



PRE-BUDGET 2023 SUBMISSION

OXFAM IRELAND'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUDGET 2023

OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

- **Increase Ireland's ODA budget in Budget 2023 by €233m**, so it can play its part in responding to urgent global needs and setting it on a path to reach the target of 0.7% of GNI spent on ODA, over the course of the next seven years.
- Maintain Ireland's commitment to development effectiveness by **implementing the recommendations of the OECD DAC review of Ireland's ODA programme in full**.
- **Advocate for the protection and integrity of aid in multilateral instruments** especially related to 'migration control' and climate finance.

ADDRESSING LOW INCOME COUNTRIES' FISCAL AND DEBT CRISIS

- **Support initiatives aimed at creating additional finance flows including the reallocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)** to those countries most in need.
- **Support immediate cancellation of 2022 and 2023 debt and interest payments** for all low and middle-income countries that require it.

ADDRESSING INEQUALITY AND THE COST OF LIVING AT HOME AND ABROAD

- Introduce **Wealth Tax & a Windfall Tax** to fund measures to help address inequality & poverty in Ireland & globally.
- Support the creation of a **Global Asset Registry**, a publicly accessible registry of wealth holdings around the world.

CLIMATE JUSTICE

- **Ensure climate action addresses extreme carbon inequality** by **targeting excessive and luxury emissions, ending subsidies for high emitting sectors** and implementing a comprehensive **just transition process**.
- **Increase Ireland's climate finance contribution** to ensure that Ireland is contributing its fair share.
- Ensure climate finance provides **additional resources that transparently (through detailed reporting of outcomes) contribute to outcomes to support those most vulnerable to climate breakdown**.

ADDRESSING GLOBAL HEALTH INEQUITIES

- **Ensure Ireland increases its funding towards global COVID-19 vaccination efforts** to make up for Ireland's shortfalls in contributions to the **Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator**.
- Advocate that the EU supports an **extension to the scope of the recent WTO agreement on COVID-19 vaccines, to cover COVID-19 diagnostics and therapeutics**.
- **Increase funding for global health by €30 million in 2023** with a view to **increasing it further from 0.04% of GNI to 0.1% of GNI by 2030**, as recommended by the WHO.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

- **Increase resources and personnel to the Irish Refugee Protection Programme** to ensure that Ireland meets its resettlement pledges.

ACHIEVING GENDER JUSTICE THROUGH SUPPORTING CARE WORK

- **Implement measures, in line with the Citizen's Assembly on Gender Equality, to ensure universal and affordable care services are provided**. For example, ensure State funded care workers are paid at least a living-wage.

INTRODUCTION

While we are all familiar with the enormous challenges faced by Ireland in response to the triple challenges of Covid, Conflict and Climate, the situation in low-income countries is even more daunting. [West Africa is currently facing its worst food crisis in a decade](#), with 27 million people going hungry. This number could rise to 38 million – an unprecedented level – unless urgent action is taken. [In East Africa, one person is estimated to be dying of hunger](#) every 48 seconds in drought-ravaged Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, as actions have remained too slow and too limited to prevent the hunger crisis from escalating. The rainfall deficit in the most recent rainy season in these three countries has been [the most severe in at least 70 years](#).

In Yemen and Syria, protracted conflicts have shattered people's livelihoods. In Yemen, more than 17 million people – over half of the population – don't have enough food, and pockets of the country are experiencing famine-like conditions. In Syria, [six out of 10 Syrians](#) – 12.4 million people – are struggling to put food on the table. This means many families are [resorting to extreme measures to cope](#): going into debt to buy food, taking children out of school to work, and reducing the number of meals they have each day. Marrying off young daughters so there is one less mouth to feed has become another shocking strategy families are using to survive.

