



The Irish Association of Non-Governmental  
Development Organisations

Dóchas  
The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

## **2008 Annual Report**

February 2009



Dóchas has signed the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages.  
Please send your feedback to [media@dochas.ie](mailto:media@dochas.ie)

Dóchas adheres to the Irish Development NGO Code of Corporate Governance

## **Introduction**

The past year was the year in which many of the changes in development policy and practice that Dóchas had been expecting came to pass. The rapid growth in the ODA budget came to an abrupt halt, while the changes in Irish Aid led to a great amount of disruption. Irish Aid also was the subject of a number of external reviews (OECD, Public Accounts Committee and the Management Review) and recommendations (Hunger Task Force). In turn, Development NGOs were challenged on their ability to move with the times and their ability to engage with macro-level development processes as opposed to the micro-level of their project work.

But it was also the year in which some of the NGO investment in quality assurance and accountability mechanisms started to pay off. The NGO Code of Corporate Governance demonstrated that Development NGOs are well ahead of Charity Regulation, and Irish NGOs were leading the way in relation to the international CSO Effectiveness process. In other words, the value of Dóchas' work became even more apparent in the past year.

### **Dóchas' main achievements in 2008**

In 2008, Dóchas commissioned an evaluation of its Strategic Plan 2005-09. The evaluation showed a sustained high level of satisfaction among members, the wider NGO sector and government. And these are some of the reasons for that satisfaction:

- Ireland remains committed to overseas aid.
  - Despite increased pressure on the budget, the government held firm on its aid promises during 2008. The Taoiseach has on numerous occasions reaffirmed Ireland's commitment to the target of spending 0.7% ODA/GNI by 2012, which was born from effective NGO lobby, sustained by Dóchas over many years.
  - A series of contributions from Dóchas changed the media debate about aid and corruption.
  - The Press Council of Ireland upheld a complaint from Dóchas about an article in the Irish Independent and members met to improve the coherence of the Development sector's public communications.
- Dóchas members are at the forefront of aid quality.
  - The Dóchas AGM adopted the Development NGO Code on Corporate Governance. The Code has received praise from both government and NGOs and is being applied by many NGOs reviewing their governance practice.
  - Dóchas members initiated a survey into partnership practices with Kenyan NGOs, to improve their performance in this area;
  - Throughout the year, members engaged in lively debates about the future of Irish Development NGOs. We organised 84 NGO meetings, attended by 700 staff members of our member organisations and 140 staff of other organisations.
- We have shaped the policy environment for our work.
  - The Charities Bill 2007 reflects all of the key proposals and comments put forward by Dóchas members;
  - Dóchas coordinated NGO input into OECD Peer Reviews and Oireachtas debates.

## 1. What Did Dóchas Do During 2008?

The work of Dóchas was guided by its Strategic Plan, and by the Action Plan for 2008, which listed the following priorities for the year:

1. **Measuring Impact & Effectiveness.**
2. **Implementing the White Paper.**
3. **Communicating NGO Values.**
4. **NGO Accountability and Regulation.**
5. **Strengthening NGO Capacity.**
6. **Evaluating and Planning for Dóchas.**

In light of these priorities, Dóchas' work in 2008 can be summed up as follows:

### I. Partnering with Government

#### **Priority Area 1: Measuring Impact & Effectiveness**

In 2002 and 2005 European Governments committed to deliver 0.7% of their Gross National Income in Official Development Assistance (ODA) by 2015. Governments promised half of the new aid to Africa and signed up to improve the quality of their aid as well.

Since then, NGOs from all 27 EU Member States have come together to monitor their governments' performance, resulting in three annual "**EU Aid Watch**" reports. Last year's report, to which Dóchas contributed the Irish chapter, revealed that while the EU claimed to be on track to meet its targets, nearly one third of officially reported European ODA was not "genuine aid", in that European governments included spending on debt relief, educating foreign students and refugees in Europe in their official statistics. This year's report, coordinated by CONCORD, was launched in May, just ahead of a key meeting of EU Development Ministers discussing the EU's approach to the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra.

The Accra meeting was the moment that the international community turned its eye to the **effectiveness of development cooperation**. The meeting demonstrated the difficulties that donor governments are encountering in their efforts at harmonisation, but it also showed the need for civil society organisations to ensure that their efforts are as effective as possible.

Dóchas has tried to give shape to the CSO Effectiveness agenda by promoting existing quality standards and by enhancing Irish NGOs' accountability. For us, accountability is the key to impact and effectiveness, as it urges NGOs to be clear about what it is they do, how they do it and why.

Other activities by Dóchas in this context included:

- In February and March, Dóchas hosted briefing meetings for Irish NGOs about the Paris Declaration and the Aid Effectiveness process.
- The 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Development Forum took place in May and focused on the theme Measuring Impact and Aid Effectiveness.
- In July, Dóchas organised a briefing meeting on the Civil Society Organisations Effectiveness Process, aiming to increase understanding of the principles that guide the effectiveness of CSOs and to generate dialogue with donors and governments on the issue. Dóchas was also represented at various CONCORD meetings on the issue, and at the

### **NGO Effectiveness: Accountability**

There are three main ways in which NGOs can enhance their accountability: disclosure, participation and standard setting. Dóchas has worked on these three areas by:

- √ (Disclosure) Improving information about our members by publishing financial information about the sector, commissioning salary surveys, and promoting Guidestar and NGO Regulation by government.
- √ (Participation) Bringing members together to reflect on their practices, policies, assumptions and achievements, and analysing members' track records in partnering with Kenyan NGOs.
- √ (Standards) Creating working groups and formulating NGO Codes of Conduct on Images & Messages and on corporate governance.

## **Priority Area 2: Implementing the White Paper**

At the end of March, Irish Aid published its **civil society policy**, eagerly awaited by the Irish NGO community. A significant percentage of Irish Aid's budget goes to civil society organisations, largely to NGOs; in its policy, Irish Aid formulated its view of civil society, set out the principles which govern its engagement with civil society organisations, and detailed the policy objectives and strategies to guide the allocation of resources, the quality of the programme and the relationships that underpin it. Dóchas organised briefings for our member organisations about the policy, and we welcomed its publication, as many of our members' core values are reflected in the policy.

During the year, Dóchas also worked to give shape to the White Paper's commitment to **Policy Coherence for Development**. On the basis of a survey of our members' priorities in this respect, Dóchas made a presentation in February to the Inter-Departmental Committee for Development (IDCD) suggesting that individual Government Departments should consider committing themselves to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Dóchas pointed out that the IDCD needs to make sure it has the mechanisms, staff and resources to do its work effectively, and that it should continue to make its recommendations available to the public. It also urged the Committee to ensure that its discussions are brought to the Cabinet on a regular basis, and that it reports to the Minister and Oireachtas each year on the progress Ireland has made towards the MDGs. Dóchas also addressed the Joint Oireachtas sub-Committee on Overseas Development on this issue (May).

Dóchas facilitated a process of discussion among members about the **management of Irish Aid**. Based on these discussions, and the 2007 Dóchas submission to the Irish Aid Management Review, Dóchas made presentations and a written submission to the OECD DAC Peer Review team which visited Ireland in October.

Other activities by Dóchas in this context included:

- In September, Dóchas presented its Budget Submission to Minister Brian Lenihan and issued a press statement to call on the government to demonstrate its commitment to making poverty history, by delivering on Ireland's promise to invest in overseas development.
- Dóchas made a written submission to the Hunger Task Force, which reported to Irish Aid in September.
- Dóchas supported the Cluster Munitions Coalition in the run up to the international conference taking place in Dublin.

