



Dóchas Strategic Framework 2009-2015

“Working together to end world poverty”

1. Who We Are

Dóchas 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. And they bring different priorities and approaches to Development. However, they share one vital characteristic: their commitment to tackle poverty and inequality in the world.

For this reason, they created the Dóchas network in 1974, as a means to help strengthen Ireland's efforts to eradicate the injustice that is world poverty. Through Dóchas, Irish Development NGOs come together to share and exchange their experiences, and to use those experiences to come up with more effective ways to end all forms of poverty and injustice.

Purpose:

The purpose of Dóchas is to enhance Ireland's contribution to global development. We achieve this by:

- leading the Development sector towards high standards of practice;
- being an independent representative voice of Ireland's Development sector, influencing public debate and decision-making in Ireland and the European Union in order to end global poverty.

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. Our work is driven by the belief that our support for people and organisations in developing countries can bring about real and positive change.

Vision:

Our vision is of a world where poverty and inequality are unacceptable, and where every person has the right to live free from fear, free from want and able to fulfil their potential.

Mission:

Dóchas is part of a movement working to build a society, in Ireland and in Europe, that actively seeks to eradicate global poverty, injustice and inequality.

Dóchas is a network of independent and diverse organisations, that have chosen to work together to enhance their impact. Our members are committed to the work of Dóchas, as they believe it contributes significantly to the achievement of their own, individual strategic objectives.

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 done better together than alone. Dóchas provides

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

Dóchas' work is an important part of the range of activities and coalitions through which our member organisations seek to enhance their long term impact. While these organisations and networks are not listed here, Dóchas aspires to build on their activities and work with as many organisations as possible to achieve our common goals.

Dóchas members believe in:

- Putting people at the heart of development;
- Using a diversity of approaches to advance their common goals;
- Sustaining their impact by learning and evolving;
- Building networks of friends and allies;
- Increasing their impact by advocating for policy change;
- Setting standards of accountability and integrity.

The work of Dóchas is based on the values and experiences of our member organisations, and that of their colleagues and partners overseas. Our decisions are taken in ways that allow for maximum efficiency and involvement by all stakeholders. Dóchas reflects the diversity of views and approaches of our members, and communicates those views effectively.

2. Where We Are

Ireland continues to be deeply committed to global solidarity. Until quite recently, the government's aid programme was growing, and the number of new NGOs and initiatives aiming to eradicate world poverty has risen exponentially in recent years. In the private sector awareness of corporate responsibilities has led to new levels and forms of corporate involvement with Development.

Despite the recession, across Europe governments have reaffirmed their pledges to increase aid budgets and to eliminate instances where EU policies, such as trade, defence and foreign policies risk undermining the positive impact of EU aid. And through CONCORD, Irish and European NGOs are finding new ways to translate their experiences, and their supporters' concerns about global poverty, into proposals for action and policy reform.

One of the consequences of this growing engagement with global inequality has been the need to ensure that all these initiatives actually bring about positive and lasting change in the lives of the world's poorest people. Irish Development initiatives must ensure that their work is based on the real needs of the people they intend to support, and that they are accountable for the way they operate and for the values underpinning their work.

At a higher level, the entire Irish aid programme, both governmental and non-governmental, needs to demonstrate impact. Dóchas members are acutely aware that they need to be able to point to long-term impact, in addition to the short-term results of their programmes.

Through Dóchas, NGOs are seeking new and effective ways to maximise their impact, by making use of the power and ideas of all those who can make a difference – governments,

companies, media and NGOs. Now more than ever it is clear that only by working together in a coordinated way can we begin to make poverty history.

Greater coordination and coherence does not mean giving up our diversity. In fact, we believe that our strength lies in our diversity of approach and our ability to respond flexibly to the changing needs of the people we serve. Yet, we are committed to the core professional standards that we share, and we understand the potential for bringing together the energies and expertise of others. We know that we have a responsibility to keep searching for new ways to improve the impact and sustainability of our work.

