



# Conflict, Climate & Hunger: A call for action

Accelerating progress on reaching  
the furthest behind

Dóchas Pre-Budget Submission 2024

**dóchas**

The Irish Association  
of Non-Governmental  
Development Organisations

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# Introduction

Dóchas is the Irish Network for International Development and Humanitarian organisations. We connect, strengthen and represent 58 international NGOs who have a shared vision of a just, sustainable and equal world. Over the past three years, we have seen decades of progress towards ending poverty and hunger rapidly being reversed. Conflict, economic shocks, climate change and food insecurity have resulted in multiple crises, with a widening gap between rapidly increasing humanitarian need and global funding, leaving millions of people without assistance or protection.

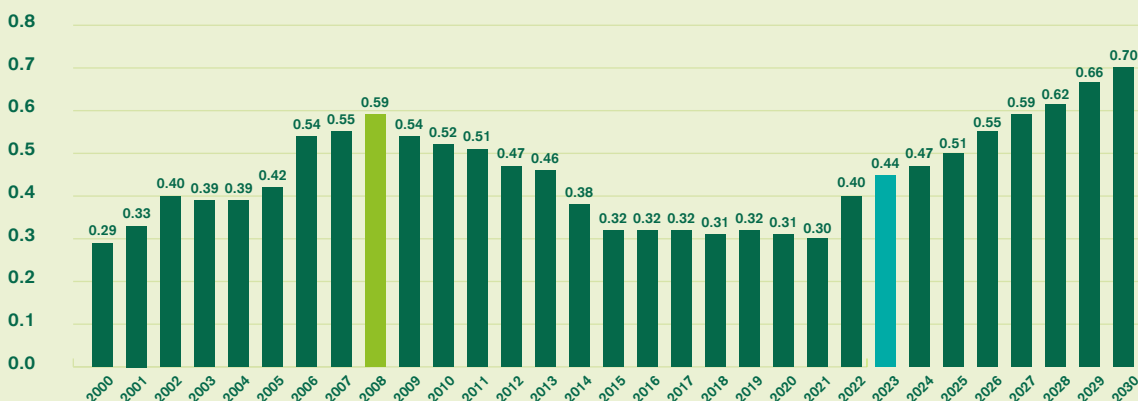
At the beginning of 2023, a record 240 million people in 69 countries needed urgent humanitarian assistance.<sup>1</sup> With escalating conflict in Sudan, the ongoing war in Ukraine and the food crises affecting the Horn of Africa and West Africa, this number is only set to increase in 2024. These facts demand we collectively act with urgency and intent.

Dóchas members and their partners, with their significant experience and expertise, are supporting communities to strengthen their own resilience to shocks and crises, to address their own development needs and to realise their rights. The collective strength of Ireland's NGOs is a valuable resource that serves to support and further Ireland's global footprint. Ireland stepped up to increase funding in response to the spiralling crisis in the Horn of Africa in 2022, and it is vital we do not step back now.

As a co-facilitator for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Political Declaration at the UN SDG Summit in September, Ireland has a critical leadership role to play in galvanising energy, optimism and action, and domestically Budget 2024 must demonstrate our commitment to achieving the SDGs.

**The Irish Government must make real and tangible progress to its longstanding commitment of spending 0.7% of GNI on Official Development Assistance (ODA) by increasing the ODA budget in 2024 by €305m. Despite the welcome monetary increases to Ireland's ODA budget over recent years, the percentage of ODA that is spent overseas is not keeping pace with needs, or our commitments.**

**Increases in ODA as a share of GNI needed to reach 0.7% in 2030**



GNI ratio projected on a linear path from 0.4% in 2022 to 0.7% in 2030. GNI for 2023 – 2026 based on Department of Finance Stability Update April 2023 and GNI 2026 – 2030 estimate based on average growth 2024-2026.

