

The Hunger Task Force: Renewing the fight against hunger

Minister of State Peter Power with Hunger Envoy Kevin Farrell and children from Rutland Street National School, Dublin. Photo: Maxwells.



The White Paper on Irish Aid called for Ireland to establish a Hunger Task Force to consider how Ireland could best tackle the root causes of global hunger. The Task Force was established in 2007. Its report was launched in September 2008 at the United Nations headquarters in New York. (It can be downloaded from www.irishaid.gov.ie.)

The members of the Task Force believed that Ireland, because of its history and commitment to development, could play a pivotal role in the global fight against hunger. Their report seeks to distil the most successful experiences in the fight against hunger and to identify why, despite these achievements, one billion people are still undernourished. (The members of the Task Force are listed in Annex 17.)

The Task Force recommends that aid be focused on three priority areas:

1. Increasing agricultural productivity in Africa – with a particular focus on smallholder and women farmers (women account for up to 80% of food production in most developing countries).
2. Preventing maternal and infant under nutrition – the cause of 3.5 million child deaths annually, and the cause of irreversible damage to the future physical and mental development in children.
3. Strengthening governance and leadership at national and international levels to ensure priority is given to reducing hunger and malnutrition.

The main message of the Task Force report was that hunger could be eradicated if both developing and developed countries acted on their commitments. The Task Force called for Ireland to provide international leadership, both in the quality of Irish Aid's interventions to reduce hunger, in committing to provide 20% of development aid to measures to tackle hunger, and in advocating internationally for a renewed focus on the first Millennium Development Goal; that of halving the proportion of hungry in the world by 2015.

In line with the recommendations of the Task Force, the Government has declared the eradication of hunger to be a cornerstone of its development aid programme, and a key component of its foreign policy. Kevin Farrell, formerly of the World Food Programme, was appointed as Special Envoy for Hunger in January to assess the implementation of the Task Force's recommendations.

The Hunger Task Force called for Ireland to provide leadership in the fight against hunger.

“Ireland’s history and experience of famine echoes through the generations and influences our approach to helping those with whom we share our humanity in the fight against poverty and hunger.”
An Taoiseach Brian Cowen TD, Hunger Task Force Report, 2008