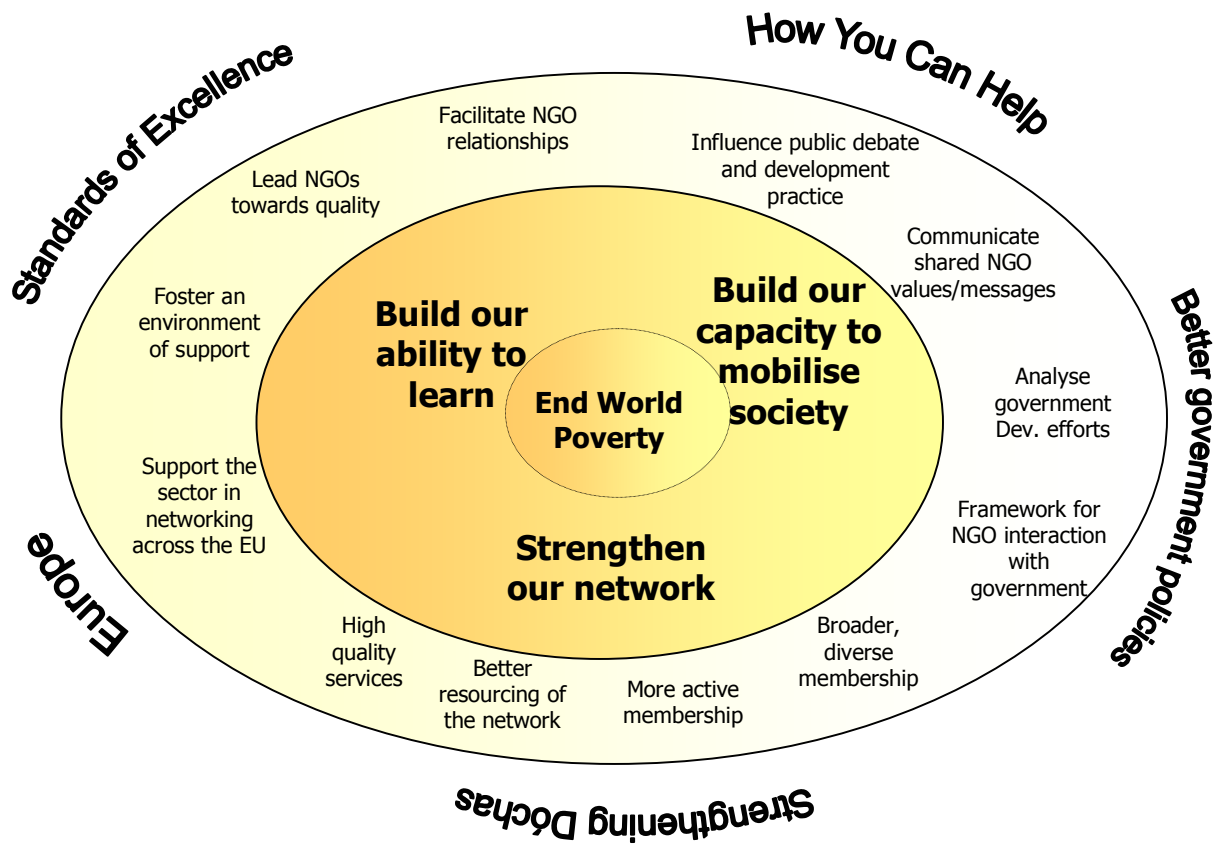
It is for all these reasons that we, the Irish Development NGOs, work together through Dóchas.

3. What We Want To Achieve

In the coming years, the members of Dóchas will work together towards:

- Government policies that promote human development for all;
- Public debate that is informed by the experience and expertise of Irish Development NGOs;
- A development sector that sets and adheres to standards of excellence;
- Effective NGO cooperation at European level and beyond; and
- An Irish NGO sector that maximises its impact through the support of a vibrant, representative network.

