



The Irish Association of Non-Governmental
Development Organisations

2014

ANNUAL REVIEW

President Michael D. Higgins

Speech at the Irish launch of

the European Year for

Development

22 January 2015

“Development, the possibility of flourishing in one’s community and culture, and access to the means to do so, is not simply a gift to be meted out by a gracious benefactor; it is both a right and a moral obligation. Development should be driven by well-informed citizens that insist on their governments implementing sound policies grounded in normative imperatives of justice, equality and dignity.”



Dóchas has signed the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages.

Please send your feedback to media@Dochas.ie



Dóchas adheres to the Irish Development NGOs Code of Corporate Governance

www.dochas.ie

 [Dochasnetwork](https://twitter.com/Dochasnetwork)

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Thank you to members, donors, sponsors, in-kind contributors and all who made our work possible in 2014

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.

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.

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.

Chairperson's Letter



In this annual report we, the members of Dóchas, reflect on the year that was and outline the reasons for our future plans.

We do so, against a backdrop of suffering and huge setbacks in human development. The news headlines of 2014 showed enormous destruction in Syria and Ukraine, with other conflicts in countries like South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo making scores of people homeless, so that the global number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people has, for the first time since the World War II era, exceeded 50 million people. The Ebola outbreak in West Africa has severely tested the humanitarian community and here in Ireland, the austerity policies are still hurting thousands of households, with people finding it harder and harder to afford suitable homes.

Yet, it is important to note that the people of Ireland are not turning their backs on the world. Although attitudes towards charities have changed significantly, prompted by governance failures in a small number of high-profile not-for-profit organisations,

support for the work of Dóchas members remains extremely high.

Research undertaken by Ipsos MRBI and by the European Union's Eurobarometer shows that almost nine out of ten respondents in Ireland (87%) say helping people in developing countries is important. Irish people are now 12% more likely than last year to say we should increase overseas development aid.

And this support is not just in the form of words. Charitable giving increased last year, and for the first time in many years, the Government opted for a small increase in the annual budget for development assistance.

Dóchas members know not to take this continued public and political support for granted. During the year, we continued our "World's Best News" project, aimed at demonstrating to NGOs and media alike that there is an appetite among citizens for more information about the huge progress that is being made around the world. Dóchas members are now communicating not just problems, but also the extent to which Irish NGOs are having a real, lasting and positive impact on the lives of poor communities. We are slowly getting better at showing that aid money is spent well, and that we have strong evidence of change, growing hope and increased resilience.

For many NGOs, 2014 was a devastating year, marked by the killing of human rights defenders, aid workers, independent journalists and lawyers. But it was also the year where people continued to work for a better world.

All around the globe, people were doing their bit: health workers continued to treat patients, teachers educated, extension workers assisted farmers, engineers brought drinking water and electricity to isolated communities, social workers and trade unionists organised communities and aid workers brought humanitarian relief to victims of conflict and disaster.

During 2015, the European Year for Development, we have an opportunity to get those messages out to an even wider audience. During the coming year we have a unique opportunity to showcase, as a collective, the work we are doing and the many ways in which we work together. The Year will give us an opportunity to engage people and to celebrate the many ways in which ordinary people are making a difference, day after day, as citizens of our global community.

Finally, we know that the coming year will provide us with an opportunity to set the agenda for many years to come. In September 2015 world leaders are set to agree a new set of priorities for the world and we have made great strides in these so-called 'post-2015' discussions. Thanks to sustained lobbying by civil society groups, the draft of this new global agreement looks very promising and reflects many of the priorities that we have put forward, in close coordination

with other representatives of some of the world's poorest people.

The suggested 'Sustainable Development Goals' include an explicit recognition of the important role that civil society plays in any concept of sustainable development. Yet, at this very moment, in many countries around the world those same civic freedoms are under direct attack. Under the guise of security policies or national self-determination, many governments have in the past years harassed, threatened or attacked civil society groups. And in other countries, NGO work has been made more difficult through violent dispersal of citizen demonstrations or draconian laws and 'regulatory frameworks' that seek to silence dissent or restrict funding.

So, as world leaders prepare to meet at the United Nations to agree the next generation of sustainable development goals, we intensify our call for recognition of the crucial role that civil society organisations play in "development". Active, organised and informed citizens are the cornerstone of democracy, and must be the basis for any strategy, global or local, for human "sustainable development".

Sharan Kelly
Chairperson of Dóchas

60 
Members

12  Dóchas
groups

54 
Working
group meetings



4,050
Subscribers to Wednesday
News



Media interviews or mentions



4,440
Twitter Followers

 1,618
Facebook Fans



6 New Publications

1. Facilitating Effective NGO Cooperation

- Creating spaces to learn and share

What are we trying to achieve ?

Dóchas is a network of organisations that have come together voluntarily to pool experiences and learning, and to apply that knowledge to try to improve each organisation's long-term impact. Our members want the organisation to provide platforms for exchange, such as our thematic Working Groups and ad hoc task groups and seminars. As a network, Dóchas encourages but does not order or compel its members to work together. Dóchas' success depends on the extent to which our members consider it in their strategic interest to participate in our 'communities of ideas'.

