

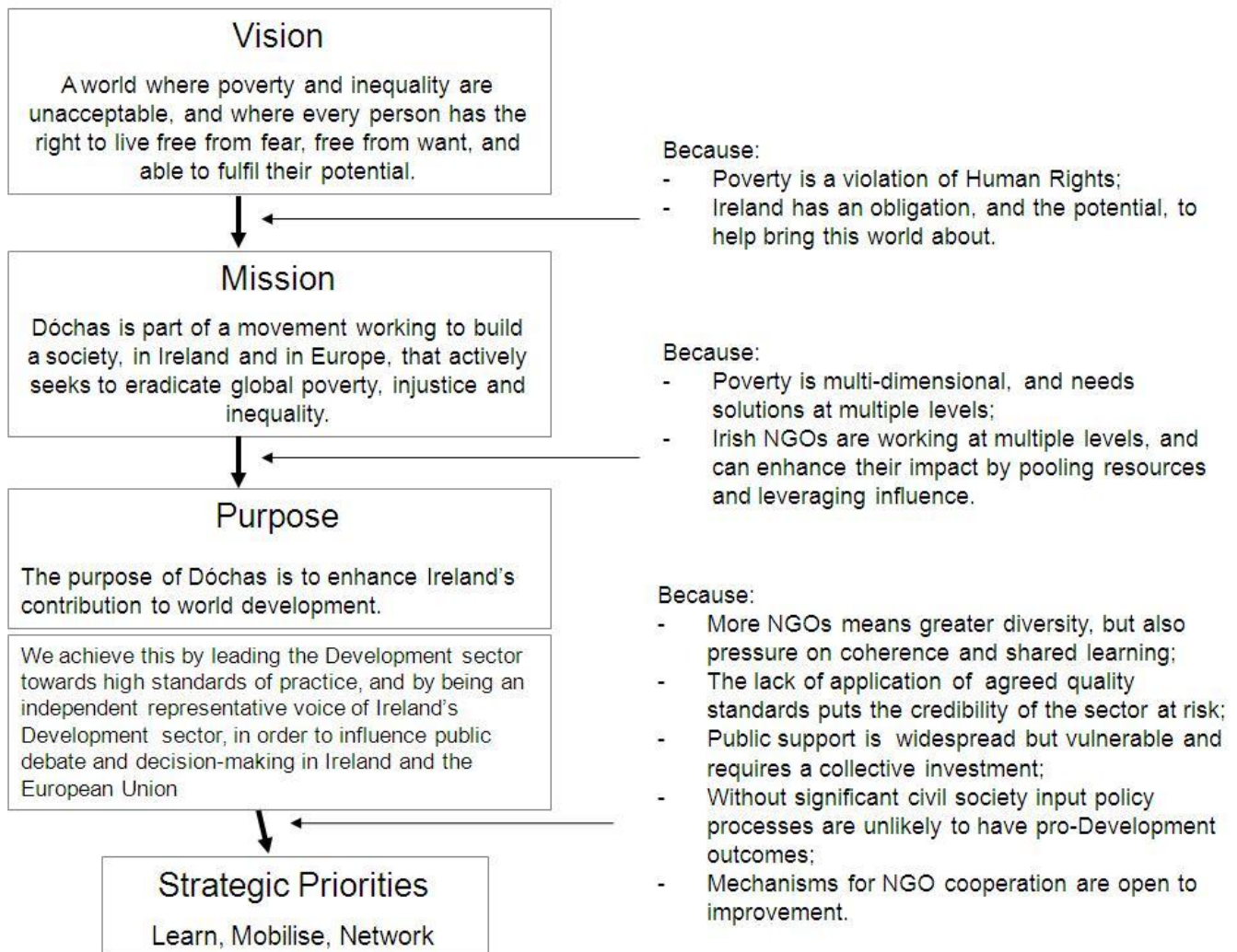
# Dochas' Theory of Change

February 2011

## 1. What Does Dochas Want?

Dochas ([www.dochas.ie](http://www.dochas.ie)) is the Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations, an umbrella group for a diverse range of organisations: large and small, young and old, secular or faith-based. Dochas has a membership of over 40 organisations who bring different priorities and approaches to Development. However, they share one vital characteristic: their commitment to tackle poverty and inequality in the world.

Irish Development NGOs have a vision of how society could be, and they work to create a world where justice, equality, solidarity and respect for human rights are the norm.



## 2. What Is Dóchas Doing?

Dóchas provides strength and coherence to the Development NGO sector, and identifies gaps and opportunities to ensure our members' work has the greatest possible lasting impact on global poverty and inequality.

In particular, Dóchas wants to create opportunities for NGOs to share experiences and knowledge, and to translate their shared learning into activities and recommendations for better practice, both at NGO and at Government level. In other words, Dóchas at its most fundamental is about helping the members to get the best out of themselves and maximise their overall impact.

Through Dóchas, our members work together to face common challenges, such as those relating to the legacy of rapid growth in the sector: The tremendous level of support in Irish society for global Development has led to a rise in the number of NGOs and initiatives aiming to fight extreme poverty. This new diversity is very welcome, but its down-side is that the sector has become less coherent, and that existing and emerging quality standards are not widely known or applied and that mechanisms for shared learning are not adequately used to capture NGO experiences to date. As a result, many NGOs work in isolation, and NGO experiences are not informing Government policy sufficiently.