<sup>1</sup> Global Humanitarian Overview Update March 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2023-march-update-snapshot-31-march-2023>

As an OECD Development Assistance Committee Member state donor and a signatory to Good Humanitarian Donorship principles, Ireland's ODA budget must remain focused on Least Developed Countries and countries worst affected by climate change and conflict. It is crucial that Ireland's ODA is concentrated on the following four inter-related areas: addressing conflict and responding to humanitarian need; addressing hunger and building sustainable food systems (SFS); tackling the climate emergency; and reaching the furthest behind first. Ireland should fulfil its commitments to fund humanitarian and development budgets, and account for any costs incurred in responding to refugees in Ireland as additional expenditure. This will ensure that Ireland can continue to extend the hand of welcome to those seeking refuge without having a negative impact on overseas aid programmes and contributions. We strongly believe that the Irish Government must do both.

### We recommend:

- **The Irish Government makes real and tangible progress to its longstanding commitment of spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA by increasing the ODA budget in 2024 by €305m.**
- **The urgent scale-up of Ireland's humanitarian funding to conflict-affected and fragile states, recognising that funding must be underpinned by policies that contribute to removing the root causes of crises.**
- **The Irish Government shows leadership through global initiatives to tackle hunger and deepens cooperation across all its departments to achieve goals on hunger and Sustainable Food Systems (SFS). It should also designate a lead department to hold the pen on all policy related to SFS to help drive coherence, and institute statutory SFS impact reviews for all areas of government policy.**
- **The Irish government acts on climate change on all levels, including delivering on the €225m per annum of climate finance committed at a minimum, with a view to rapidly increasing this allocation in response to the actual needs of low-income countries and in line with Ireland's fair share of climate finance, while also demonstrating that it is reaching people and communities in the global south who need it most.**
- **As part of Ireland's commitment to implementing the SDGs, both domestically and overseas, the SDGs are hardwired into the planning and budgetary processes across the state, an important political signal in itself, but one that can also allow for more effective monitoring of progress towards the goals and ensure we are truly leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first.**

*"We make this commitment, however, not only urged by memory as we may be, but because it is the right and moral thing to do. It is an example of the Irishness we wish to be known by, one grounded in decency, in ethical principles, taking our share of global responsibility."*

— President Higgins, 21 May 2023.

# Conflict

## Addressing conflict and responding to humanitarian need

Sudan has recently been engulfed in deadly and violent conflict, which has displaced over one million people within its borders and forced hundreds of thousands to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. Latest figures suggest that 25 million people, half the population of Sudan, now need urgent humanitarian assistance.<sup>2</sup> This comes at a time when over 100 million people are already forcibly displaced worldwide, and a further 10 million have been left in dire need of assistance following the earthquake affecting Turkey and Syria. Millions in Ukraine, Yemen, Palestine and other countries still live in daily fear of conflict, violence and threats to their personal freedom and livelihoods.

The scale, intensity and duration of global conflict is driving people into humanitarian crises. Conflict destroys all investments – education, enterprise, health, social systems and services, and plunges a country into poverty. Civilian populations are left entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance, which is insufficient as it is desperately underfunded. Without an urgent scale-up of humanitarian funding, lives will be lost and the suffering of hundreds of millions will increase. As of May 2023, only 15% of the amount needed for global humanitarian appeals for this year has been funded. More worryingly, this has been the trend over recent years, with humanitarian appeals remaining consistently underfunded

and the gap between levels of need and funding growing ever greater.<sup>3</sup> This chronic level of underfunding has real and serious consequences, forcing impossible choices as to who gets left behind.

### Gendered impacts of conflict

Instances of gender-based violence rise during and in the aftermath of conflict and displacement: one in five refugee or displaced women and girls – those fleeing their homes for reasons that include war and humanitarian disasters – have experienced sexual violence.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, funding to frontline women's rights organisations in crises remains at a paltry 0.2% of total bilateral aid.<sup>5</sup> Seven of 11 top humanitarian donors allocated less than 1% of aid to fragile states directly to women's rights organisations.<sup>6</sup> Women can and should play an important role in peace and development. A peace agreement, which includes women, is 35 per cent more likely to last at least 15 years.<sup>7</sup>

