progress this, as does [Ireland's long-term commitment to Women Peace and Security](#) (WPS).

The new Government can show leadership in supporting refugees by adding [the International Protection \(Family Reunification\) Amendment Bill 2017](#) to the list of bills being re-submitted to the Dáil and progressed by the new Government. Family reunification offers refugees the best chance to rebuild their lives in Ireland on firm footing – with their family by their side. The aforementioned bill would end the overly restrictive nature of Ireland's current family reunification legislation. [Ireland should also fulfil its commitment to take a portion of the](#)

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACTAS

unaccompanied minor children being held on the Greek Islands. This welcome commitment builds on the leadership Ireland has shown in the EU in relation to migration and refugees having previously taken unaccompanied minors from France and from its participation in Operation Sophia search and rescue missions in the Mediterranean, where the Irish Navy rescued more than 18,000 people.

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

BUILD A MORE SUSTAINABLE AND JUST WORLD

- Reform the **'care system'**.
- **Bail out businesses responsibly.** Priority must be given to supporting small businesses that have the least ability to cope with the crisis. Any public support for large corporations should be conditional on measures that uphold the interests of workers, farmers and taxpayers and build a sustainable future.
- Support the **EC COVID-19 Rescue Package.**
- **Reform the corporate tax system.**
- Pass mandatory **human rights and environmental due diligence legislation** in Ireland and support the efforts to pass such legislation at the EU level.
- **Reform the EU macroeconomic framework.**
- **Implement faster and fair climate action** as set out by the [One Future Campaign](#), including reducing Ireland's greenhouse emissions by eight per cent a year in line with Ireland's Paris Agreement commitment.
- **Help poorer countries to cope with the climate emergency** by reaching the target of spending 20 per cent of ODA on climate finance by 2025. Increased ODA spending on climate finance should **receive an additional budgetary allocation** rather than being diverted from the existing ODA budget.
- Support the development of the **Circular Economy as set out in the government's Climate Action Plan.**

A better future must be guided by universality, collaboration, human rights, interconnectedness and a leave no-one behind ethos. It must be based on the international framework of human rights and intergenerational cohesion to deliver income security, the best possible health care, decent housing, safety, and enjoyment of rights for all. We need a major economic stimulus that underpins a new social contract between people, governments and the market - that radically reduces inequality, gender inequalities and lays the foundations for a just, equal and sustainable human economy that works for all throughout their lives.

With COVID-19 threatening to set the fight against poverty back by decades, we must seize this moment to save lives and repair the systems that made so many people vulnerable in the first place. This means truly putting equality at the centre of development in order to help the world recover from the crisis. The COVID-19 crisis is showing how deep and growing inequalities undermine our ability to face existential threats. It's also shows the need for political leadership at the global level to convene a collectively understood and owned response that would include more aid spending on universal public services, which are proven to tackle inequality, and for more aid to help low-income countries raise taxes progressively. It is also the time to support active citizens in holding their governments to account and for truly feminist aid that puts gender equality and women's rights at its heart. Aid that helps build a human and planet-

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

centred economy that will keep the promise of limiting global heating to 1.5°C alive, is also critical.

Tax avoidance and inequality

The economic impact of the pandemic is likely to be highly unequal. [An IMF study of major epidemics in this century found that income inequality increased](#) and the employment prospects of those with only a basic education were sharply curtailed after the SARS (2003), H1N1 (2009), MERS (2012), Ebola (2014) and Zika (2016) outbreaks. A [recent report by Oxfam](#) noted that Ireland has the fifth-largest number of billionaires per capita in the world. Overall, the world's 2,153 billionaires own more wealth than the 4.6 billion people who make up 60 per cent of the entire population of the planet. Despite significant progress in reducing poverty in the last 20 years, recent [evidence](#) suggests that the pace of global poverty reduction is slowing. Over past decades there has been a shift in tax contributions from capital and wealth to labor and consumption - that means from the very wealthy and large companies to workers and families. In addition, the global corporate tax system is still unfairly biased against poor countries. It has prevented developing countries from collecting their fair share of corporate tax - reducing the revenue they have available to tackle poverty and inequality. The financial crisis only exacerbated this trend - under-taxing wealth and capital, accelerating tax competition between countries to allocate wasteful tax incentives and a substantial use of tax havens either for companies' profit shifting or individuals' wealth being hidden. It is vital that the current crisis does not exacerbate the trend towards regressive taxation. Even the OECD or the IMF have been recognising that system was not fit for the reality of business models in the 21st century. But the lack of political, as well as a more democratic global tax architecture, have been locking the door to more transformative reforms.