- Dóchas liaised with the Oireachtas Public Accounts Committee following the publication of its report on Irish Aid.
- Following a Dóchas-led consultation with NGOs in 2006 about Ireland's engagement with UN bodies, Irish Aid introduced a new framework for its UN activities.
- In the framework of the DFA-NGO Standing Committee on Human Rights, Dóchas engaged in dialogue with the Department of Foreign Affairs on Ireland's Human Rights related activities in various international fora.
- In June, Dóchas facilitated a meeting of NGOs with an OECD evaluation team examining Ireland's implementation of the *OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions*.
- In February, Dóchas assisted Traidlinks in the organisation of a seminar on the role of the Private Sector in Development.



### Priority Area 3: European Union

In early April, Dóchas launched a discussion paper on the '**Lisbon Treaty from a Development Perspective**', which was discussed with Development NGOs and presented to the Oireachtas Committee on European Affairs. Following the rejection of the Treaty by referendum, Dóchas initiated a survey of its member organisations, which showed that the Irish Development NGOs consider the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty by the Irish voters a negative development. In October, Dóchas was invited to present its views to the Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Ireland in the European Union.

Dóchas continues to be one of the more active National Platforms within the pan-European NGO structure, **CONCORD**. Irish NGOs are represented in several CONCORD working groups, and Trócaire's Justin Kilcullen plays a widely praised role as President of the network.

Other activities by Dóchas in this context included:

- In September, The CONCORD Board met in Dublin, and presented its plans to the Board of Dóchas. Dóchas also hosted a briefing meeting on the EU in September, and organised a training for Dóchas members on accessing EU funding in November.
- Dóchas staff continue to play an informal role as advisor to several NGO networks in Eastern and Central Europe, with a particular focus on the Czech Republic and Lithuania.
- Dóchas has met a number of times with the Irish Aid EU section to brief them on NGO priorities and concerns ahead of key EU-level meetings.
- In September, Dóchas hosted a delegation of the Czech NGO platform, FoRS, when they visited Ireland to learn about the work of Dóchas, Dóchas members and Irish Aid, as preparation for the Czech EU Presidency project. Dóchas has also been asked to join a CONCORD Task Group on building the capacity of National Platforms.

## **II. Constituency for Development**

### **Priority Area 4: Communicating NGO Values**

At the 2008 AGM - one year after the adoption of the Code - members looked at their performance in adhering to the **Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages**. Members indicated that they were finding it difficult to prioritise the Code and needed more support for its implementation. In response, Dóchas published a *Guide to Understanding and Implementing the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages*, and appointed an Information Officer, to assist in the roll out of the Code. Furthermore, following a request from Dóchas, Dtalk has begun to offer training courses on the implementation of the Code.

In the autumn, Dóchas and Connect-World hosted a series of workshops on **NGO Communications**, having teamed up with a number of communications professionals to analyse NGO public communications and to promote reflection among NGOs about the consistency and efficacy of their public communications.

#### **Dóchas in the Oireachtas**

In November, Dóchas launched a new publication for members of the Oireachtas, whereby each Senator, TD and Dóchas member received a folder, entitled 'Making Poverty History Together' containing thematic sheets outlining how Irish NGOs work to eradicate poverty and inequality.

During 2009, more sheets will be published and distributed to all members of the Oireachtas.

- The Press Council of Ireland upheld a complaint by Dóchas about the article entitled "*Africa is giving nothing to anyone – apart from AIDS*" published on 10 July in the Irish Independent. The Press Council ruled that the article was in breach of the Code of Practice for Newspapers in that it was likely to cause grave offence.
- Dóchas continued its active involvement in the public debate on Corruption and development cooperation, with letters and articles in the Irish Times.
- In March, following an article by GOAL Chief Executive John O'Shea in the Irish Times in which he called for Ireland to bypass 'toxic' African governments and implement development programmes directly, using Irish project managers, there was further discussion in the media on issues surrounding corruption and development.

In November, Dóchas members met to draw up an inventory of their activities in the area of public campaigning, and to explore the potential for collective action. Members identified the upcoming European elections as a great opportunity to campaign on 'development' issues.

### III. Quality of NGO Work

#### **Priority area 5: NGO Accountability & Regulation**

During the year, the **Charities Bill 2007** made substantial progress towards enactment, passing Committee stage and plenary debate in both Houses of the Oireachtas. Following a number of rounds of targeted NGO lobbying, a series of crucial amendments were made by the Seanad in December, clearing the way for rapid enactment in 2009.

<b>Charities Bill 2007: Overview of advocacy outcomes</b>	
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Definition of "Charity" includes human rights	Not achieved.
Definition of "Charity" includes advocacy	"Excluded bodies" now restricted to "a body that promotes a political cause, unless the promotion of that cause relates directly to the advancement of the charitable purposes of the body"
All charities required to register with the Regulator	All charities regardless of size are required to register with the new Authority
Regulator to be supportive of self-regulation by NGOs	The functions of the Regulator include to: "(i) encourage and facilitate the better administration and management of charitable organisations by the provision of information or advice, including in particular by way of issuing (or, as it considers appropriate, approving) guidelines, codes of conduct, and model constitutional documents"
Regulator to be advised by NGO sector representatives	The Bill provides that: "The Minister shall, in appointing the members of the Authority, ensure that among those members there are persons who have knowledge of, and expertise in relation to – (i) the law relating to charities (ii) the keeping of accounts by, and the funding of, charitable organisations, and (iii) the management of charitable organisations"
Reporting requirements to be proportionate	The Bill has adopted the key principle of proportionality throughout
Consultation to be built into the process of implementation of the legislation	The Bill provides that: "The Authority may take such steps as it considers appropriate to consult with persons whom it considers may be affected by the performance by it of its functions"
Charities Register to be useful for NGO sector	The Bill makes explicit reference to the potential of initiatives such as Guidestar.

Following a survey of members' attitudes to corporate governance, Dóchas, in association with the Corporate Governance Association of Ireland (CGAI), formulated a draft **Code of Good Practice on Corporate Governance**. The 16<sup>th</sup> Dóchas AGM formally adopted the Code to strengthen the professional standards of members' work and enhance stakeholder confidence in the sector. The Code sets out clear guidelines on the main principles of corporate governance

and offers help in decision-making, accountability and the work of Development NGO board members.

A large number of Dóchas members have indicated that they have used the Code to initiate internal governance review processes. In addition, several domestic NGOs have contacted Dóchas for assistance in their own governance reviews. The EU's Directorate-General of Justice, Freedom and Security has included the Code as one of the case studies in a study on "public and self-regulatory initiatives improving transparency and accountability of non-profit organisations in the European Union".

On 30 July, Dóchas launched a **survey on Irish NGO partnerships with Civil Society Organisations in Kenya**. A small-scale survey of NGOs, community-based organisations and other organisations that are partnering with Dóchas members was commissioned with a view to stimulating reflection and discussion among Dóchas members about the nature and quality of their relationships with Kenyan CSOs.

The idea behind the research stems from Dóchas work on NGO Accountability. It is intended that this research will capture the views and perception of Kenyan NGOs and facilitate joint-learning to enhance the effectiveness and impact of Irish NGOs.