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- 2 UN OCHA Humanitarian Response Plan. <https://humanitarianaction.info/plan/1123/document/summary-hrp-rrp#page-title>
  - 3 OCHA Financial Tracking Service. <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/overview/2023>
  - 4 UNHCR press release 2021. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/news/press/2021/11/619e5ec94/unhcr-urges-support-address-worsening-gender-based-violence-impact-displaced.html>
  - 5 CARE. Time for a Better Bargain: How the Aid System Short-changes Women and Girls in Crisis. (February 2021). Retrieved from: [https://www.care.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/She-Leads-in-Crisis-Report\\_4.7.21\\_updated.pdf](https://www.care.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/She-Leads-in-Crisis-Report_4.7.21_updated.pdf)
  - 6 Ibid.
  - 7 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. <https://www.un.org/en/desa/we-need-more-women-leaders-sustain-peace-and-development>

A more agile approach is needed for a fast-changing and rapidly deteriorating situation. The Irish Government must respond urgently and appropriately, while also tackling the longer-term root causes of why humanitarian emergencies occur in the first place and recognising the interconnectedness of climate change, poverty and exclusion as drivers of conflict, displacement, food insecurity and protection risks. Political efforts towards conflict prevention and resolution that place affected civilians and their right to meaningful participation and protection at the centre of solutions should always be the priority. In this regard, Ireland should leverage its

experience and expertise developed during its latest term at the UN Security Council, where significant progress was made on resolutions on humanitarian carve-outs and humanitarian access in Syria in particular. Ireland needs to continue to demonstrate that leadership by consistently ensuring that it puts centre stage the voice of civil society and local organisations and people in all global forums. Engaging in conflict prevention and peace diplomacy to reinforce and support humanitarian assistance should not be optional; it should be a safeguard of investments already made.

### We recommend:

- **The Irish Government builds on its achievements as a member of the UN Security Council, leverages its role as co-facilitator of the UN SDG Summit and develops an ambitious platform for its candidacy to the UN Human Rights Council. We should utilise Ireland's role and reputation to influence relevant political players and partners to take constructive roles to prevent and respond to humanitarian crises.**
- **The Irish Government continues to increase humanitarian funding which is timely, flexible, predictable and multi-year for conflict-affected and fragile states, in line with Ireland's commitment to prioritise these contexts, and its commitments under the Grand Bargain.<sup>8</sup> This funding should include provision to local actors, women's rights organisations and civil society organisations who work at the frontlines of humanitarian response, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda.**
- **The Irish Government ensures that Ireland's domestic response to the Ukraine crisis is additional to current and future ODA spending and not diverted from funding for ongoing humanitarian crises.**
- **In line with Ireland's whole-of-government approach to spending ODA, the Irish Government ensures that its ODA, whether provided to humanitarian organisations, multilateral institutions or through the European Union, is released in a timely manner and used to fund programmes that are delivered in line with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, noting increased threats to the integrity of the international system that guarantees the right to seek asylum.**

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8 The Grand Bargain, which will be renewed in June 2023, is a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organisations to ensure that humanitarian funding is as effective as possible. A key target of the bargain is that at least 25% of humanitarian funding goes to local and national responders. Despite the target date of 2020, currently only 1% of funding globally is allocated directly to local organisations. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/content/grand-bargain-hosted-iasc>



# Hunger

## Addressing hunger and building sustainable food systems

Hunger and malnutrition are not inevitable. People capable of producing and earning enough food for themselves and their families are being starved and prevented from living their lives and raising their children in safety and prosperity by numerous factors including conflict, inequality, climate change, biodiversity loss and the undermining of their natural resource rights, including the loss of land. Our increasingly dysfunctional global food system leaves them vulnerable and defenceless against rising costs of production and global food price spikes.