As a result, too many countries have been falling short of public revenues and have made the choice to either put the burden on families and workers, or cut public investments that are now undermining their health or social protection capacity. Countries with a weak, insufficient and unfair tax systems will obviously have a very limited margin for maneuver, and that will be the case for most developing countries. This failure to collect tax is often due to multiple limitations on the design of national tax systems as well a battery of exemptions and deals which ensure that the richest individuals and companies are simply not paying what they owe. The effective tax rate on [the wealthiest 10 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean region is close to 4.8 per cent only](#).

Supply chains and human rights

The global value chains of numerous businesses in Ireland and the EU often involve exploitative working conditions, including modern slavery and child labour; gender discrimination and violence; violations of trade union and workers' rights; corruption and tax evasion; toxic pollution and rampant destruction of forests; land-grabs and evictions of indigenous peoples and local communities; and violent attacks on human rights/ environmental defenders. Oxfam's [Ripe for Change](#) report exposed the economic exploitation faced by millions of small-scale farmers and workers in food supply chains. Our surveys of people working in supermarket supply chains in a

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

range of countries found that a large majority struggle to adequately feed their own families. Women bear the heaviest burden – overwhelmingly concentrated in the least secure and lowest paid positions in food supply chains, shouldering most of the unpaid work on family farms, and routinely denied a voice in positions of power. Our modern food system is built on squeezing women’s labour hardest of all. While frontline supermarket workers in Ireland have been rightly recognised as essential workers in relation to the COVID-19 crisis, the essential labour of workers who actually produce our food through global value chains remains hidden.

Climate Crisis

The climate crisis is the most pressing issue that we are faced with on the planet. It is affecting many of the communities with which Oxfam works - undermining their livelihoods through gradual, insidious changes in temperature and rainfall patterns, and increasing the frequency and/or intensity of hazards such as floods and droughts. Vulnerability to disaster and climate change matter because it perpetuates and deepens poverty and suffering. It stands in the way of people - particularly women - being able to enjoy their basic rights and reduces their chances of ever being able to attain them.

Ireland has been a laggard on climate action, with the Government dragging its heels and missing key targets. The Government’s 2019 Climate Action Plan is a step forward but it’s nowhere near enough. According to the UN, Ireland needs to reduce global emissions by 7.6 per cent a year, year-on-year, from now to 2030, to ensure it is compliant with commitments made in the Paris agreement to keep global warming to 1.5 per cent above current levels. However, measures outlined in the Climate Action Plan amount to an average of only two per cent reductions in our greenhouse gas emissions from now to 2030.

The devastating impacts of climate change are being felt everywhere and are having very real consequences on people’s lives - especially in the world’s poorest countries. As well as reducing carbon emissions at home, it is necessary for richer countries like Ireland to provide sufficient climate finance to ensure the countries most impacted by climate breakdown have adequate resources to implement necessary adaption measures.

The corporate world also has a huge impact on sustainability. Every decision can affect the most vulnerable people and ecosystems. It can threaten livelihoods and exacerbate poverty. For example, the fast fashion industry has shaped the way that we consume clothes. Due to overconsumption and lack of regulation we are buying vast amounts of low-quality textiles. Not only are these garments unfit for long-term use, but they cannot be recycled, resulting in a world-wide waste problem that is detrimental to the environment. The wages and working conditions of clothes producers in countries like Bangladesh, who are usually women, often fall well below basic human rights standards. Textiles have been identified as one of the waste streams with the highest untapped potential to implement circular practices. Throw-away fashion is unsustainable and is stretching the planet’s resources beyond its limits. Every year Irish people dump 225,000 tonnes of clothing – a huge waste of water and energy considering that it would take 13 years to drink the amount of water needed to make one t-shirt and one pair of jeans.