The economic hit to low-income countries due to the ongoing fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine is being exacerbated by the rapid onset of climate breakdown. It is creating rapidly worsening debt distress and fiscal conditions in many low- and middle-income countries while citizens face severe inflationary pressures. [Yet 87 percent of the International Monetary Fund's \(IMF\) COVID-19 loans](#) are requiring developing countries to adopt tough, new austerity measures that will further exacerbate poverty and inequality- a policy that has been recognised as counter-productive by the [IMF](#), [the EU](#), and [UNCTAD](#).

Driving all these crises is inequality- economic inequality, gender inequality and most importantly unequal access to power. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, billionaires have made unimaginable, record-breaking fortunes. Today, [every dimension of inequality - across wealth, income, gender and race - is rising around the world](#).

Ireland has already shown solidarity with the world's poorest and most vulnerable people struggling through these triple crises, through its Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme. These contributions build on Ireland's ongoing work to create a fairer, more peaceful and sustainable world. Ireland successfully campaigned on a platform of promoting human rights, climate action, gender equality and humanitarian support to secure a non-permanent United Nations Security Council seat for the 2021-2022 term. Upholding Ireland's strong reputation and credibility as a leader on international development depends on its continued support for Official Development Assistance and advocacy for policies to improve the lives of people living in, or those vulnerable to, poverty, inequality and crisis.

OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

The Programme for Government pledges to increase Ireland's official aid budget to 0.7 percent of national income in line with international commitments by 2030. In 2022, despite a monetary increase in the ODA budget of [€176m on the 2021 allocation, Ireland's spending on ODA remained at 0.32% of GNI. In 2021, fourteen OECD DAC countries spent more in percentage terms and eighteen OECD DAC countries spent more in monetary terms.](#) According to [Dóchas estimates](#), Ireland needs to increase its ODA budget in Budget 2023 by €233m, and by similar annual amounts every year to ensure Ireland reaches the target of 0.7% over the course of the next seven years.

In addition to 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](#) and principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship must be maintained. Ireland's aid should continue to be used for its intended purpose to save lives, alleviate poverty and reduce vulnerability. Irish Aid's effective aid approach can be bolstered by committing to implement 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 as part of Ireland's contribution to the EU's development budget, as the total Irish contribution to EU ODA in 2020 amounted to [over €230 million](#), around a quarter of Ireland's ODA. Particular attention should be paid to potential contributions to EU 'migration control' projects that negatively impact human rights and run counter to Irish Aid's aims and Policy Coherence for Development as set out in the Lisbon Treaty. Also, as Ireland ramps up funding for climate finance to ensure that nations most impacted by climate breakdown have adequate resources to implement necessary adaptation and mitigation measures, we need to ensure that such funding is reaching those most in need on the ground, especially female farmers working on small farms.

- **Increase Ireland's ODA budget in Budget 2023 by €233m**, so it can play its part in responding to these urgent global needs and setting it on a path to reach the target of 0.7% of GNI spent on ODA over the course of the next seven years.
- **Maintain the integrity of ODA:** Maintain Ireland's commitment to development effectiveness by **implementing the recommendations of the OECD DAC review of Ireland's ODA programme, in full**. This should include developing **a clear policy on private sector engagement** and **a policy coherence mechanism**, as well as **enhancing civil societies' role** in the delivery of Ireland's ODA.
- **Advocate for the protection and integrity of aid in multilateral instruments** especially related to 'migration control' and climate finance.

TACKLING LOW INCOME COUNTRIES' FISCAL AND DEBT CRISIS

[\\$650 billion-worth of Special Drawing Rights \(SDR\) were issued by the IMF in August 2021](#), as an easily accessible form of finance or cash for countries struggling with the global crisis. However, these were distributed according to quotas rather than needs, in line with IMF rules. This means that \$400 billion went to high-income countries, \$230 billion to middle-income countries, and just \$21 billion to low-income countries, despite the tremendous needs of low-income countries. Going a little way to make up for that inequity, G20 countries committed to reallocating \$100 billion of their share back to low-income countries. Seven months later, we have still only seen firm pledges of \$36 billion. Ireland has received \$4.69 billion in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs).