**By strengthening our network, and strengthening the mechanisms for NGO learning, Dóchas can promote the articulation of quality standards for the sector, which can be used to improve NGO impact and to inform Government decision-making.**



### RATIONALE:

Dóchas needs to be an effective and accountable organisation, with an engaged and representative membership. Dóchas needs to focus members' energy and to learn from past experiences.

Ireland's Development NGO sector has a wealth of expertise and experience, built up over decades. Dóchas wants to bring out the best of that experience, to find ways to maximise NGO impact.

As a member of the EU, Ireland can effect change at global level. Dóchas seeks to support members' ability to influence, to ensure that Ireland effectively helps address the root causes of poverty.

### 3. How Is Dochas Doing That?

The work of Dóchas is based on a [Strategic Framework](#) that sets out the overall priorities for the network. Those priorities arose out of a process of analysis of the current challenges facing the Development sector in Ireland, and were translated into an Implementation Plan, which was adopted by Dóchas at the end of 2010.

In summary, Dóchas' programme of work can be presented as follows:

Key Challenges Facing the Development Sector	Dóchas Programmes 2011-2014	Desired Outcomes
<b>A rapid growth in the number of NGOs has diminished coherence and shared learning in the sector.</b>	Facilitating relationships and networking for learning	Effective NGO cooperation
<b>The lack of application of professional quality standards puts the sector's credibility at risk.</b>	Capturing, articulating and monitoring NGO quality	A development sector that adheres to standards of excellence
<b>Public support for Development remains widespread, but vulnerable.</b>	Enhancing NGO messages about Development	Public debate informed by NGO experience and expertise
<b>Without high-quality collaboration between NGOs and Government, policy processes are unlikely to have pro-Development outcomes.</b>	Engaging and mobilising for Development	Government policies that promote human development
<b>Dóchas needs to further enhance its effectiveness.</b>	Strengthening Dóchas	A vibrant and representative network

Our "Intervention Logic" is simple. Our members provide the knowledge, staff and finances needed to deliver effectively on our common plans, and they have mandated Dóchas to lead the way. Through Dóchas, our members work together on issues that are better dealt with together than alone, and they seek to leverage the energies, skills and expertise of all those who can make a difference.

How we do this is detailed in our annual Work Plans, and is reported in our annual reports and audit reports – which are available on [www.dochas.ie](http://www.dochas.ie). In this document, we present a stylised, simplified version of our strategy, summarising our core activities, approaches and ways of working: Our "Theory of Change".

The logic behind our work (“Intervention Logic”) can be summarised as follows:

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Long-term Outcomes
Members’ involvement in sector-wide meetings and learning events	Dóchas staff and Board enable members to meet, document their learning and pilot the recommendations	Dóchas Working Groups and meetings provide an effective forum for peer exchange, shared learning and concerted action.	NGOs build relationships to share experiences and improve their impact
<p>Members’ values, views and concepts of quality in NGO work</p> <p>Southern partners’ views on Development Effectiveness</p> <p>Members’ buy-in for Dóchas agreed shared Quality principles and concepts</p>	<p>Articulation and agreement of key principles of NGO effectiveness</p> <p>Annual Dóchas assessment of adherence to the minimum standards for the Code of Corporate Governance</p>	<p>Dóchas members have articulated a shared vision of NGO effectiveness and Impact, and agree to deliver on the vision.</p> <p>Dóchas members adhere to existing Codes of Conduct</p>	<p>Dóchas members have a shared approach to quality and best practice in the sector</p> <p>Dóchas members enhance their accountability, by improving their governance and their communications</p>
<p>Members’ peer meetings on implementing the Code</p> <p>Dóchas support programme for Code signatories</p>	Annual Dóchas assessment of adherence to the Code’s minimum standards	NGO communications practice adheres to the principles of the Code of Conduct on Images & Messages	NGOs’ public communications serve to inform and educate the general public, not primarily to raise funds.
<p>Member organisations capture experiences and instances of impact, and link the experiences with recommendations for policy change.</p> <p>Joint campaigns, eg. “Act Now on 2015”.</p>	<p>Assist members and Working Groups in capturing experiences, and translating experience into relevant recommendations for policy change.</p> <p>Facilitating Irish Aid communication with the NGO sector, by acting as a first port of call for Irish Aid</p>	Clear NGO recommendations to Government for policy and practice change, based on NGO experiences	Government policies and practice that are influenced by the values, experiences and expertise of Dóchas members
<p>Active participation of member organisations</p> <p>Financial contributions from members and others to the work of Dóchas.</p>	<p>Communicating the strategic importance of the Dóchas agenda with senior management of all members, and associated organisations.</p> <p>Demonstrating best practice in terms of accountability in all aspects of Dóchas’ work.</p>	Dóchas services are diversified, and clearly articulated, to enable greater depth of engagement by members and non-member organisations	A vibrant and representative network, with a funding base that makes it autonomous and sustainable.