What did we do in 2014?

The Dóchas groups provide a space where members can share expertise and best practice, and formulate policy responses to influence governmental and institutional decision-making.

The Working Groups are core to what Dóchas is trying to do - share experience and learning across the sector, with an aim towards improving how effective we are in our work overall. In 2014, the Dóchas Working Groups continued to form the centre of activities of the network. Currently there are Working Groups on:

- Development Education
- Disability and Development
- Finance
- Food, Nutrition and Livelihoods Security
- HIV and AIDS
- Humanitarian Aid

In addition, we have Task Groups on Results, NGO Communications, the "Act Now on 2015" campaign and the "Post-2015" discussions. Each of these groups hosted meetings for members as well as public seminars to stimulate NGO exchange and shared learning. Themes addressed at these events ranged from NGO governance (April) and fundraising from philanthropies (June) and Disability inclusion (November) to large events such as our annual conference on NGO accountability (May) and the annual peer meeting of signatories to the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages (June).

2. NGO Standards

- A development sector that adheres to standards of excellence

What are we trying to achieve?

Dóchas aims to ensure that its member organisations have a shared approach to quality and best practice in the sector. We prompt our members to develop minimum standards of practice, which we then disseminate and encourage NGOs, donors and others to apply. The main principle behind our work is that we want to strengthen the influence of programme participants on decision-making.

An external assessment undertaken for Dóchas by students from UCD and Trinity College showed a 96% compliance rate with the Irish Development NGOs Code of Corporate Governance. And the 2014 assessment of the 80 signatories to the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages showed that more and more NGOs are actively working to reduce stereotyping in their public communications.

What did we do in 2014 ?

During the year, our two codes of conduct – one in the area of corporate governance and one relating to public communications – were held up as examples of leadership by our members. Dóchas continues to monitor adherence to the codes by our members, and inform the public and decision-makers of the existence of these codes.

In 2014 Dóchas also continued to provide training and tools to assist our members to adhere to the highest standards of excellence. Topics covered in 2014 included insurance, financial reporting templates and human resources.

For all Dóchas members, commitment to high professional standards, participation and transparency are integral to development processes and to the workings of development organisations. Our donors and our partners overseas deserve transparency about our work, our decisions and our finances.

This belief prompted our members to develop self-regulating codes of conduct for Development NGOs that help them ensure that their work is effective, transparent, accountable and has lasting impact on the communities with which they work.

Dóchas was also part of a team that developed and launched the goodcharity.ie website which aims to increase transparency in the charity sector by providing information that will help members of the public to evaluate charities before they donate money or volunteer their time

At the Dóchas annual conference in May 2014, the CEO of the Charities Regulatory Authority and the Chairman of the Oireachtas Public Accounts Committee praised the high standards of practice in Ireland's Development NGO sector and recommended the application of our standards to the wider non-profit sector.

3. Shifting Public Attitudes

- Public debate informed by NGO experience and expertise

What are we trying to achieve?

Dóchas is working to ensure that NGOs inform and educate the general public, not primarily to raise funds, but to create deeper understanding of the challenges of development processes and to promote citizen action in support of initiatives that enable structural change.

What did we do in 2014 ?

In the past year, we continued to promote a new approach to public engagement strategies by our member organisations. Dóchas' analysis of public opinion, based on the annual survey undertaken by Ipsos MRBI, showed that people in Ireland continue to show high levels of support for the principle of development cooperation, but that they worry about the impact that Aid is having. Our project "The World's Best News" has shown member organisations that there is a great appetite for more stories about the hugely positive impact of overseas aid.

An opinion poll undertaken by Ipsos MRBI showed that a very large majority of people surveyed – **77 per cent** – think that **"Even in an economic down-turn, we have an obligation to invest in overseas aid"**.

Dóchas commissioned and published research into our members' public communications that focused on analysing NGO communication materials from the perspective of Frames and Values.

The resulting "Finding Irish Frames" report highlighted that the bulk of the public communication of the participating NGOs was focused on prompting a response in the form of donations, as opposed to other forms of taking action. The research was presented to members in April, and formed the basis of a number of debates among our member organisations.

THE WORLD'S BEST NEWS

The World's Best News is a news service operated by Dóchas, featuring stories of hope and change from the developing world.

Informed by our research into public attitudes, as well as our analysis of member organisation's public communications strategies, Dóchas decided to highlight the many ways in which people in developing countries are making great inroads in the fight against poverty, disease and hunger.

"The World's Best News", available on Tumblr, Facebook, Instagram and Flipboard, brings unexpected and different stories, illustrating that the world is becoming a better place.

our world
our dignity
our future

Dóchas selected as National coordinator for European Year for Development 2015 (EYD)

What is EYD?

2015 is a pivotal year for all humanity and as such has been declared the European Year for Development by the European Union. During 2015, world leaders will take decisions that will shape government policies for years to come, and will shape how we live, work and interact with the planet. Dóchas will lead efforts in Ireland to establish a new development narrative in Ireland that shifts beyond aid and charity to address issues of universality, solidarity, engagement, individual and collective responsibility, and global solidarity.