Ireland should set an example by reallocating 100% of its \$4.69 billion allocation of IMF Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) to countries most in need. This could be done bilaterally, through conversion into hard currency, to low and middle-income countries in Africa and Asia which are most food insecure, or else multilaterally through a vehicle which strictly avoids conditionality and is concessional. Although barriers have been advanced to the reallocation of SDRs, such as to the 'lending' of them by the European Central Bank, we believe that what is most absent is the political [will](#) to effectively reallocate these much-needed emergency funds. This is where Ireland can provide global leadership. Our co-signed Civil Society Organisations' Principles for Fair Channelling [of Special Drawing Rights](#) should be followed. Such transfers should come with no economic policy conditionality nor sectoral bias and, if they cannot be grant-based, they should have extremely low interest rates and extended horizons and grace periods. Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) rechannelling should not be eligible to be counted as ODA. SDRs do not represent a real donor effort and cannot be used in the same manner as other financial transfers. Also, their character and quality does not align with the requirements of ODA and, thus, should not be counted as such.

[Rising interest rates](#) in rich nations are fuelling the debt crisis, with many of the world's poorest countries facing default or crippling repayments. Debt servicing for the world's poorest countries [is estimated at \\$43 billion in 2022](#). In January this year, [the World Bank estimated](#) that 33 countries were already "in" or at "high" risk of debt distress. In 2021, debt represented 171% of all spending on healthcare, education and social protection combined for low- income countries.¹ The global response to this impending debt crisis has been a series of half measures. The international financial institutions lent more money, adding on to existing debt burdens and the G20 offered a partial bilateral debt payment suspension that kicked the can down the road. This money being used to service debt is precious – money needed to afford soaring food import bills and ongoing COVID-19 responses, let alone investments in an equitable and sustainable future.

Ireland should support immediate and unconditional cancellation of all unpayable debts to poorer countries. The two main debt initiatives driven by the international community – the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) and the Common Framework – have proven largely ineffective. Ireland must prioritize the debt agenda and support initiatives to cancel all debt payments in 2022 and 2023 to bilateral creditors, and multilateral institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank for all low and lower-middle-income countries that require it. It should also support efforts to immediately suspend debt service for countries applying to the Common Framework and to establish a new debt relief process which addresses its failures, particularly ensuring private

¹ A Nordic Solution to the New Debt Crisis, Matthew Martin for Norwegian Church Aid, forthcoming.

sector participation. 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.

- **Support initiatives aimed at creating additional finance flows including the reallocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)** to those countries most in need.
- **Support immediate cancellation of 2022 and 2023 debt and interest payments** for all low and middle-income countries that require it.

ADDRESSING INEQUALITY AND COST OF LIVING AT HOME AND ABROAD

Oxfam has led the world in calling for urgent measures to tackle the crisis of inequality. At the start of this year, before Russia invaded Ukraine, we showed that [billionaire wealth globally had grown to the greatest levels since records began](#), that it accelerated alarmingly during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that it had surpassed the Gilded Age.

Wealth Tax

[Extreme wealth in Ireland has increased in a similar fashion –Irish billionaires have seen their wealth increase by over 50% since the start of the pandemic](#). As a result, Oxfam Ireland called for a [national conversation about a wealth tax in Ireland and we proposed a moderate tax schedule: 1.5% above net-wealth thresholds of €5 million and 2% above net-wealth thresholds of €50 million, in current prices](#). Oxfam Ireland proposes that due consideration be given to the model of wealth tax that we put forward in our submission to the Commission on Taxation and Welfare [here](#).

This tax would be complementary to other capital taxes and could yield at least €5 billion per year at low rates - 1.5% and 2% - above net-wealth thresholds of €5 million and €50 million respectively.

