



The Irish Association of Non-Governmental  
Development Organisations

## Dóchas Strategic Framework 2009-2015



Working together to end world poverty



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

Cover Pictures:

1. Dereje Defar (6) right with his friend Matusala Solomon (12) who attend Zokessa Primary School, Ethiopia
2. A portion of maize kernels is handed out by a Gabbra pastoralist woman during a food aid distribution in Kalacha, Kenya
3. Ansha Mohammed, a beneficiary of off-farm activity skills training programmes now works as a tailor in her workshop in Geba, South Wollo zone, Ethiopia.

# 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 world development. We achieve this by:

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

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

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 best dealt with 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

Irish Development NGOs have high quality relationships with all their stakeholders, and use those relationships to learn, improve their impact and meet quality standards.

Irish Development NGOs have the information and the skills to become highly effective agents of change.

Irish Development NGOs seek to achieve their mission at policy level as well as at programme level.

## 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

A strong and vibrant Development NGO sector, that engages strategically with the challenges of poverty eradication.

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.

An effective and well-resourced government strategy to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Development NGOs, the Government and EU officials debate and work together to find ways to maximise the impact of Ireland's Development efforts.

## 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

Dóchas leadership prompts member organisations to trust each other and work through the network to improve their impact.

Dóchas is a well-resourced and effective organisation, trusted and respected by all its internal and external stakeholders.

Dóchas is an effective and accountable network that is central to the work of its member organisations.

Dóchas is the representative voice of the Irish Development NGO sector and is trusted and respected for the role it plays.

## 4. Getting There

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

# Dochas

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Development Organisations

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