We will do that by building the sector's ability to influence decisions that affect the world's poor, and by ensuring that our work adheres to the highest possible standards. We will continue to strengthen mechanisms for NGO cooperation and coordination, and to build the capacity of the Irish Development NGO sector as a whole.



Priority 1: Build our ability to learn

Overall objective:

Build our ability to learn in order to maximise our impact.

Rationale:

Development NGOs play a crucial role in the international community's efforts to eradicate world poverty. Ireland's Development NGO sector has a wealth of expertise and experience, built up over decades of partnering with people in developing countries. Dóchas wants to bring out the best of that experience, and assist the NGO sector in finding ways to maximise its impact.

What We Want To Achieve	How We Are Going To Do It	What This Means for 2015
<p>Irish Development NGOs have high quality relationships with all their stakeholders, and use those relationships to learn, improve their impact and meet quality standards</p>	<p>Facilitate relationships between Dóchas members and others to foster cooperation, professionalism, joint learning and standards of excellence</p>	<p>Irish Development NGOs are committed to networking and building alliances to engage in sector-wide learning</p>
	<p>Lead the Development sector towards continuously improving development practices and policies</p>	<p>Dóchas provides an infrastructure of meetings, trainings, working groups and other mechanisms to stimulate learning and the formulation of professional standards</p>
		<p>Dóchas is the focal point for dialogue on standards of practice, and is characterised by high levels of debate and cooperation among members</p>
		<p>Dóchas members have formulated standards of quality and accountability, and are working with each other to promote adherence to those standards</p>
<p>Irish Development NGOs have the information and the skills to become highly effective agents of change</p>	<p>Foster an environment of support to Development NGOs that allows them to work effectively towards greater Development impact</p>	<p>Dóchas members are part of high-quality initiatives that contribute to NGO learning and impact</p>
<p>Members are able to identify their strategic development needs and are using available support structures well</p>		
<p>Irish Development NGOs seek to achieve their mission at policy level as well as at programme level</p>	<p>Support the NGO sector in networking effectively with its counterparts across the European Union</p>	<p>Development NGOs across Europe work together to influence policies and development practice</p>
		<p>NGOs in Ireland have the capacity to inform and engage citizens for Development</p>

Priority 2: Build our capacity to mobilise society

Overall objective:

Build our ability to mobilise all levels of society to ensure Ireland makes significant contributions to global development.

Rationale:

Ireland plays a strong role in international development efforts, through a combination of missionary services, civil society initiatives and the governmental aid programme. As a member of the European Union, Ireland also has a potential to effect change at global level. Dóchas seeks to ensure that all these efforts are effective and aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty, by coordinating and facilitating members' ability to influence.

What We Want To Achieve	How We Are Going To Do It	What This Means for 2015
A strong and vibrant Development NGO sector, that engages strategically with the challenges of poverty eradication	Inspire other civic and private development initiatives by sharing the values and collective experiences of the Irish Development sector	Irish Development NGOs actively collect, interpret and communicate their experiences in ways that engage and empower others
		Irish Development NGOs have agreed joint communications and advocacy strategies and are making a noticeable impact on public attitudes to global development
		Dóchas members have systematic and close partnerships with key opinion shaping organisations
Government policies that are informed by the experiences, values and concerns of Development NGOs and that have real and lasting impact on the lives of the world's poorest people	Document and collate the learning and expertise of Development NGOs, and make them available in ways that influence public debate and policy processes in Ireland and the EU	NGOs work together to demonstrate that aid works
		NGOs make focused and relevant contributions to policy debates concerning Ireland's ODA programme
An effective and well-resourced government strategy to achieve the Millennium Development Goals	Hold the Irish Government to account to ensure its actions reflect Ireland's global responsibilities and live up to its commitments	NGOs monitor the extent of realisation of government aid promises, both in terms of its quantity, and its impact on poverty levels
		Ireland's aid programme is supported by other government policies that are coherent with global poverty eradication
		Government reporting on ODA accounts for its development impact