As an example of what our wealth tax could fund every year, €5 billion would cover **the entirety** of the contributions proposed by [Social Justice Ireland in Budget 2023](#) for Housing (€1,442.3m), Health, Disability and Carers (€1,436m), Pensions and Older People (€1,025.7m) and Children and Families, incl. Direct Provision (€749.7m) **along with** our proposed €233 million contribution to Official Development Assistance (ODA) for Budget 2023 on a path to reach the target of 0.7% GNI over the course of the next seven years, **while leaving** a further EUR113 million that could be allocated to (additional) international climate finance.

Windfall Tax

In addition to a wealth tax, Oxfam Ireland proposes a windfall tax on the excess profits of large companies in sectors of the economy that are benefiting from fortunate circumstances resulting from the pandemic and rising prices. We are witnessing record profits across multiple sectors, not just in the energy sector- shipping and logistics, arms producers, pharmaceuticals, IT and food producers and many others are benefitting from the multiple crises that we find ourselves in. These companies have also benefited from public policy measures such as quantitative easing during the COVID-pandemic that helped maintain and bolster profits. [The IMF has recommended a broad-based windfall tax](#) to help build social solidarity.

The recent [remarks of the UN Secretary General](#) highlighted that the largest global oil and gas companies made close to \$100bn in combined profits in the first three months of 2022. In August

[Bord Gáis's operating profits increased by 74% in the first half of this year](#) to nearly €40 million over the same period in 2021. While our [analysis from May](#) of five of the best-known Irish energy companies showed they had a combined rise of 50% rise in profits or €280 million in total² even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

But it is not just the energy sector that is making excess profits. Corporations and the billionaire dynasties who control so much of our food system are seeing their profits soar. Billionaires involved in the food and agribusiness sector globally have seen their collective wealth increase by [\\$382bn \(45%\) over the past two years](#). There have been 62 food billionaires created in the last two years. In Ireland, five of the biggest Irish food companies have had a total profit rise of €174 million in just one year - in the last year of recorded profits³. Similar levels of excess profits are being made in other sectors. As a result [Spain has recently imposed a windfall tax on banks as well as utilities](#).

We propose that the windfall tax would be levied on excess profits well above average company profits for the year's 2017-2020, the accounting years before the pandemic began. Regulators should be tasked with imposing fines or other relevant measures to prevent windfall taxes being passed on to consumers, as is the case with the Spanish and Italian model of windfall taxes.

We call for a more effective and comprehensive form of windfall tax than that under consideration by the Irish Government, according to [Minister for Finance, Paschal Donohue, speaking in the Dáil in April](#). Minister Donohue said that a 10% tax on the taxable profits of all energy companies in Ireland could yield in the region of €60 million per annum. However, this estimate was based on taxable profit levels in 2020 - which are likely to be much lower than current levels.

Global Asset Registry

Oxfam Ireland fully endorses the [Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation \(ICRIT\)'s public campaign](#) in 2022 for a Global Asset Registry (GAR). A Global Asset Registry (GAR) has been endorsed by ICRIT's commissioners in an [open letter](#) to G20 finance ministers and has been [described as](#):

"an international network of asset registries that listed all different forms of wealth: from assets including property, yachts, jets and jewellery; to bank accounts, cryptocurrency assets and safe deposit boxes; as well as trusts and other legal arrangements; and even intangible assets such as intellectual property and trademarks.

"These would be linked to their actual, beneficial owners, who may be different to their legal owners. The [ICRIT Commissioners] said a global asset registry that detailed what was owned where and by whom would enable countries to record and analyse wealth and inequality and would lead to greater enforcement of tax laws while hindering those who wanted to pursue illicit activities."

This would give an opportunity for Irish-based corporations, Irish high net-wealth individuals and the Irish state to definitively and publicly disassociate themselves from and repudiate the wealth of oligarchs and illicit financial flows. This proposal is timely given that the IMF's recent [Financial System Stability Assessment](#) of Ireland warned of lax regulation of Ireland's shadow banking, or market-based finance, sector - said to be worth EUR4.5 trillion in assets. Budget 2023 needs to

² Figures are taken from [The Irish Times Top 1000 Guide to Irish Business](#), which uses CRO data.

