

The Taxing of Inequality

Philip Graham, Media Executive, Oxfam Ireland

Oxfam has two big challenges:

1. Refugee crisis in several countries, and now the one in South Sudan;
2. Inequality with a focus on tax injustice.

Eight billionaires have the same wealth as poorest 50%.

Between March 2013 and March 2014 European billionaires increased their wealth by £22 billion. On the other hand, 45 is the current life expectancy in Sierra Leone.

Oxfam is running the 'Even it Up' campaign that is asking British and Irish governments to 'Make Tax Fair'. "There's a point where you have to stop pulling people out of the river. You need to go upstream and find out why they are falling in" – Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Oxfam was criticised by the Conservative government for being too political when it talked about austerity. Oxfam talks about tax dodging because it is needed for funding essential services, and with a political will great inroads could be made into world hunger.

Cameroon has only one doctor for 31,102 people since the government introduced a fee based health system.

Tax scandals such as Apple are still rumbling on and we all pick up the tab in terms of essential services. The Republic of Ireland is ranked the sixth worst tax haven, and four UK Crown dependencies are also on the list. NI as a tax haven? Oxfam is looking at the proposal to cut corporation tax, because it would create tax loopholes.

Oxfam asked 1,000 people their views on tax dodging and found that 89% think that ordinary people pay the price, 88% think we have the right to know if big companies are paying, 87% think that ending tax avoidance should be a priority for the government, and 80% say the gap between the richest and the rest is rising.

Oxfam also looks to gender inequality, because it will be 170 years before women catch up and get paid the same as men.

Oxfam is also looking at the Living Wage.

“Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For indeed that is all who ever have” - Margaret Mead, Anthropologist.