Three years of drought across the Greater Horn of Africa have wrought havoc on the people of the region and their crops, livestock and livelihoods and reversed gains made on gender equality. Parts of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia are now enduring their sixth consecutive failed rainfall season, which has led to soaring food prices and water scarcity, pushing millions of people into ever more extreme levels of food insecurity.<sup>9</sup> In Somalia alone, almost 4 million people are now displaced from their homes and in many cases living in makeshift shelters.<sup>10</sup>

### Rising Hunger levels

In the 20 years between 2000 and 2020, the global maternal and under-fives mortality rates fell by nearly 40% and 60% respectively. The number of children affected by growth stunting (which is caused by chronic malnutrition) declined by 27%. However, those gains are rapidly being eroded. The 2023 Global Report on Food Crises<sup>11</sup> highlights the devastating fact that 258 million people in 58 countries face hunger, food insecurity and famine as a result of conflict, climate and rising food prices. That stark number means that 65 million additional people are food insecure – 34% more than in 2022.

Beyond the timely and resourced response to the humanitarian crisis these contexts require, we must collectively begin to tackle in earnest what has become an unsustainable global food system. We must recognise the complexity involved in developing an SFS, acknowledging the interconnectedness of climate, ecology, economy, social dynamics, health and politics, to find an approach that brings positive change globally and locally. Collectively we are well placed to take a lead in achieving a sustainable global food system, in view of Irish NGOs' long-term involvement in addressing hunger and nutrition and the Irish Government's ambition to encourage sustainable food production. In doing so, it will be necessary to promote the inclusion of small-scale food producers and ensure their voices are heard in these decision-making processes.

9 IPC Famine Factsheet. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/ipc-famine-factsheet-updated-december-2020>

10 International Organisation for Displacement: <https://www.iom.int/news/displacement-somalia-reaches-record-high-38-million-iom-deputy-director-general-calls-sustainable-solutions>. (February 2023)

11 Global Report on Food Crises 2023 <https://www.fsinplatform.org/global-report-food-crises-2023>

## We recommend:

- The Irish Government continues to show leadership through global initiatives, including the UN Committee on World Food Security, the UN Food Systems Summit and Nutrition for Growth, to tackle hunger and provide additional funding to maintain and fulfil existing levels of food assistance to low-income countries. As the costs of production have risen exponentially, the value of every euro spent in development and humanitarian interventions has depreciated.
- The Irish Government scales up funding to respond to the short-, medium- and long-term impacts of the food security crisis. Where appropriate, cash and vouchers should be used, as they can reach hungry people in crisis more quickly. Efforts should also be made to direct aid to local organisations, including those led by women. Women's and young people's voice, agency, participation and leadership should be central across the decisions and policies that are being developed to address food insecurity and the climate crisis.
- Guided by its "A Better World" policy,<sup>12</sup> the Irish Government deepens cooperation across all departments to achieve goals on hunger and Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) and designates a lead department to hold the pen on all policy related to SFS to help drive coherence and institute statutory SFS impact reviews for all areas of government policy.
- The Irish Government earmarks a portion of new funding within the ODA budget to support the transition to a sustainable global food system and targets these additional funds to support producers in the global south and ensure that they operate in an environment (infrastructure, regulation, extensions services, certification, strategic food reserves) where they can succeed.
- The Irish Government advocates within the EU, and at global fora, for fair, flexible and equitable trade arrangements that do not disadvantage global south producers, especially small-scale producers. Ireland should support vibrant and resilient local and regional markets.

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12 Irish Aid, A Better World, International Development Policy. <https://www.irishaid.ie/media/irishaid/aboutus/abetterworldirelandspolicyforinternationaldevelopment/A-Better-World-Irelands-Policy-for-International-Development.pdf>

# Climate

## Tackling the climate emergency

Climate change presents the single most existential threat to human life on this planet. The negative impact is being acutely felt by communities across the global south, more especially women and girls, who have the fewest resources to adapt and deal with the consequences, and did the least to cause the crisis in the first place. As an example, between 2019 and 2022, South Sudan experienced four consecutive years of intense flooding, which swept away homes and livestock, flooded farmlands and submerged water sources, all further exacerbating an already dire food insecurity situation. Climate change is driving migration and displacement and will continue to do so. Over 70% of the world's refugees and internally displaced people come from the most climate-vulnerable countries.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, 93% of the countries most vulnerable to the climate crisis are in debt distress, or at significant risk of debt distress.<sup>14</sup>