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

To create a more just and sustainable world Oxfam Ireland calls on the next Government to:

Reform the 'care system': The COVID-19 crisis has shown that care work is the 'hidden engine' that keeps the wheels of our economies, businesses and societies turning. It is driven by women and girls who, with little or no time to earn a decent living, be involved in their communities or have a say in how their societies are run, are trapped at the bottom of the economy. Care work (paid and unpaid) in Ireland and around the world is highly gendered and undervalued in terms of pay and recognition. Provision of care services (e.g. childcare, care for the elderly or people with special needs) by the Irish State is relatively low, leaving households to provide these services themselves or to source them from the market - if they can pay. This issue has become even more acute due to the COVID-19 crisis.

This can be addressed by:

- Ensuring significant extra investments in public services and social infrastructure are delivered. For example, there is a need to increase investment in early years education to bring overall expenditure in line with the UNICEF recommendation of one per cent of GDP.
- Ensuring care workers employed or funded by State programmes are properly compensated to at least a living wage level.
- Holding a referendum on Art. 41. 2 of the Constitution about the role of women in the home to amend the language so it is gender neutral and recognises the value of care work in Irish society.
- Delivering integrated changes in social and employment policies that support carers, facilitate the combination of care and employment, while at the same time encourage and support greater male participation in care.

Bail out businesses responsibly: During the crisis, state support to businesses can take different forms. It ranges from tax/social contribution deferrals or carry-backs to state guaranteed loans, to temporary unemployment schemes and actual cash injections in a company (through increased state equity, public non-refundable contributions or direct subsidies). [The European Commission has provided guidance for any State Aid to private businesses through a Temporary Framework](#) that includes a ban on payment of dividends and share buybacks and an obligation for large companies to report on their investments in green and digital transformation. Oxfam Ireland believes that Ireland needs to go beyond the criteria in this Framework. Priority must be given to supporting small businesses who have the least ability to cope with the crisis. Bailouts of big corporations should be conditional on measures to uphold the interests of workers, farmers and taxpayers, and to build a sustainable future. For those corporations receiving company-specific assistance, financial support should take the form either of interest-bearing loans or of the government taking a stake in the company. Governments should ensure proper oversight of all bailouts, including being represented on boards, to prevent corruption and mismanagement.

Such conditions should include companies':

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

- Agreeing to a moratorium on executive bonuses and all payments to shareholders for at least three years following government financial support.
- Demonstrating a commitment to transformational action to cut their greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement and the 1.5°C temperature goal.
- Accepting collective bargaining and engaging with independent trade unions and enable female workers to raise their voices safely and effectively.
- Instituting mandatory gender parity through quotas on boards and executive committees and commit to closing any gender pay gaps.
- Honouring ongoing contracts with suppliers to protect workers in the supply chain.
- Publishing country by country reports to disclose their financial activities in tax havens.
- Agreeing to close operations in tax havens, as has been [agreed in a number of EU countries](#).

Support EC COVID-19 Rescue Package: The European Commission (EC) COVID-19 crisis recovery package for the EU presented at the end of May includes a [proposal for a new EU long-term budget of EUR 1.1 trillion and a EUR 750 billion recovery fund](#). The Commission has also suggested using new EU common taxes to fund the recovery. It is positive that the EC is proposing to fund the recovery through progressive taxation: the most profitable and polluting companies pay their fair share while governments can avoid austerity which would impact the most vulnerable in our societies. It is important that Ireland supports this proposal of the EC to raise revenue for the recovery through EU wide taxes to reduce environmental damage and ensure everyone pays their fair share. In addition to the proposed environmental taxes and levies on large multinational and digital companies, the EU should also raise money by taxing the wealthiest individuals and speculative financial transactions.