- The Guidestar feasibility project is nearing completion, with the Task Group concluding that the concept is both technically feasible and acceptable to the non-profit sector. Dóchas has helped promote the concept of a Guidestar to contribute to the transparency of the sector and has played an active role in the project's Oversight Group.
- In November, Dóchas hosted a first ever networking meeting for Board members and Trustees of our member organisations.

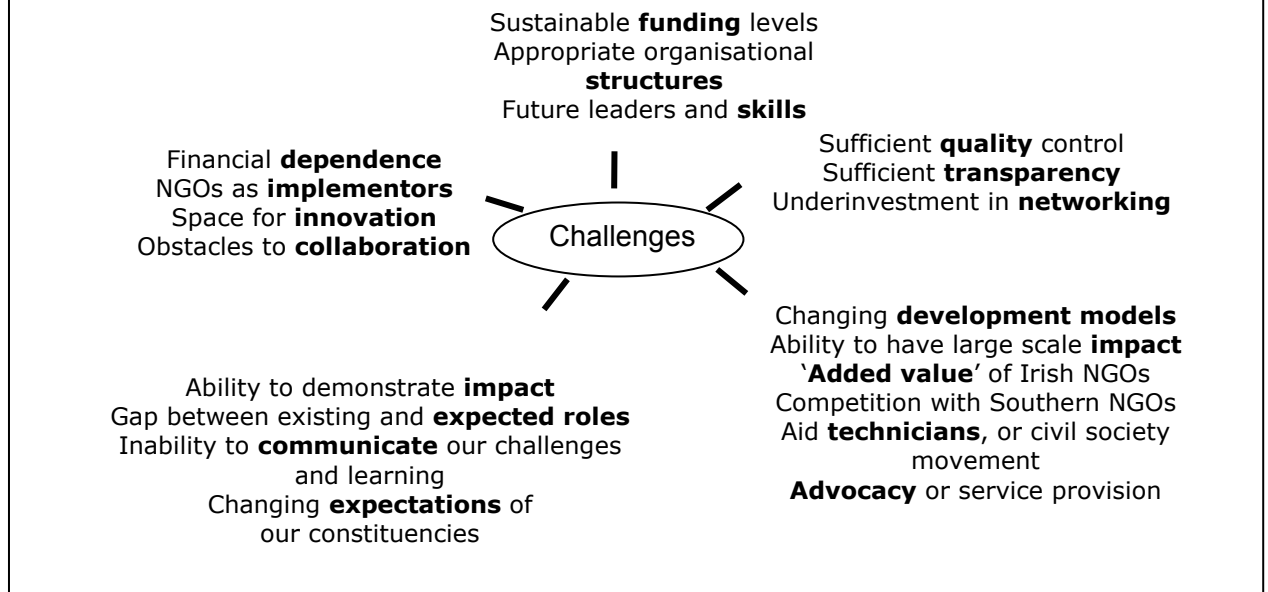
## **Priority Area 6: Strengthening NGO Capacity**

Irish Aid commissioned an evaluation of the **Dtalk training programme**. The report by Dalberg consultants showed that Dtalk's primary objective - preparing development workers to be more effective in their work - was "*substantially achieved*", but that Dtalk "*does not provide a holistic professional development for workers, including services such as career advice or individual skills needs assessment.*" On the basis of the evaluation, Dóchas made a submission to Irish Aid about the future of the NGO training programme. Our comments were reflected strongly in the Terms of Reference for the tendering process.

During the first half of the year, Dóchas hosted a series of discussion events on the **future of Irish Development NGOs**. Based on a discussion document published in March, the series encouraged members to explore changes in the roles of Development NGOs, in the values of Irish society, expectations from donors, supporters and partners, and in the concepts of development cooperation. The themes and challenges were subsequently discussed in the strategic planning process and in special task groups on human resources and NGO communications.

The Dóchas discussion document "A Wave of Change - How Irish NGOs will Sink or Swim" set out a series of potential challenges to Irish Development NGOs. A subsequent on-line survey found that Dóchas members agreed with the challenges identified, and appreciated the priority Dóchas accorded to debating the long-term trends.

## The Future of Irish Development NGOs: Some of the Challenges Identified



### Other Dóchas activities:

- The Task Group set up to lead a process of reflection on future Human Resources needs in the sector found that members had increasing difficulty in recruiting specialist staff, and that the current level of expat workers, estimated to be at around 400, was not set to increase significantly in the coming years.
- In February, Dóchas hosted a seminar on mechanisms to set up a sector-wide mechanism to facilitate garda vetting of volunteers and staff of NGOs. A proposal was submitted by Volunteering Ireland to Irish Aid and the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs, and the pilot phase is set to begin in early 2009.
- Dóchas launched an on-line Register of Consultants, to enable Development NGOs to gain access to a wider pool of consultants with expertise in the diverse areas that our members work in.
- To facilitate access to senior Irish Aid staff, Dóchas hosted a dinner for CEOs of small NGOs with incoming Director General of Irish Aid, Brendan Rogers.

## **IV. Building an Effective Network**

In the past year, Dóchas continued to strengthen both its reputation and organisational set-up. As the indicators in Annex 2 show, the network is as vibrant as ever:

- The number of member organisations grew to 39, and the number of applications for membership each year is steady at about 4-5
- 700 people working for our member organisations attended 84 meetings during the year, and spent an estimated €37,500 worth of staff time in Dóchas-hosted meetings (this figure excludes bilateral meetings and time spent preparing for, or travelling to, meetings)
- Dóchas' public profile continues to grow: our website is attracting more visitors, and each week over 1,100 people receive our Wednesday News (up from 350 when the service was launched).

Earlier in the year, Dóchas adopted a policy on the appropriate level of financial reserves.

### **Priority Area 7: Evaluating and Planning for Dóchas**

During the first half of the year, Dóchas commissioned an evaluation of its Strategic Plan for 2005-2009. The consultant found sustained high levels of satisfaction among all of Dóchas' primary stakeholders: member organisations, other Development NGOs and Irish Aid. In particular, the report highlighted:

- The membership and stakeholders of Dóchas view the outgoing Strategic Plan as broadly meeting the needs of this time and that the network has performed very well in working towards its objectives.
- There is widespread appreciation for the professionalism, expertise and commitment of the Dóchas staff and the 'phenomenal output' of the office. Members appreciate the increased professionalism of the information services, depth of policy analysis and its articulation on a broader spectrum of issues.
- Interviewees identify a series of key changes in the external environment which bring on the need for adjustment in how they and the network operate.
- The underlying 'glue' of the network of shared interests (as distinct from a collective vision) in relation aid quantity may need to be complemented by a new bond between Dóchas and its membership, based on a role in the area of NGO quality.
- There is a need for greater processes of strategic thinking within the sector to envision where it can be in 15 years, and how it will get there. The new strategic plan should be a step towards fulfilling such a vision.

In the context of its strategic planning process, Dóchas undertook a participatory SWOT analysis of the network, which showed a similar high level of support for the work of Dóchas (see Annex 4)

- Towards the end of the year, Dóchas and Irish Aid agreed terms of reference for a joint evaluation of the Memorandum of Understanding.
- Dóchas produced monthly Members Updates, listing the main areas of work of Dóchas and its Working Groups, as well as developments in Irish Aid and the European Union.
- During the year, Dóchas published four issues of the NGO Impact News, a news service providing information on publications about the role of Development NGOs.