The Oireachtas declared a climate emergency over three years ago, yet the urgent ambitious climate action that is needed and would be expected in an emergency response is lacking. Ireland must close the implementation gap between ambitions and action to respond to the climate emergency. Despite having committed to a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030, the Environmental Protection Agency

data show that Ireland's emissions increased by 5.2% in 2021.<sup>15</sup> Recent data published for 2022 suggest that Ireland is the poorest performing EU member state. Just four EU member states saw their emissions rise in the final quarter of 2022, and Ireland's increase was twice the rate of the second-worst performing country, Latvia.<sup>16</sup>

Richer countries, including Ireland, have a responsibility not only to dramatically reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions, but also to provide financing for adaptation efforts in the global south and to provide finance to deal with loss and damage resulting from climate breakdown. While Ireland's commitment to scaling up its climate finance year on year is to be welcomed, the scale of the increase is falling short. ODI calculations estimate that Ireland met just 37% of its fair share of climate finance in 2020, which places us in the lower half of high-income countries in terms of climate finance provided.<sup>17</sup> In 2021, Ireland made a commitment to provide €225 million per annum in climate finance by 2025. This is lower than Ireland's estimated fair share, which is approximately €500 million, and each year the cumulative shortfall in the delivery of climate finance builds up.<sup>18</sup> The latest figures show that €99.6 million in climate finance was provided in 2021.<sup>19</sup>

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13 UNHCR Spotlight report, 2023: A Moment of Truth for Global Displacement. <https://www.unhcr.org/spotlight/2023/01/2023-a-moment-of-truth-for-global-displacement/>

14 Action Aid, 2023, <https://actionaid.org/publications/2023/vicious-cycle>

15 <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/climate-change/ghg/latest-emissions-data/>

16 <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/further-greenhouse-gas-emissions-rise-confirms-ireland-as-outlier-in-eu/a983059130.html>

17 ODI, 2022: A fair share of climate finance? <https://odi.org/en/publications/a-fair-share-of-climate-finance-an-appraisal-of-past-performance-future-pledges-and-prospective-contributors/>

18 In 2009, developed countries committed to mobilise \$100 billion of climate finance per annum by 2020, to fund climate mitigation and adaptation for developing countries, and extended the goal to 2025. The fair share figure of €500 is based on estimations of \$520million in the Trócaire and Christian Aid report, The Cost of Inaction, 2019 and of \$520 million from the ODI report, A fair share of climate finance? in 2022.

19 DFA, Ireland's Climate and Environmental Finance Report 2021 <https://www.irishaid.ie/media/irishaid/publications/Ireland's-Climate-and-Environmental-Finance-Report-2021.pdf>



It is crucial that this funding is additional to ODA to ensure that our overseas aid is not relabelled or reconfigured as climate finance and that climate finance does not divert development resources from some of the poorest countries in the world. Consideration of new sources of finance is necessary, such as taxes on profits of fossil fuel companies, and financial reform, including reallocating IMF Special Drawing Rights.

### Loss and damage

Climate change impacts are already resulting in loss and damage that are beyond the current or conceivable adaptive capacity of developing countries. In Malawi, communities are struggling to deal with the prolonged dry seasons and more intense rainfalls that have become the new normal. Some of the poorest countries in the world who have contributed least to the climate crisis are experiencing massive losses and damage from climate impacts, pushing them further into debt and diverting much-needed public finance for sustainable development into dealing with crises. Ireland has a key role as a member of the Transitional Committee to develop recommendations on how to implement the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF) to address the urgent and immediate need for new, additional, predictable and adequate financial resources to assist low-income countries to address loss and damage and also ensure that additional funds are allocated to the LDF when it is put into operation.