4. Influencing Government Policies

- Creating spaces to learn and share

What are we trying to achieve ?

Dóchas' core role is to bring its member organisations together, to pool experiences and knowledge, and to find ways to apply that knowledge to inspire changes in NGO practice. The second major role for Dóchas is to use the pooled insights and experiences to inform public policy making in Ireland and at EU level.

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

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. Dóchas members know that, to achieve their aims, they need Government policies that support their work. As a result, Dóchas members dedicate some resources to policy dialogue with the Irish Government and the European Union, to ensure that NGO values, experiences and expertise are taken into account in policy processes. Dóchas members have increased their cooperation in the development of policy positions, and in devising strategic ways to frame their policy messages in ways that can generate maximum impact.

What did we do in 2014 ?

One of our priorities in 2014 was to use the major policy decision moments of the year to promote options for Government policies that positively impact on the lives of the world's poorest countries and communities. Specifically, in 2014, this meant that Dóchas facilitated its member organisations' involvement in key processes such as:

- The public consultation on the Review of Ireland's Foreign Policy;
- The OECD DAC Peer Review of Irish Aid;
- The global negotiations towards a new set of sustainable development goals, post 2015;
- Policy level engagement with the new Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and with the Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs with Special Responsibility for ODA, Trade Promotion and North South Co-operation;
- Submission to Budget 2015.

“ The message to the Irish people is that they can hold their heads up high.

No matter how much they are suffering in the last number of years, they haven't forgotten their international obligations and neither has the Government.

They still can feel proud of where they come from. ”

Simon Anholt
Author of the “Good Country Index”

5. A Vibrant and Representative Network

Dóchas is a network of independent organisations, but it is also an organisation in its own right. As an entity, Dóchas depends on the active involvement of its member organisations and the legitimacy of the mandate it receives from those members. The Board is keen to build on that mandate and to ensure that the organisation remains as responsive and accountable as possible.

The continued growth of Dóchas' membership, and the increase in members' participation in Dóchas events shows that our members continue to find value in our work. Feedback from members, both formally through the Working Groups and the Board and informally, tells us members support and value Dóchas' work on shared learning and on NGO accountability standards. Irish Aid has, on several occasions during the year, expressed their appreciation for the role played by Dóchas.

During 2014, the Board of Dóchas commissioned an external evaluation of the work of the organisation, to serve as a starting point for discussions about a new long-term strategic framework for Dóchas. The evaluation was highly positive about the work of Dóchas.

In 2014 Dóchas also launched a brand new website, www.dochas.ie

Governance Codes

In June 2012, "The Governance Code for the Community, Voluntary and Charitable Sector in Ireland" (the Code) was launched by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to promote high standards of governance and transparency in the charity sector.

The Code was developed on the basis of consultations among community and voluntary organisations, and its core principles reflect those on which the Dóchas code on corporate governance is based. Both codes set out explicit

standards and principles for internal oversight and external accountability and they are fully complementary.

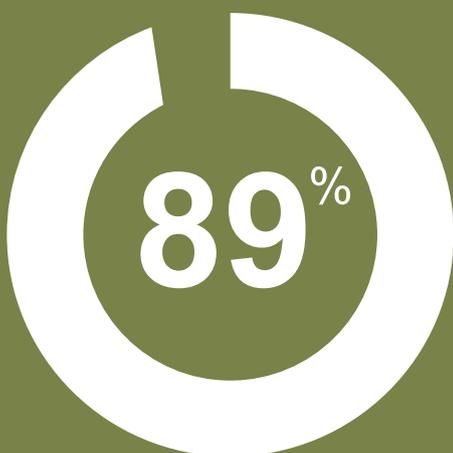
Any organisation wishing to health check its internal governance can adopt either of the Codes, depending on its area of activity – The Dóchas Code is mandatory (on a 'comply or explain' basis) for all Dóchas members, and is linked to the funding requirements of Irish Aid.

Dóchas Governance and Finances

Details of how Dóchas is governed are contained in our Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2014, which is available on the Dóchas website, www.dochas.ie.

That report also contains details of how Dóchas is funded and how our income was spent.

Our total expenditure for the year was €418,790, made up as follows:



Charitable Expenditure:
€371,256



Fundraising:
€30,713



Governance:
€16,821

The organisation's total income in 2014 amounted to €407,088. This represents a slight decrease compared to 2013 (€477,325) mainly due to the fact that we had a grant from the European Commission in 2013 for our EU Presidency Project and we did not receive funding from the European Commission in 2014.

Details of Dóchas' reserve and risk mitigation policy are contained in our "Report and Financial Statements" for the year ended 31 December 2014.

Dóchas acknowledges with gratitude the work of all our members' staff and volunteers that participated in Dóchas meetings and programmes during 2014. The major achievements during the year are due to the dedication and belief of all of these people as well as of the Dóchas staff and volunteers.

Dóchas

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An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



Dóchas gratefully
acknowledges the
support of Irish Aid, the
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and our member
organisations.

Designed by

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creative agency