## V. Working Groups

Many of the initiatives and activities listed above were undertaken within the framework of the Dóchas Working Groups and Learning Groups, but aimed at the wider membership of Dóchas. Dóchas encourages its groups to develop activities of benefit to the members of the group, as well as to the wider network.

- The **Development Education Group** set itself the goal of promoting exchange of learning among DevEd practitioners. During the year the group:
  - Elaborated an implementation manual for the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages. The document was launched at the Dóchas AGM on 30 April, along with a poster for organisations that signed up to the Code. This manual has been shared with our colleagues in CONCORD/Europe, and national platforms are now in the process of translating the manual into their respective languages.
  - Sent two representatives to the 2008 Development Education Summer School held in the Netherlands in June: Alan Hayes (NYCI) and Nogugu Mafu (KADE). Fleachta Phelan (Comhlámh) also participated in the Summer School which focused on getting poverty eradication onto the political agenda.
  
- The Dóchas **Disability and International Development Group** is a coalition of academics, disability groups and international organisations interested or working in the field of disability and development. During 2008, the group:
  - Hosted a well-attended Disability and Development Week, with seminars, a photo exhibition and video screening, in the Irish Aid Centre in Dublin. The aim of the Week was to raise awareness of Disability as a Development issue, to encourage Development NGOs in Ireland to recognise the importance of including disability concerns in their work and to encourage Disability Organisations in Ireland to consider Development issues and ways of sharing their expertise / materials.

“One of Irish Aid’s priorities is the elimination of poverty and exclusion, in particular through support for marginalised and vulnerable groups. If we are serious about reaching the Millennium Development Goals, we need to properly deal with disability and disability issues, including prevention”.

Minister of State Peter Power T.D. at the Dóchas Disability & Development Week

- Developed a strategic plan to guide its activities in the coming years.
  - Undertook a survey of the involvement of Dóchas members, and of domestic Disability groups with Disability and Development issues. The survey results were presented at the DID Week.
  - Provided input into the Irish Aid Management Review process, as well as the Dóchas submission to Irish Aid regarding its humanitarian aid policy.
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- The Dóchas **Food and Livelihoods Security Group** is set up to facilitate learning among NGOs on issues relating to sustainable livelihoods. The group hosted a roundtable meeting in May on the theme: “A Green Revolution for Africa – Threats and Opportunities for Small-Scale Farmers”.

- The Dóchas **HIV and AIDS Working Group** aims to mobilise and strengthen a coordinated and effective Irish approach as part of a global effort to combat HIV and AIDS. In 2008, the group:
  - Planned and facilitated the Irish Aid and Dochas Learning Day Seminar on Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Elderly Carers and Psycho-social Support in May.
  - Was represented on the official Irish delegation to the Special Session on AIDS of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGASS) in June. The Assembly heard that 5,700 people die everyday of AIDS related diseases and 7,000 people are infected by the HIV virus each day. An effective response to the pandemic must recognise that AIDS is a public health crisis as well as a development issue, and that access to prevention, treatment and support must be improved. Prior to the UNGASS meeting, Dóchas wrote to Taoiseach Brian Cowen to call for Irish leadership
  - Met with officials from the Health Service Executive (HSE) to explore ways in which its staff could get more involved in development issues.
  - Met with the Executive Director of the Global Fund, visiting Irish Aid in Dublin in April.
  - Participated at the 17<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference in Mexico (3-8 August), and supported the *Stamp out Stigma and Discrimination* campaign.
  - Provided support to the Irish Aid Technical Advisory Group (TAG) HIV and AIDS Meetings.
  - Supported the 4th Global Partners Forum on Children affected by HIV and AIDS and contributed to the Final Communiqué held in Dublin on 6th and 7th October.
  - Gave significant feedback on the Irish Aid HIV Policy and Strategy draft.
  - Worked with Irish Aid to mark World Aids Day; on a series of events around themes of 'HIV, Food Security and Nutrition'. Seminar and pm lecture 26<sup>th</sup> Nov. Spoke at the NGO-focused round-table discussion on the challenges involved in rolling out HIV programmes in NUIM on Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>, with Dr Louise Ivers (Partners in Health) and marked the 20th anniversary of World AIDS Day and ongoing HIV Stigma action.

Dear Breda,

... I would be most grateful if you would inform the members of the Dóchas HIV and AIDS Working Group of this change in Irish Aid. I would also be grateful if you would extend to them my deep appreciation for all the collaboration and support over the past six years. The Dóchas HIV and AIDS Working Group has been unique in its approach to HIV and AIDS, setting a clear strategic framework as a network body while each individual member having its own comparative strengths on addressing the HIV pandemic. The input and representation from the Working Group to Ireland's national statements presented to the United Nations General Assembly were a model of best practice within UN Member States and our events focused on 'learning and best practice' were instrumental in informing policy and programming in Irish Aid. ...

Nicola Brennan, Irish Aid

- The **Human Resources Forum** did not meet during 2008, but prompted a couple of important Dóchas initiatives during the year:
  - In January, Dóchas published a salary survey to contribute to the clarity of

the sector's terms and conditions.

- In June, Dóchas hosted a meeting of CEOs and HR managers to analyse trends and needs in relation to members' human resources. The Task Group that was subsequently formed undertook a survey of members' needs and explored ways to improve the sector's support for middle managers and for entrants into the sector.
- In the past year, the **Dóchas Humanitarian Aid Working Group**:
  - Organised a seminar on the Global Humanitarian Partnership and the reform process to improve the international community's humanitarian response.
  - Engaged in a lengthy dialogue with the Irish Aid Emergency & Recovery Section about a new format for funding proposals for emergency humanitarian assistance.
  - Consolidated Dóchas feedback to Irish Aid on its draft *Humanitarian Relief Policy* as well as on ways to improve the dialogue between the Section and the NGO sector.
- The **Micro-Finance Working Group** succeeded in its objective of building bridges and contacts among agencies engaged in micro-finance and has therefore been disbanded.

In addition to the meetings of these groups, Dóchas also hosts a number of ad hoc **Task Groups**. During the year, Task Groups on Gender, Aid Quality and public campaigning met, to strategise and exchange information.

## VI. Research and Publications

During 2008 Dóchas commissioned 17 pieces of work from 11 external consultants. The aim of these consultancies varied, but were directly related to the Action Plan for the year, providing members with facts, analysis or strategic direction to inform their work.

The following consultants were contracted by Dóchas in 2008:

<b>1) Communications</b>	Maeve Guthrie Conall O'Caoimh Vicky Tindal	<b>3) NGO futures</b>	Africa Centre
<b>2) Events</b>	Crucial Joanna Rea Vicky Tindal Patricia Kennedy	<b>4) Research</b>	Clodagh Heagney Clare Mulvany Shepperd Moscow Joanna Rea
		<b>5) Strategy</b>	Conall O'Caoimh Ray McElroy

During the year, Dóchas published a number of documents:

- A Guide to Understanding and Implementing the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages
- Poster of the guiding principles of the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages
- Irish Development NGOs Code of Corporate Governance
- AidWatch Report: "No Time to Waste: European governments behind schedule on aid quantity and quality"
- Members brochure (re-print)

- “Making Poverty History Together” briefing papers (folder + inserts)
- Wednesday News leaflet
- Global Development: What you can do (re-print)
- NGOs – Mobilising people for development (re-print)

Other Dóchas publications during 2008 were:

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Irish Aid: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dóchas Budget 2009 submission to Minister for Finance</li> <li>• Dóchas information note on DAC Peer Review of Ireland 2009</li> <li>• Dóchas submission to the OECD DAC Peer Review of Ireland</li> <li>• Policy Coherence for Development - Dóchas Statement to the Joint Oireachtas Sub-Committee on Overseas Development</li> </ul>   |
| NGOs:      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Wave of Change: How Irish NGOs Will Sink or Swim</li> </ul>   |
| EU:        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A briefing paper on EU Development policy and priorities for 2008/2009</li> <li>• Dóchas discussion paper: The EU Reform Treaty from a Development perspective</li> <li>• Dóchas submission on Development Cooperation in the EU - After the Lisbon Treaty</li> <li>• The Lisbon Treaty and Development - Dóchas Statement to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on European Affairs</li> </ul> |
| Other:     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opinion articles in the Irish Times and Irish Examiner</li> <li>• A series of press releases on topical issues</li> <li>• A New Green Revolution for Africa - Threats &amp; Opportunities for Small Farmers</li> <li>• Dóchas Report on UNCTAD XII</li> </ul>   |

## 2. What Did Dóchas Achieve?

Dóchas measures its achievements at a number of different levels: its impact (realisation of its purpose), activities (achievements of its goals) and capacity (realisation of its activities).

During 2008 Dóchas undertook a number of activities that brought it closer to its overall goal of effective action for sustainable development. Below are some indicators that illustrate our progress:

<b>PURPOSE:</b>	<b><u>IMPACT MEASURE:</u></b>
Vibrant, outward-looking network, with an active and informed membership, promoting effective action to bring about sustainable development	<b>Better government practice and policy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taoiseach and top government Ministers repeatedly speak of the importance of Ireland’s development cooperation programme;</li> <li>• ODA budget for 2008 keeps Ireland on track towards the 0.7% by 2012 target;</li> <li>• EU uses Corporate Governance Code as case study of best practice in the field of NGO self-regulation;</li> <li>• Ireland and EU play a lead role in the international Aid Effectiveness debate;</li> <li>• Charities Bill 2007 reflects members’ values and capabilities.</li> </ul>

< contd >	<p><b>Better NGO practice and policy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large number of Dóchas members and other NGOs apply the Governance Code in internal governance review processes;</li> <li>• Member organisations meet regularly and debate approaches to Development and strive to adhere to examples of good practice.</li> </ul> <p><b>Level of NGO interaction with other actors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dóchas is being held up as a model of good practice and professionalism within the CONCORD network;</li> <li>• Dóchas public profile enhances the sector's collectivity.</li> </ul>
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In short, Dóchas put in place a number of important initiatives that established the Development NGO sector as one of the strongest NGO sectors in Ireland, with clear quality control and accountability mechanisms in place, and with a strong and effective voice to ensure that its priorities are reflected in government policy.

At a more tangible level, Dóchas can point to a number of successes that helped bring its strategic goals closer.

<p><b>GOALS:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conducive policy environment</li> <li>2. Broadening the constituency for development</li> <li>3. Maximising NGO impact</li> <li>4. Building a well-managed organisation</li> </ol>	<p><b><u>ACTIVITY MEASURE:</u></b></p> <p><b>Government policy informed by NGO experience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong NGO input into government efforts to improve Policy Coherence;</li> <li>• Revised Dtalk programme objectives reflect Dóchas priorities;</li> <li>• EU Aid Watch report highlights poor track record of many EU governments.</li> </ul> <p><b>Dóchas members engaged in shaping public debate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributions from Dóchas change the debate about aid and corruption;</li> <li>• "Making Poverty History Together" series reached all members of both Houses of the Oireachtas, and receives praise;</li> <li>• Dtalk offers trainings on implementing the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages;</li> <li>• Press Council upholds Dóchas complaint about Kevin Myers article.</li> </ul> <p><b>Dóchas members encouraged to reflect on impact and best practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability &amp; Development Week puts Disability on the Development agenda and attracts attention from domestic NGOs;</li> <li>• Dóchas members launch research into the quality of their partnerships with NGOs in Kenya;</li> <li>• Members are briefed on the Aid Effectiveness and CSO Effectiveness processes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Dóchas network is accountable and sustainable</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dóchas members participate actively in agreeing the outline of a new long-term strategy for the network;</li> <li>• An external evaluation of the Strategic Plan shows high levels of stakeholder satisfaction.</li> </ul>
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Indicators at activity level include:

<b>ACTIVITIES:</b>	<b><u>CAPACITY MEASURE:</u></b>
1. Lobby and policy work in Ireland and the EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong coordination role by Dóchas in major policy processes, including the OECD Peer Reviews on ODA and Combating Bribery;</li> <li>• Clear and well-received submissions to government on the level of ODA and the quality of Irish Aid policy and practice (Hunger Task Force, Management Review);</li> <li>• Continued high levels of interaction with Irish Aid staff on a wide range of policy issues.</li> </ul>
2. Public communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of members' adherence to the Code of Conduct on Images &amp; Messages shows substantial progress, which is confirmed by external researchers;</li> <li>• Dóchas staff are regularly asked to give lectures in third level institutes;</li> <li>• A series of meetings to debate NGO Communications strengthens members' resolve to improve the sector's coherence.</li> </ul>
3. NGO Quality and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process to debate the future of Irish Development NGOs improves members' awareness of long-term trends;</li> <li>• HR survey by Dóchas provides clear facts and trends in members' human resources needs;</li> <li>• NGO Impact News and monthly Dóchas Members Updates improve members' exposure to Development debates;</li> <li>• Salary survey improves sector's transparency.</li> </ul>
4. Dóchas sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership contributions up to ca. €125,000;</li> <li>• Members contributed ca. €37,500 in time spent in meetings (down from €38,000);</li> <li>• 84 meetings organised, and average attendance level up (€447 per organisation per meeting, up from €248 two years ago);</li> <li>• External evaluation shows that members indicate high levels of satisfaction with Dóchas services;</li> <li>• Growing public profile: greater media coverage, and growing number of visitors to the website (see annex).</li> </ul>

As set out in the Annexes, Dóchas undertook a large number of activities during 2008. The capacity indicators above, and the statistics in Annex 2 show that, overall, Dóchas is going from strength to strength: greater participation of member organisations, increased financial capacity and a greater public profile for Dóchas.

### **3. Building On The Achievements – Challenges Ahead**

As the full reality of Ireland's economic recession became apparent in the second half of 2008, the need to continue to demonstrate the relevance of the overseas aid programme was once again brought to the fore. Whereas since 2005 Dóchas members had been able to work behind the scenes on improving the quality of the aid programme – both governmental and non-governmental – the need for more public communication about Ireland's aid efforts has now become clear again.

Dóchas members are keenly aware that they need to improve the way we as NGOs communicate that Aid Works and that the Irish Development NGO sector has a wealth of relevant experience to inform both governmental and private development initiatives.

Over the past 12 months, Dóchas members have spent a lot of time considering the nature of the challenges they are facing as a result of the many changes in their working environment. Thanks to a series of discussion documents, seminars and briefings over the past number of months Dóchas members developed a clear and shared understanding of the trends impacting on their work and the steps needed to meet those challenges.