### We recommend:

- **The Irish government delivers on the €225m per annum of climate finance committed at a minimum, with a view to rapidly increasing this allocation in response to the actual needs of low-income countries and in line with Ireland's fair share of climate finance, while also demonstrating that it is reaching people and communities in the global south who need it most. The Irish government ensures that all Ireland's climate finance is new and additional to any future increases in ODA as per Ireland's obligations under the UNFCCC, and that there is full transparency in this regard.**
- **As a country which played a leading role in agreeing a historic Loss and Damage Fund (LDF) at COP27, Ireland now champions this cause at international levels by working positively to find agreement on how best to implement this fund. The delivery of the finance should be based on principles of common but differentiated responsibilities, including historical responsibility, and respective capabilities; polluter pays; additionality; human rights and gender equality; transparency and accountability.**
- **That Ireland urgently reduces polluting emissions across all sectors and phases out all fossil fuels in accordance with Paris Agreement commitments and national climate action legislation.**
- **Ireland leads the way in global financial reform by reallocating its IMF Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) to countries of the global south. We should not only reallocate \$100 billion of existing SDRs to countries most in need but also commit to at least two new \$650 billion issuances by 2030. This simple measure could make a huge contribution to climate financing, as well as to debt relief and social spending in the global south.**

# Conclusion

## Ireland's role in reaching the furthest behind first

Low-income countries have witnessed some of the starkest reversals in progress towards the SDGs. At this halfway point towards 2030, many African countries are struggling to meet most SDG targets, and for some, the catastrophic levels of food security are decimating the ability to even envisage achieving them. Without deliberate policies to accelerate progress towards the SDGs, by 2030, at least 492 million people will be left in extreme poverty. Currently, 380 million women and girls in the world are living in extreme poverty.<sup>20</sup> If we continue on this trajectory, in Africa south of the Sahara, the situation will be worse in 2030 than it is today.

We welcome Ireland's commitment to co-facilitating the SDG political declaration for the SDG Summit in September. This presents a significant opportunity for Ireland to communicate our commitment to multilateralism and our shared values of human rights, justice and dignity for all people. Governments must champion the ideals of the SDGs and respect for human rights on the global stage, and Ireland's role both domestically and internationally is crucial in that regard. In this respect, we endorse and repeat the calls of Coalition 2030 for the Irish Government to focus on those who are furthest behind in Ireland and globally.

Ireland's role in reaching the furthest behind first through its ODA programme is crucial; it is and must be at the core of Ireland's ODA policy. As this submission has made clear, the Irish Government, through all departments where the country's ODA is spent, must ensure that those marginalised communities, those furthest behind – often women, disabled people and children – are targeted and reached through our ODA programme. To achieve this, we must first and foremost fund and support civil society organisations, especially those that are locally based and/or led by women, who can deliver effective, community-led solutions and are on the frontline of response.

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<sup>20</sup> Progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022-en\_0.pdf (unwomen.org)

## In summary, we recommend:

- **The Irish Government makes real and tangible progress to its longstanding commitment of spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA by increasing the ODA budget in 2024 by €305m.**
- **The urgent scale-up of Ireland's humanitarian funding to conflict-affected and fragile states, recognising that funding must be underpinned by policies that contribute to removing the root causes of crises.**
- **The Irish Government shows leadership through global initiatives to tackle hunger and deepens cooperation across all its departments to achieve goals on hunger and Sustainable Food Systems (SFS). It should also designate a lead department to hold the pen on all policy related to SFS to help drive coherence, and institute statutory SFS impact reviews for all areas of government policy.**
- **The Irish government acts on climate change on all levels, including delivering on the €225m per annum of climate finance committed at a minimum, with a view to rapidly increasing this allocation in response to the actual needs of low-income countries and in line with Ireland's fair share of climate finance, while also demonstrating that it is reaching people and communities in the global south who need it most.**
- **As part of Ireland's commitment to implementing the SDGs, both domestically and overseas, the SDGs are hardwired into the planning and budgetary processes across the state, an important political signal in itself, but one that can also allow for more effective monitoring of progress towards the goals and ensure we are truly leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first.**

Front cover image: Elema, 56, with his camels near North Horr in Marsabit in the north of Kenya. Years of drought in the area has seen even hardy animals like camels die. Photo: Ed Ram/Concern Worldwide, Dec. 2021

## Contact details

Dóchas

Suite 8, Olympic House,  
Pleasants Street, Dublin 8

Phone: 01 405 3801

Twitter: @Dochasnetwork

Facebook: @dochasnetwork

Linkedin: Dochasnetwork

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of Non-Governmental  
Development Organisations