³ Figures are taken from [Irish Times Top 1000 Companies website](#), which quotes the CRO as its source for company figures.

include a commitment to support the formation of the Global Asset Registry (GAR) as part of its oversight of this area.

- Introduce a **Wealth Tax and a Windfall Tax** to fund measures to help address inequality and poverty in Ireland and globally.
- Support the creation of a **Global Asset Registry**, a publicly accessible registry of wealth holdings around the world.

CLIMATE JUSTICE

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. It is affecting many of the communities Oxfam works with, 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 breakdown matters 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.

The most important thing Ireland can do to help mitigate this is to fully implement its commitments in the Paris Agreement to keep global warming below 1.5C. In implementing effective climate action, the Irish government needs to [confront extreme carbon inequality in Ireland](#). To achieve climate justice those most responsible for causing climate change, both in Ireland and around the world, have the most responsibility for addressing this issue. To do this, Ireland must implement measures targeting excessive and luxury emissions, ending subsidies for high emitting sectors and implementing a comprehensive just transition process to support those most impacted by the transition to a post-carbon future.

As well as reducing carbon emissions at home, richer countries like Ireland should provide sufficient climate finance to ensure that nations most impacted by climate breakdown have adequate resources to implement necessary adaptation and mitigation measures. Oxfam Ireland believes that Budget 2023 needs to increase the quantity and quality of climate finance to nations in the Global South who are facing the brunt of the planetary emergency. Not only are those nations of the Global South the least responsible for causing climate breakdown, in historical terms, vast inequalities persist in who contributes to current emissions, both [internationally](#) and within [Ireland](#).

Oxfam Ireland fully concurs with the [Dóchas Budget 2023 submission](#) which states:

"It is estimated that Ireland's fair share of climate finance allocations under the UNFCCC would be between €340m to €840m per year taking past emissions and wealth into account" based on calculations by the Overseas Development Institute which state that Ireland is only paying [25%-50% of its fair share](#). Therefore, Oxfam Ireland agrees that Ireland needs to deliver and move beyond its target of €225m per annum of climate finance as a matter of urgency.

Furthermore, Oxfam Ireland believes that the Irish Government needs to demonstrate the effectiveness and uniqueness of its climate finance by providing increased accountability and visibility of this finance's effectiveness and 'additionality'. In terms of additionality, Ireland ranked poorly in a recent comparative [analysis by CARE International](#), as Ireland provided "no strongly additional climate finance". As has also been stated by Dóchas in its submission, all climate finance funding must be demonstrated to be new and additional to any future increases in ODA as per [Ireland's obligations under the UNFCCC](#), and there should be full transparency in this regard. It is vital that Ireland:

- Ensure climate action addresses **extreme carbon inequality** by **targeting excessive and luxury emissions, ending subsidies for high emitting sectors** and implementing a

comprehensive **just transition** process to support those most impacted by the transition to a post-carbon future.

- **Increase Ireland's climate finance contribution** to ensure that Ireland is contributing its fair share.
- Ensure climate finance **provides additional resources that transparently (through detailed reporting of outcomes) contribute to outcomes to support those most vulnerable to climate breakdown.**

ADDRESSING GLOBAL HEALTH INEQUITIES

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a huge regression in the development of health systems around the world. On top of this, COVID-19 is still taking many lives on a weekly basis. This is most evident in low-income countries, where [only 20% of people are fully vaccinated](#)⁴ and less than 1% of people are boosted. Millions of people have died since the emergence of the Omicron variant, and the majority of these deaths have been in low- and middle-income countries.