As a result, the priorities in Dóchas' Action Plan for 2009 are widely shared and supported by Dóchas members. In the coming year, we will concentrate on the following priority areas:

### 1. Promoting Policies to End Poverty

- **Publicise NGO assessments of government aid performance** – By providing their analysis of aid expenditure figures, NGOs can influence the debate about aid effectiveness. We will also continue to monitor, and influence, the government's performance towards the 0.7% ODA/GNI by 2012 target.
- **Promoting Development in the public debate** – With the EP elections and a second referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, 2009 offers good opportunities to relate development policy to topical political debate.
- **Mobilising NGOs to highlight relevance of policy agenda for NGO work** – It is imperative for Dóchas to help make connections between its members' work and the broader Development policy agenda.

### 2. Strengthening Ireland's Commitment to Development

- **Communicating How You Can Help** – Dóchas will try to reach out to many of the new NGOs and make the shared learning of the Dóchas members more accessible.
- **NGO Communications: Improving coherence and impact of NGO messages** – Dóchas intends to continue to facilitate members' work towards shared messages and coordinated public positions.
- **Implementing the Code of Conduct on Images & Messages** – In the coming year, Dóchas will continue to actively supported members in their implementation of the Code.

### 3. Maximising the Impact of NGOs

- **NGO Partnership Practice: learning from our partners** – In 2009, the Kenya CSO survey will be finalised, and Dóchas will ensure its findings feed into further NGO discussions about partnership practice.
- **NGO Practice: supporting our members** – In the coming year, we will assist the sharing of experience that happens through our Working Groups.
- **NGO Accountability** – Dóchas will lead a process of Governance reviews, by publicly assessing its own adherence to the Code.

#### 4. Building an Effective Network

- **Agree new framework for Dóchas' work** – During the year, Dóchas will seek to agree a new Strategic Plan, and a new MOU with Irish Aid.
- **Update Dóchas communications** – Dóchas will improve its communications with its members and the general public.
- **Strengthening Dóchas** – We will invest in the relationships with our members and seek to attract external funding to support the work of Dóchas.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The coming year will bring a great number of challenges, primarily in the area of maintaining Ireland's commitment to overseas development cooperation. Over the last number of months, Dóchas members have considered many of these challenges in great detail, and as a result are well able to respond to those challenges in a considered fashion.

They are fully aware that protecting the quality and quantity of Irish ODA is not simply a question of renewed public campaigning about the need for more and better aid, but that more is required. Although they are starting from a solid base, after many years of improving mechanisms of transparency and accountability, Dóchas members are committed to continued investment in their own effectiveness. They are also aware that they will need to combine this increased aid effectiveness with improved public communications about their work.

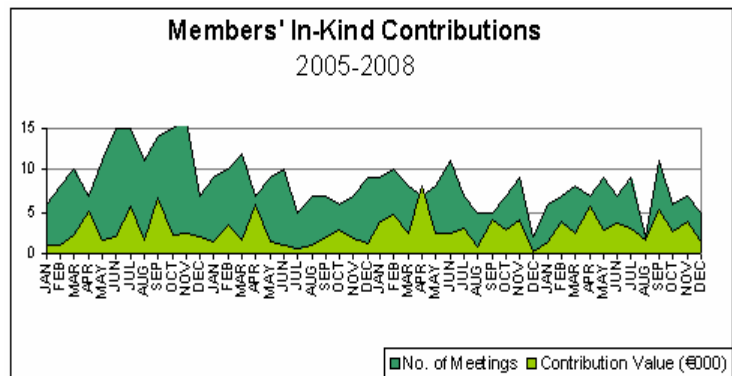
Over the past months, Dóchas members have reiterated their commitment to this agenda, and their commitment to achieving it through their collaborative efforts within the Dóchas network. As Dóchas nears the end of a long strategic planning process, members are ready to take up where the old strategy left off, and renew their collective efforts at finding ever more effective ways of eradicating global poverty while building on the strong support for that work from the Irish public.

## ANNEX 1 – Statistics

**Figure 1:**

Dóchas members' in-kind contributions: Number of meetings attended and estimated value of staff time dedicated to participation in those meetings.

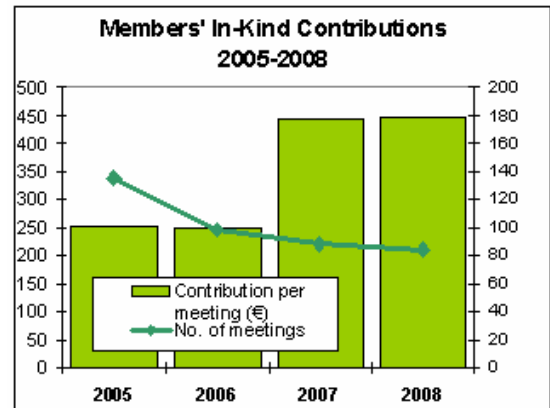
- **84 meetings organised during the year** (down from 88 in 2007);
- **Estimated value of staff time in meetings €37,500.** (down from €38,000 in 2007 and up from €21,000 in 2006)  
NB: this figure includes meeting hours only; time spent by members on Dóchas work outside meetings is not quantified.



**Figure 2:**

Dóchas members' in-kind contributions: While the total number of meetings organised by Dóchas was down (84 compared to 88 in 2007), overall participation levels were up; this means greater average turn-out per meeting.

- On average, **members contributed €447 per meeting**, in terms of staff time spent in the meetings. (ie. excluding time spent preparing and travelling). This contrasts with a figure of €443 in 2007 and €248 in 2006

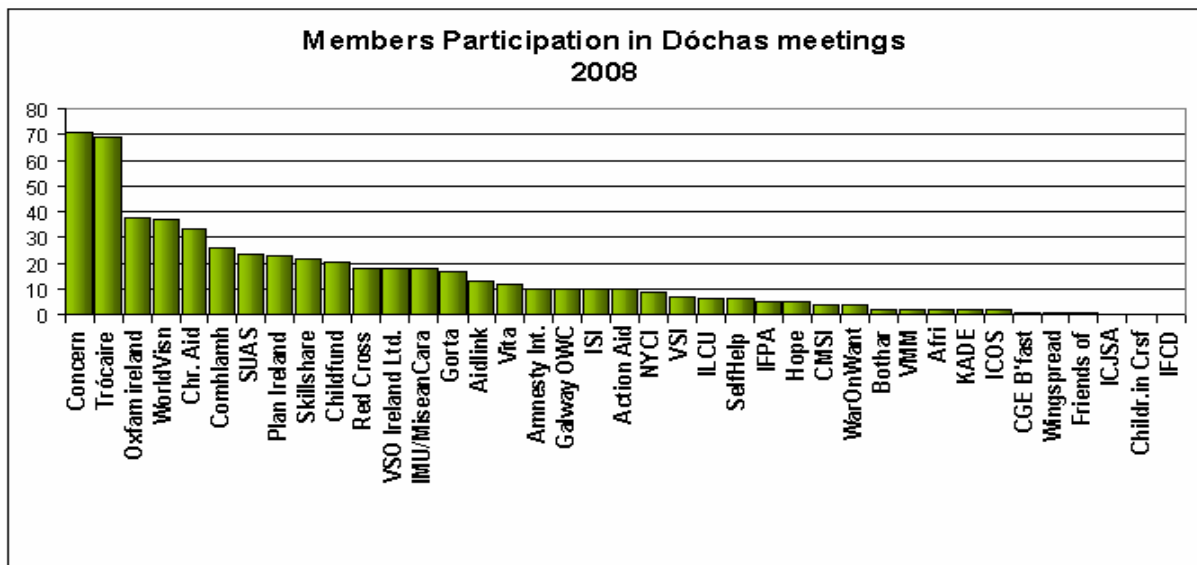


**Figure 3:**

Members participation in Dóchas meetings.