- Support the EC COVID-19 rescue package.
- Explore the possibility of an EU-wide solidarity wealth tax.
- Implement an EU-wide Financial Transaction Tax (FTT), a small tax on every financial transaction that could raise tens of billions of dollars and curb financial speculation.

Reform the corporate tax system: It is impossible to develop long term solutions to global poverty and inequality so long as the current scale of corporate tax avoidance continues to drain financial resources from low-income countries - resources which should be used to provide essential services such as health and education.

Oxfam Ireland recognises that Ireland has made some reforms to address corporate tax avoidance, however, these haven't gone far enough to address the scale of tax avoidance that is facilitated by Ireland's current corporate tax regime. There is clear and growing evidence that Ireland is still acting as a 'conduit' facilitating large scale tax avoidance. A recent Oxfam [review of the EU Tax Haven List](#) in February 2020 established that royalty payments sent out of Ireland were equivalent to 22 per cent of the country's GDP in 2018. This is more royalties than are sent out of the rest of the EU combined and makes Ireland the world's number one royalties' provider. High levels of these payments, far above normal economic activity, indicate that a jurisdiction is facilitating tax avoidance. The [2020 European Commission Semester Report on Ireland](#) backs up

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

this finding stating, “The economic evidence suggests that Ireland’s tax rules are used by companies that engage in aggressive tax planning”.

Corporate tax avoidance negatively impacts efforts to reduce global poverty reduction. The [UN estimates](#) that developing countries lose around \$100 billion annually as a result of corporate tax avoidance every year. This deprives developing countries of vital revenue needed to provide the health, education and infrastructure that lift people, especially women, out of poverty. Increasing attention has also been drawn to how tax avoidance and tax evasion negatively affect women’s rights and are detrimental to closing the gender inequality gap.

Efforts to reform the global tax system are now taking place at the OECD - an approach which Ireland supports. These reforms are essential to finance the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). Corporate income tax is essential for revenue raising in developing countries. Low income countries are especially exposed to profit shifting and tax competition. The Irish Government needs to engage constructively with this reform process at the OECD and ensure that world’s poorest countries stop paying the price for an outdated global tax system.

Ireland needs to adopt the following:

- Contribute to a second generation of international tax reforms by supporting a transformative international reform of corporate income tax leading to an equitable rebalancing of taxing rights between developed and developing countries. The aim should be to find a solution for all economic sectors and not ring-fence highly digitalised companies - ensuring sufficient taxing rights for operations in consumer markets as well as manufacturing and natural resource operations. Redistribution of taxing rights should allocate profits based on a corporations’ global activity and a combination of factors such as consumption, employment and production.
- Agree a global minimum effective tax rate at a fair level. The minimum effective tax rate should be set globally, applied on a country-by-country basis without carve-outs, and set at a high enough rate to effectively curb profit shifting. It should generate additional revenues where economic activity takes place.
- Require that all large multi-national companies (MNCs) adhere to full and effective transparency by supporting efforts at EU level to agree meaningful legislation on *public Country by Country Reporting*. This would ensure that MNCs publicly report on a country by country basis where they make their profits and pay their taxes.
- Review and reform Ireland’s Double Taxation Treaties: Ireland should adopt the UN Model Double Taxation Convention between developed and developing countries (the UN model) as the minimum standard.

Adopt Mandatory Human Rights Due Diligence Legislation: Although some businesses and financial institutions are already taking steps to meet their responsibility to respect human rights and the environment in their global operations, too many others are linked to serious abuses. At present, there is no legally binding business and human rights regulation to stop this exploitation and abuse. Voluntary measures have failed to prevent abuses and are simply not

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

strong enough. A recent report published by the Centre for Social Innovation at Trinity Business School in Dublin, [Business and Human Rights in Ireland: Benchmarking compliance with the UN Guiding Principles](#), paints a very poor picture of Irish company engagement with business and human rights.

Reform the EU's Macro Economic framework: As in the last the financial crisis, the choices currently being made in the short-term at EU level will determine the policy choices open to the Irish Government in the aftermath of this pandemic. Ireland and the EU should learn from the mistakes made during the Euro crisis and urgently revise the EU's current economic governance framework. If countries are forced to take austerity measures again due to the EU's fiscal rules, recessions will be deepened and will last longer. With the ECB's commitment to guarantee cheap credit through sovereign bond purchases, 'responsible financial management' needs to be understood not as closing the deficit but as stimulating a just recovery.