The Irish government's recent failure to support a [true TRIPS waiver](#), despite support for it from the Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment, the Seanad and the majority of the Irish public, will exacerbate the situation. One of the main stated reasons for the government's lack of support was the need for more focus on '[getting the vaccines into people's arms](#)'. However, the Irish government has not contributed its fair share to the [Access to COVID-19 Tools \(ACT\) Accelerator](#); one of the main means of strengthening health systems' response to COVID-19 and improving vaccination rates. The ACT Accelerator has been seeking to address many of the challenges faced by low-income countries trying to increase the number of vaccinations. However, it has faced large shortfalls in funding. The fair share of funding from Ireland in 2022 was approximately €190 million, yet Ireland has only contributed €10.7 million of this, which represents less than 6% of Ireland's fair share.⁵ Ireland's fair contribution is part of a global call for of US\$16.8 billion for the ACT Accelerator, and is based on the Ireland's wealth level along with the potential for economic recovery post-COVID-19.

The ACT-A is set to [transition organisationally](#) in the coming months. However, the need to support health systems strengthening and vaccination uptake remains. Therefore, **Ireland must increase its funding towards global COVID-19 vaccination efforts to address vaccine inequity and help save millions of lives.** This could be achieved through additional funding to the WHO or through Ireland's [partnerships](#) with countries with low-vaccination rates such as Tanzania (7% double vaccinated), Sierra Leone (23%) and Ethiopia (32%).⁶ The funding could be devoted to several areas, including service delivery, cold chain equipment, knowledge management, monitoring and surveillance, and/or vaccine hesitancy. It should be noted that because COVID-19 has had such a huge negative impact on health system strengthening, **it is vital that this increased funding is not at the expense of existing aid budgets.**

Another way in which the Irish government can mitigate the recent WTO agreement on COVID-19 vaccinations is by **pushing the EU to support an extension to the scope of this WTO agreement, to cover COVID-19 diagnostics and therapeutics.** This is set to be considered by the WTO in the next six months. In countries with low vaccination rates, therapeutics and diagnostics are even more vital as the virus is more likely to transmit and it is more likely to lead to severe disease and death among vulnerable groups who are unvaccinated.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that it is vital that efforts to **strengthen health systems in low-income countries. This should include increased staffing, improved healthcare infrastructure, greater access to equipment, user fee reduction/removal, and improved social supports for patients.** As an example of the level of need, in 2018 [only four countries](#), of the 47 countries in the WHO African region, had reached or exceeded the Sustainable Development Goal

⁴ As of August 31st 2022

⁵ ACT-A consultant, personal communication, 23 June 2022

⁶ Our World in Data. (2022) Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations. Available at: <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations> (Accessed: 14 July 2022).

threshold of 4.45 doctors, nurses and midwives per 1000 population. [In Ireland](#), where there is widespread acceptance that there are major healthcare workforce shortages, there are 16.4 doctors, nurses and midwives per 1000 population. In Mozambique, Tanzania and Sierra Leone, countries that [Ireland has partnerships with](#), there is a density of less than one healthcare worker per 1,000 population. Here, there is a clear need for massive increases in the health workforce to provide wide access to safe healthcare. Through their partnerships, Ireland **should increase funding to support recruitment of healthcare workers** to meet the SDG goal of 4.45 doctors, nurses and midwives per 1000 population.

Overall, Ireland needs to increase its ODA, and in particular its ODA spend on health. In 2020, Ireland [devoted](#) only 0.04% of GNI to health ODA, and health only formed 14% of the overall Irish ODA budget. The Commission of the World Health Organization [recommends](#) that 0.1% of GDP should be devoted to funding for global health. **The Irish government must meet this goal by increasing its funding for global health to 0.1% of GNI⁷ by 2030.** To achieve this, the Irish government must **increase funding for global health by €30 million in 2023.**

- **Ensure Ireland increases its funding towards global COVID-19 vaccination efforts to make up for Ireland's shortfalls in contributions to the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator.**
- Advocate that the EU **supports an extension to the scope of the recent WTO agreement on COVID-19 vaccines, to cover COVID-19 diagnostics and therapeutics.**
- **Increase funding for global health by €30 million in 2023** with a view to increasing it further from 0.04% of GNI to 0.1% of GNI by 2030, as recommended by the WHO.