Development NGOs, the Government and EU officials debate and work together to find ways to maximise the impact of Ireland's Development efforts	Deepen the frameworks for interaction between Irish Development NGOs, the Irish Government and the European Union	Staff of Irish Development NGOs engage with a wide range of Development policy issues
		Consultation and dialogue are a standard feature, and help to improve the quality of Ireland's development cooperation programme
		Dóchas is the main partner for the government's interaction with Irish Development NGOs, and is respected by all parties for the way it performs this function
		Irish Development NGOs work with their European counterparts to influence government policies

Priority 3: Strengthen our network

Overall objective:

Strengthen the network's effectiveness and accountability

Rationale:

If our aims are to be achieved, Dóchas needs to be an effective, legitimate and accountable organisation, with an engaged and representative membership. Dóchas needs processes for participation, leadership and representation that focus members' energy. Dóchas will seek to learn from past experience and build on the strengths of its members, Board and staff.

What We Want To Achieve	How We Are Going To Do It	What This Means for 2015
Dóchas leadership prompts member organisations to trust each other and work through the network to improve their impact	Strengthen Dóchas' leadership role in building the collective capacity of the Irish Development NGO sector	Dóchas members adhere to mutually agreed quality standards and account to each other
		Dóchas identifies and analyses members' strategic capacity-building needs and is respected for the way it helps members address them
Dóchas is a well-resourced and effective organisation, trusted and respected by all its internal and external stakeholders	Ensure that the Dóchas office has an effective staff team with the support they need to enable the network to deliver our strategy	Irish Development NGOs invest in the Dóchas network as part of their core strategy to achieve their own organisation's mission
Dóchas is an effective and accountable network that is central to the work of its member organisations	Ensure a continued high quality of services to members and others and maximise opportunities for their participation in the full range of	Dóchas members are deeply committed to the network, and appreciate the full value of Dóchas for their own work
		Members and stakeholders

	Dóchas activities	feel invited and empowered to shape the activities and strategies of Dóchas
	Ensure that governance and work practices in Dóchas provide a good model for the sector	Dóchas adheres to the highest standards of corporate governance
Dóchas is the representative voice of the Irish Development NGO sector and is trusted and respected for the role it plays	Maintain and strengthen a diverse, inclusive and informed membership, representative of the Development sector in Ireland	Dóchas membership has grown and consolidated, and forms a critical mass
		Irish NGOs engage actively in Dóchas activities
		Dóchas' role as the unified voice of the sector and effective advocate contributes to greater coherence and influence for Development NGOs

4. Getting There

The success of this strategy requires the commitment, energy, expertise and support of its members.

This strategy builds on years of investment by our member organisations, and by Irish Aid, in the network. Over the coming years, Dóchas member organisations will continue to strengthen their cooperation and impact, and the Dóchas network will continue to improve its services and mechanisms for member participation. And we will ensure that our independence, sustainability and our ability to match our ambitions with resources are guaranteed.

This plan covers the period 2009-2015, and will be reviewed after three years.

Each year, Dóchas will develop work plans and indicators to measure progress towards our overall goal. We will adhere to the highest standards of governance, transparency and accountability, and actively strive to ensure our relevance to all major stakeholders.

In the years covered by this Strategy, we will build our momentum as an organisation and make decisive progress to our goal of building a society that does not accept global poverty, injustice and inequality.



Dóchas has signed the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages.
Please send your feedback on our adherence to media@dochas.ie

Dóchas adheres to the Irish Development NGO Code of Corporate Governance

Dóchas is the umbrella organisation of Irish Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) involved in development and relief overseas and/or development education in Ireland. Dóchas aims to provide a forum for consultation and cooperation among its members as well as to help them speak with a single voice on development issues.

Dóchas, 12 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2, Ireland Phone: +353 (0) 1 405 3801
www.dochas.ie

Dóchas gratefully acknowledges the support of Irish Aid
< logo >