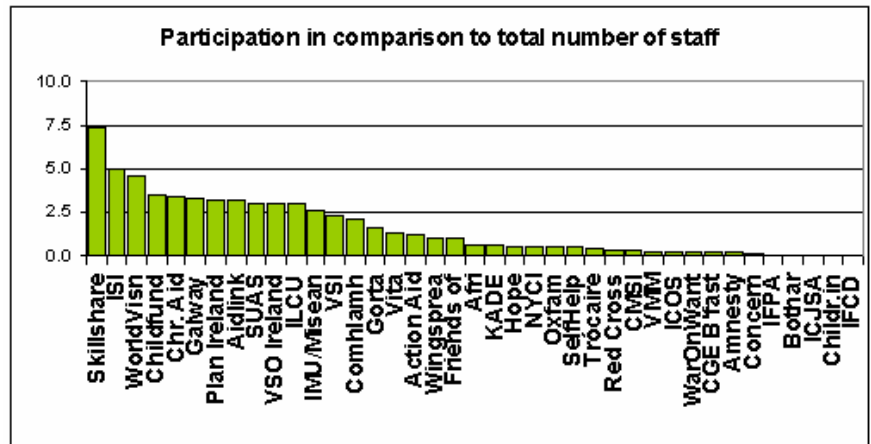
**Seven hundred people** working for member organisations attended Dóchas events during 2008. Six organisations did not participate in any Dóchas event during the year, whereas six organisations together accounted for 50% of participants.

NB: this figure excludes the **140 people** who attended Dóchas events but were not working for Dóchas member organisations.



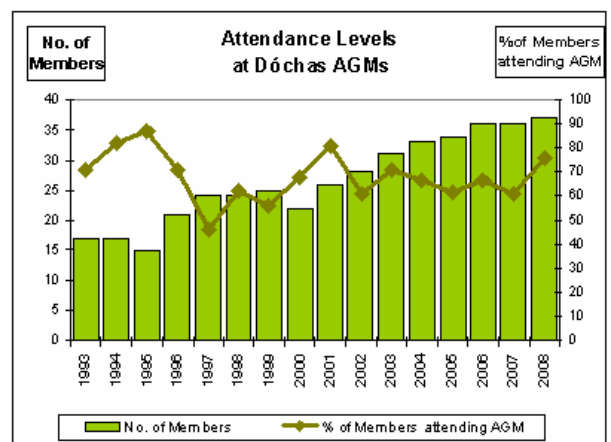
**Figure 4:**  
Members participation in Dóchas meetings, in comparison to staff size.

- Although the biggest organisations participate in more meetings than others, there are many examples of small organisations participating very heavily, and – inverse – medium-sized organisations being less active.



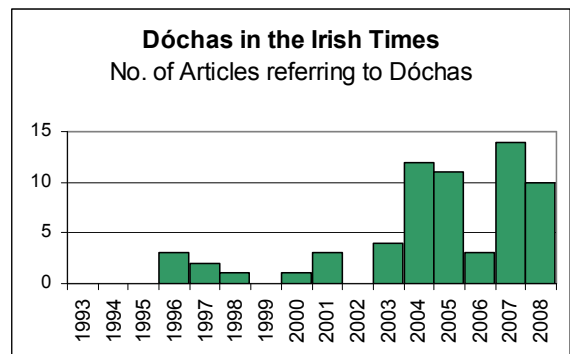
**Figure 5:**  
Attendance levels at Dóchas AGMs: Overall participation levels at the AGMs are relatively stable at ca. two-thirds of member organisations.

- Due to a steadily growing number of member organisations, each year the AGM is attended by a growing number of organisations.



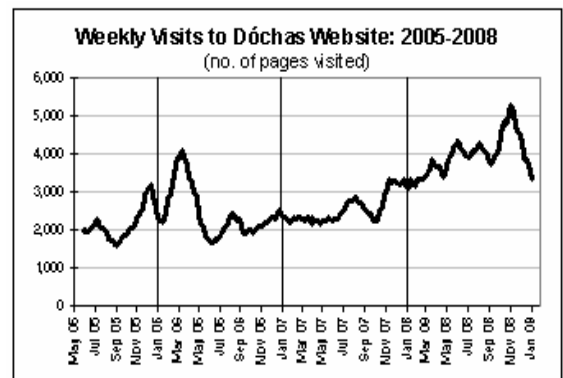
**Figure 6:**  
Dóchas public profile: Number of articles in the Irish Times referring to the name Dóchas.

- Dóchas' media profile remains modest, but at a sustained higher level than during the early years.
- The publicity was generated mainly by the discussion about Corruption and Aid, and by the How You Can Help website;

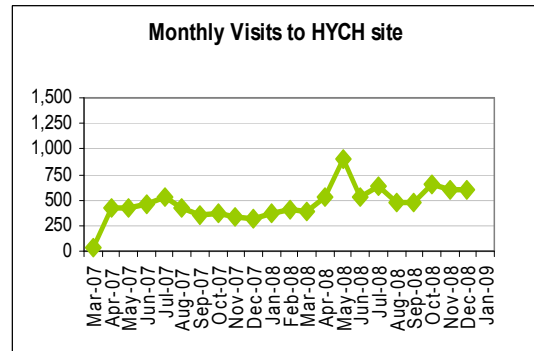


**Figure 7:**  
Dóchas public profile: Number of pages visited on the Dóchas website.

- There is a steady increase in the number of pages visited.
- Overall, traffic to the Dóchas site was higher in 2008 than in any previous year.

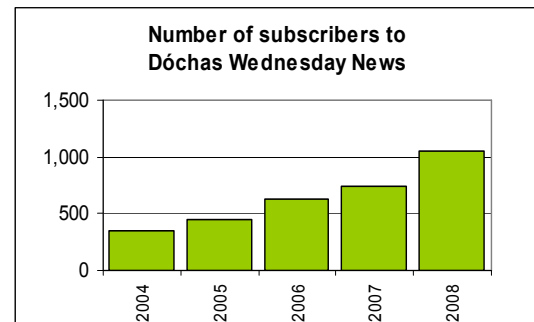


**Figure 8:**  
 Dóchas public profile: Number of pages visited on the How You Can Help website.

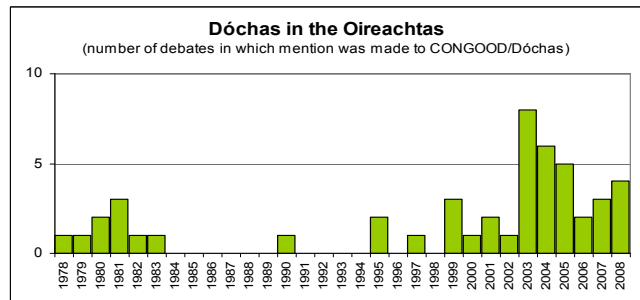


**Figure 9:**  
 Dóchas public profile: Number of subscriptions to Wednesday News

- The Dóchas Wednesday News continues to grow into the main sectoral newsletter, with over 1,000 people receiving the email service every week.