⁷ GNI is being used because GDP has a falsely inflated value which provides a misleading picture of the Irish economy

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

Oxfam Ireland welcomed the Irish government's support to people fleeing the war in Ukraine and its commitment to finding solutions to ensure Ireland meets its international protection responsibilities, accommodation challenges notwithstanding. As an organisation working globally on humanitarian and crisis situations, Oxfam Ireland has highlighted the importance of Ireland upholding its commitment to receive and protect refugees and displaced people from all countries and regions seeking protection without discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity or nationality.

Ireland should ensure that it meets its pledges to resettle Syrian and Eritrean refugees. These resettlement pledges are a vital lifeline to people left languishing in impossible conditions in camps and must be met. The Irish government must ensure that providing refuge to one group of refugees is not at the expense and to the detriment of another group of refugees.

The Irish government's response to displacement from Ukraine has shown a recognition of both the importance of the right to protection for those forced to flee, and of Ireland's international responsibility. This is equally true for all crisis displacement situations around the world. The [Minister for Foreign Affairs](#) has pointed to the geographical proximity of Ukraine, but it should be recalled that Syria, Lebanon and Jordan are also in the [EU neighbourhood](#).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) projects [that more than 2 million refugees will be in need of resettlement in 2023](#). This is a 36% increase from 2022, due in part to the humanitarian impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the new mass displacement situations of the past year. Safe return home is not a viable option for many refugees as conflicts continue. Resettlement is a vital protection tool.

Ireland responded to the need to increase the number of resettlement places and in 2015, the [Irish Refugee Protection Programme \(IRPP\)](#) was established in response to the humanitarian crisis that developed in Southern Europe. The number of [refugees resettled to Ireland increased](#) from 178 in 2015 to 783 in 2019. The resources allocated to the IRPP must reflect this increase as well as the increase in resettlement need globally and the pledges that Ireland has made.

In December 2019, the Irish government committed to a new phase of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP), to [increase annual resettlement quota by 50 each year over 4 years: 650 in 2020, 700 in 2021, 750 in 2022 and 800 in 2023](#). Ireland has pledged with the UNHCR **to resettle 2,900 refugees between 2020 and 2023**. The pledged arrivals for the first two years largely comprise Syrian refugees resident in Jordan and Lebanon, along with a pilot group of 150 Eritrean refugees resident in Ethiopia.

These groups of refugees that Ireland has pledged to resettle are in dire situations where they are. After more than 10 years of conflict in Syria, nearly [5.7 million registered refugees](#)—including almost 2.7 million children—still live in camps, informal settlements and host communities in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. In Lebanon, [9 out of 10 Syrian refugees](#) live in extreme poverty and half of the refugee population is food insecure. In Ethiopia, eruptions of conflict and insecurity have disrupted Eritrean refugees' [access to food, water and medicine](#).

In **2020 and 2021, the number of resettlement departures to Ireland dipped to 195 and 92** respectively, due to COVID-19 associated challenges. The IRPP have been making trips to Lebanon and working to meet pledges but will need appropriate resources and personnel to do so. The resources allocated to the IRPP within the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth must reflect this increase as well as the increase in resettlement need globally and the pledges that Ireland has made.

- **Increase resources and personnel to the Irish Refugee Protection Programme** to ensure that Ireland meet its resettlement pledges.

ACHIEVING GENDER JUSTICE THROUGH SUPPORTING CARE WORK

The COVID-19 crisis has shown that care work, often unpaid, is the “hidden engine” that keeps the wheels of our economies, businesses and societies turning. It is driven primarily by women and girls who often have little or no time to earn a decent living, to get involved in their communities or have a say in how their societies are run- [Eurostat data shows](#) that the share of women in Ireland outside the labour market due to caring responsibilities remains almost double the EU average.