Oxfam Ireland recommends that the new Irish Government should advocate for the following measures to be adopted at the EU level:

- Development of a monitoring mechanism to ensure any new resources allocated to tackle COVID-19 benefit the most vulnerable parts of the economy and the most affected workers, and that they are directly targeted to strengthening of essential services (health and social protection) in Member States.
- Mutualisation debt issuance among the 19 eurozone Member States.
- Support the transition to a zero-carbon economy through the purchase of corporate bonds as part of the €750 million Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme (PEPP) agreed by the European Central Bank (ECB). The massive purchase of bonds by the ECB can drive [speculative flows to developing countries](#). Mechanisms to stop such undue outflows to other economies should also be put in place.
- Reform the EU's macroeconomic framework to advance a sustainable, fair and green economy, including the revision of the EU's fiscal and monetary rules. For example, the mandate of the ECB - with a sole focus on price stability - should be broadened to include inclusive and sustainable environmental, economic and social goals.
- Set an ambitious revision of the Non-Financial Reporting Directive in 2020, to allow for a true shift in companies' governance and advance the development of a directive on Mandatory Human Rights Due Diligence.
- Prioritise investment in green technologies and R&D through public funds in the medium and long run, moving the economy away from the current incentives to fossil fuels and other harmful technologies.

Climate Finance: The Irish Government [has committed](#) to at least double the percentage of ODA spending on climate finance by 2030. The overall climate finance provided by [Ireland in 2017 was €69 million](#) which was approximately 9.2 per cent of the overall ODA budget in that year. Thus, to reach this target Ireland needs to spend about 20 per cent of its ODA budget on climate finance. However, as climate breakdown is happening now, it important that this commitment is reached as soon as possible - by 2025 at the latest.

Support the development of the Circular Economy: The Circular Economy concept brings a holistic perspective to the lifespan of a product from design, material choice, sustainable

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS

production processes, product use, reuse and recycling. Circularity benefits the environment and helps to fight the climate crisis. It also generates innovative and sustainable economic opportunities. Oxfam Ireland works with a wide range of companies committed to sustainability. These business partnerships directly improve the lives of millions of people worldwide by making it easier to keep excess stock out of landfills. However, a lot more needs to be done to develop the potential of the circular economy in Ireland.

To help support the development of the circle economy in Ireland the next Government should create a Textiles Action Plan; offer support solutions to incentivise circular practices, especially involving social enterprises; develop design policy guidelines - including transparency in the textile chain; and put in place and implement the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework.

CONCLUSION

The time is now for Ireland to cement its place in the world as a country at the forefront of combating this pandemic, caring for the most vulnerable, and ensuring human rights across the world. With COVID-19 threatening to set the fight against poverty back by decades, we must seize this moment to save lives and repair the systems that made so many people vulnerable in the first place and create a new and better world that is that is just, sustainable and feminist.

RESPONDING TO NEW GLOBAL REALITIES:

AN AGENDA FOR THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT AND OIREACHTAS



Oxfam is a world-wide development and humanitarian organisation that mobilises the power of people against poverty. Around the globe, Oxfam works to find practical, innovative ways for people to lift themselves out of poverty. We save lives and help rebuild livelihoods when crisis strikes, and we campaign so that voices of the poor influence the local and global decisions that affect them.

Last year, Oxfam Ireland, in partnership with Irish Aid, worked in over ten countries and reached 8.05 million people through our development and humanitarian programmes.

In Ireland, we advocate nationally and globally on a variety of issues, including financing for development, inequality, tax justice, women's rights and human rights in humanitarian crises. At EU level, Oxfam challenges EU policies to make them work for people in poverty. In Brussels, we work to influence key decision-makers in the EU institutions to ensure that EU policies affecting poor countries have a far reaching, positive impact on the lives of those most in need.

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