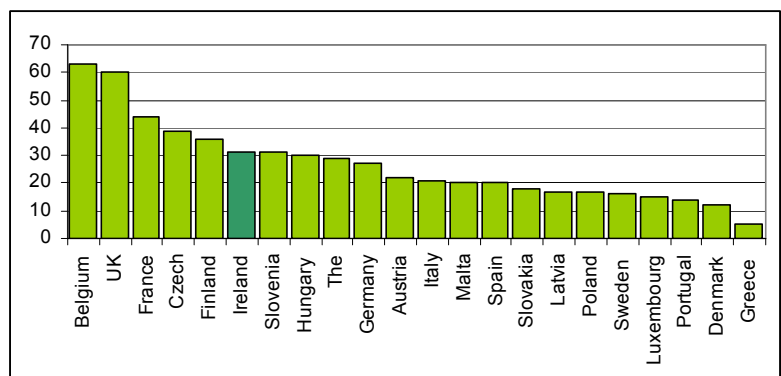


**Figure 10:**  
 Dóchas public profile: Number of times the work of Dóchas is mentioned in Oireachtas debates or committees.



**Figure 11:**  
 Participation by National Platforms in CONCORD

- NB: this graph only covers national platforms; CONCORD also has NGO networks as its members, who are excluded from this graph.
- Dóchas representatives attended 31 CONCORD events during the year.



## ANNEX 2 – Media coverage in 2008

<u>DATE</u>	<u>MEDIA</u>	<u>ISSUE</u>
20-Jan	Sunday Independent	€5 m grant to Niall Mellon Trust
21-Jan	Irish Times	"Head 2 Head": Role of government in development
22-Jan	Irish Times	Letter to Times responding to article
19-Feb	Irish Times	Article on CGAI
22-Feb	Irish Times	Letter to Times re. Charity giving/ HYCH site
26-Feb	INN	Radio interview on PCD statement
March	Sky digital TV	Aid and Trade - Solidarity with Africa
12-Mar	Spin Southwest FM	Radio interview on Charities Legislation
07-Apr	Irish Times	Dóchas statement on OECD aid figures
19-Apr	OB TV	Ethnic entrepreneur of the year award.
30-Apr	Irish Times website	AGM
01-May	Irish Catholic	Charities Regulation.
07-May	INN	Burma Cyclone / How You Can Help
07-May	South East FM	Burma Cyclone / How You Can Help
07-May	Spin Southwest FM	Burma Cyclone / How You Can Help
07-May	Belfast Telegraph	Burma Cyclone / How You Can Help
08-May	Irish Times	Burma Cyclone / How You Can Help
08-May	Herald AM	Burma Cyclone / How You Can Help
28-May	Irish Times	Lisbon Treaty presentation to Oireachtas
04-Jun	Newstalk	Disability and International Development week
04-Jun	INN	Disability and International Development week
05-Jun	Irish Times	Code of Corporate Governance
05-Jun	98FM	Disability and International Development week
16-Jun	Europa In De Wereld	Lisbon Treaty referendum
12-Jun	The Irish Catholic	Disability and International Development week
09-Jul	Irish Times	Letter re G8
17-Jul	Irish Independent	Response to Kevin Myers article
July	The African Voice	Cut of Aid budget
10-Aug	Sunday Times	"We could all take charge of Irish Aid"
26-Sep	Irish Times	Hunger Task Force
17-Oct	Irish Examiner	17 Oct GCAP
18-Oct	Irish Times	Press Council ruling
20-Oct	Waterford FM	17 Oct GCAP
21-Oct	Irish Independent	Kevin Myers article / Press Council ruling
25-Oct	The Broker	Article on Ireland's ODA programme
13-Nov	Irish Independent	Press Council ruling
01-Dec	Irish Examiner	World AIDS Day

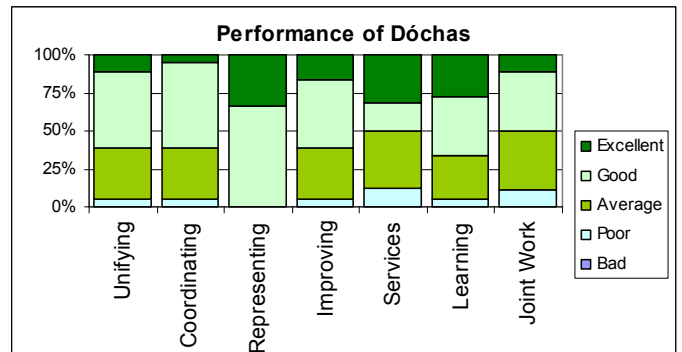
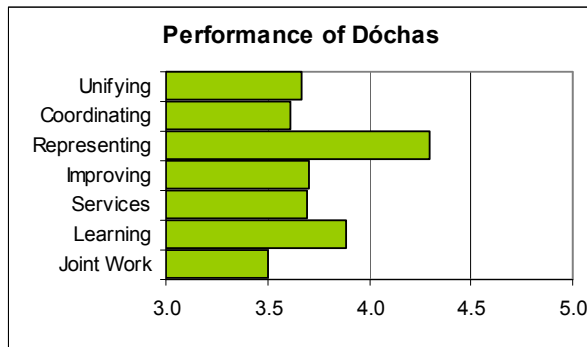
26 print media (17 in 2007)  
11 broadcast media (11 in 2007)

## Annex 3 – Results of the Survey on Dóchas’ Strengths and Weaknesses

**Dóchas performs a number of functions. Dóchas can seek to:**

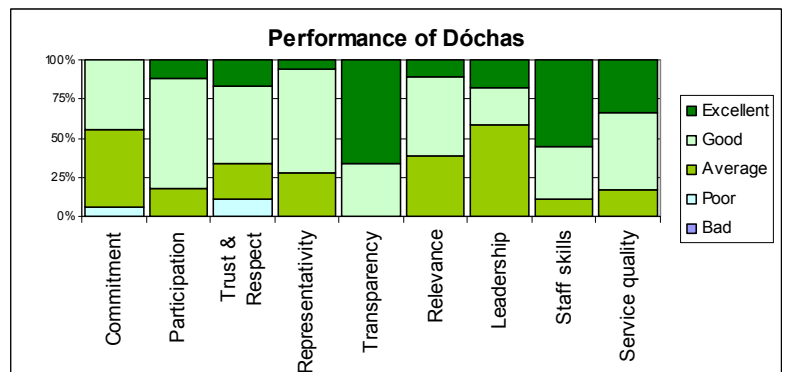
- Unify the sector (eg. common positions)
- Coordinate NGO work (eg. joint campaigns)
- Represent the sector externally (eg. lobby)
- Improve the work of its members (eg. codes of practice)
- Provide services to members (eg. news services and databases)
- Promote Learning among members (eg. joint analysis)
- Promote Common Activities among members (eg. joint fund-raising).

**Can you rate the performance of Dóchas in all these roles?**



**We continue with another question about Dóchas' Strengths. Can you rate Dóchas' performance in the following areas?**

- Members' commitment to Dóchas' work
- Mechanisms for members' participation
- Mutual trust among Dóchas members
- Representativity of membership
- Transparency of Dóchas
- Relevance to members
- Leadership by the Dóchas Board
- Staff skills and capacity
- Quality of services



**Our Successes. What do you consider to be Dóchas' main successes?**

- Existing at all
- Having a steadily growing membership
- Achieving the 0.7% commitment
- Having members that work together
- Systematic consultation of NGOs by Irish Aid
- The Make Poverty History campaign
- Having influence on government decision-making.
- Providing quality information services.
- Enhanced the profile of NGO work.
- Dóchas is trusted by its members.
- Working Groups that are active and relevant.
- Members turn to Dóchas for their issues.