Care work continues to provide a foundation for our society and economy as we manage the aftermath of the pandemic, the economic and social consequences of the invasion of Ukraine and the impact of spiralling inflation. Care work (paid and unpaid) in Ireland and around the world is highly gendered and undervalued in terms of pay and recognition. Many workers in the care sector are still paid poverty wages. [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 percent 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.

Care work highlights the important role of low-wage workers in terms of the provision of essential goods and services. Most importantly, the COVID 19 pandemic has emphasised 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 \(almost 70 percent\) of essential employees in Ireland are female.](#) This trend is replicated worldwide, with [more than 70 percent of healthcare workers worldwide being female.](#)

Provision of care services (e.g. childcare, or care for the elderly or people with special needs) by the Irish State is relatively low, forcing households to provide these services themselves, or pay for them – if they can afford it. Oxfam Ireland supports the National Women’s Council’s proposal in [their pre-budget submission](#) that:

“The most effective and efficient way to tackle persistent gender inequalities in care is sustained investment in public services and social infrastructure, including a public early years and school age childcare system and universal adult social care. [Investment in care has been shown to act as a better post-pandemic economic stimulus than investment in traditional economic recovery approaches](#), such as construction. Producing significantly less emissions than construction, care jobs are also green jobs so investment in care also helps us meet our climate goals.”

Using the [report of the Citizens’ Assembly on Gender Equality](#), with its strong emphasis on care, as a framework to guide Budget 2023 investment, the Irish Government should:

- **Ensure significant extra investments in public services and social infrastructure to enhance care services and resource a ‘Commission on Care’ as outlined in the Programme for Government.** For example, investment must be increased in early years education to bring overall expenditure in line with the UNICEF recommendation of one percent of GDP.

- **Ensure care workers employed or funded by State programmes are properly compensated to at least a living-wage level.**
- **Hold a referendum on Art. 41.2 of the Constitution on the role of women in the home,** as recommended by Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality. New language in the constitution **should refer explicitly to gender equality and non-discrimination and recognise the value of care work in Irish society.**
- **Deliver 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.
- **Prioritise gender budgeting:** Gender budgeting must be prioritised by the Government to assess the possible impact of fiscal and spending decisions on women and girls and enable the collection and allocation of national and international funds in ways that promote gender equality.
- **Develop and properly resource the Equality Budgeting process** beyond the current pilot stage to include all dimensions of inequality, including poverty, socioeconomic inequality and disability.

OXFAM IRELAND

Oxfam is a global development and humanitarian organisation that mobilises the power of people to fight inequality to end poverty and injustice. We challenge injustice and inequalities, shaping collective understandings and solutions: We work with the people most impacted to build more just, equitable and sustainable systems, based on our understanding of how these interact and influence each other. We are a global voice on inequality, including economic inequalities that drive poverty, such as unpaid care work; tax justice; climate justice, and responsible business practice.

We work across humanitarian, development and influencing approaches: We provide support and relief to communities in developing countries to protect and rebuild their lives in times of crisis. We work with people and communities experiencing poverty and disadvantage to find sustainable ways to build fair and independent lives, and we mobilise people to stand up and speak out, to influence those in power to ensure that people living in poverty have a say in the critical decisions that affect them, their families and communities.

Last year, Oxfam Ireland, in partnership with Irish Aid, worked in over nine countries and reached 12 million people through our development and humanitarian programmes.

CONTACT

Michael McCarthy Flynn, Head of Policy and Advocacy:

Oxfam Ireland
Portview House
Thorncastle Street
Ringsend
Dublin 4
m: +353 (0)87 613 1345

e: Michaelmccarthy.flynn@oxfam.org

w: www.oxfamireland.org

f: www.facebook.com/oxfamireland

t: www.twitter.com/OxfamIreland