



Exploring Irish
attitudes to overseas
development aid

dóchas



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Dóchas Worldview Public Engagement Research Project

The Irish overseas development sector is committed to engaging Irish citizens in the fight against global poverty, inequality and injustice, but we are at a crossroads in terms of how we connect with the Irish public. We urgently need to seek new ways of connecting more people to the relevance of international development cooperation for the Ireland of today. The Sustainable Development Goals give us a broad, aspirational vision to what can be achieved, but further effort is needed to ensure it is made real and relevant to Irish citizens.

We also need to be aware that public trust in charities, including non-governmental development organisations, remains low, while there continues to be criticisms by some of aid-spending, with accusations of waste, poor governance, corruption and/or duplication. There is a growing populist trend that is highly critical of the values and purpose of international development co-operation along with the rise of the “charity begins at home” or “let’s deal with the issues at home first” sentiment. If these trends go unchallenged, particularly in an age of negative and/or fake digital news, it could pose a huge threat to Ireland’s overseas development cooperation.

Against this backdrop, the Worldview public engagement research project has been developed by Dóchas members, and funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It aims to reveal more about the views of the Irish audience and its varying constituents, not just on what they believe when it comes to international development cooperation, but why they believe it. From this research, a shared collective narrative about international development may emerge, which would allow us to connect with more people in Ireland about its relevance and importance.

The Worldview Project is broken down into several parts as follows;

1. Desktop research into what data and research already exists in relation to this topic in Ireland and abroad, and how can it feed into and inform what we are aiming to achieve through this piece of work.
2. Audience market research which will aim to gather baseline and segmentation data on Irish audiences. This research will be used to identify and to segment the audience into clearly defined and usable groups.
3. Annual survey and focus groups (based on the segmentation survey) to discern 1) the current beliefs and motivations of the Irish public in relation to overseas development aid; 2) the communication content, style and channels that are likely to enhance support for overseas development aid; and 3) how these vary from one audience group to another.
4. Once we have a deeper understanding of our audience(s), it will be possible to use data driven communications to test out various ways of engaging with different target audiences to communicate the importance of international development cooperation and how it can have a huge positive impact not only on people in other countries but on us as a society.

5. In a follow-up phase, a particular target audience/s may be focused on for further understanding. This audience should be active and influential on a social and political level. Once identified, research will be carried out to gain a much deeper understanding of this group.

It is hoped that this project will continue over the coming years in order to build our knowledge of our audience and how best to engage with them. It is intended that as our knowledge grows it will be passed onto our members to use for their ongoing communications. This shared knowledge will help individual organisations and the sector as a whole, through a shared narrative and a shared approach, to disseminate the vital messages and promote a national conversation around the relevance and importance of international development cooperation and cultivate a sense of Irish Global Citizenship. This project will also inform Dóchas' external voice and messaging, including our ongoing political engagement work, and our efforts to promote best practice among our members in the use of Images and Messages.

To learn more, view the Worldview Project Launch [here](#) and contact Vikki Walshe, Public Engagement Project Manager at vikki@dochas.ie