

Ireland as a Model Power



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Ireland as a Model Power

Ireland's leadership on a global stage demonstrates our commitment to key values:

- **The pursuit of peace**
- **The protection and promotion of human rights**
- **Sustainable global development**

Dóchas has a vision of Ireland as a leader on the global stage, a model power that leads by example, consistently demonstrating these core values in our foreign affairs, development, and climate policies.

At a time of growing global instability and weakening multilateralism, the world needs leadership from countries known for their credibility, consistency, and ability to build trust.

Ireland is uniquely positioned to provide that leadership. With a strong tradition of diplomacy, a commitment to international law, and a global reputation as a principled partner, Ireland can act as a model power, proving that long-term cooperation and solidarity can deliver stability and shared prosperity.

Amid intensifying geopolitical competition where transactional partnerships are displacing long-term alliances, institutions are being dismantled, and unpredictability has become a defining feature, we must plan for a new era of influence. This paper sets out a vision for Ireland as a model power, a country that: leads through its values; strengthens international cooperation at a time of fragmentation; and uses its influence to build a fairer, more resilient world.

As a militarily neutral country that has experienced conflict, oppression, and hunger – as well as economic progress, entrepreneurship, and connectivity – we have a unique perspective. Ireland must play to its strengths by leaning into our global reputation and domestic public support for international development, and strengthening our place in a world with few honest brokers. We can demonstrate what it looks like to lead through cooperation and credibility, rather than dominance and defence. We can contribute to global peace and security in a way that encompasses our values.

Cooperation can be rebuilt by example. In a fragmented system, smaller and mid-size democracies can stabilise cooperation by proving that the rule of law, institutions, and shared investment still work in practice. We can play a key part in building a fairer, more equitable international order, one that promotes the agency of the global south. Ireland can do this by leading on finance, capacity building, institutional reform, and policy coherence.

It's Who We Are

Irish people's high-level support for Official Development Assistance (ODA) is underpinned by **deep-seated values and identity**, and is grounded in a belief in human rights, shared humanity, and humanitarianism. More than 70% of Irish people agree that it is important for the Irish Government to provide ODA. There is also a high level of trust in what our ODA can achieve, with 73% of Irish people believing it can bring about positive change for those in the global south.

Irish people are proud that, as a country, **we stand in solidarity and cooperation with the oppressed, the marginalised, and those living in poverty**. We take pride in being a 'force for good' in the world. Shaped by our own history, Irish people feel a unique connection to those experiencing oppression, hunger, and injustice. We have expressed this through our consistent support for international aid, our historic stance against apartheid—which is still remembered across the global south today—and our unwavering support for Palestine.

It's In Our Interest

Ireland's focus on hunger, climate, gender equality, education, and health has generated immeasurable global goodwill over decades. Our commitment to diplomacy, ODA, and the promotion of a peaceful resolution of conflicts and respect for international law has increased our international standing and contributed to Ireland's soft power on the world stage. Our ability to convene and coalesce the willing has been a diplomatic success story. **It has given Ireland access, legitimacy, and credibility**. We have built a strong reputation as a good faith actor and trusted partner.

Multilateralism is central to Ireland's foreign policy. As it evolves, Ireland needs to assess its role in this new global order – and be part of shaping a new, and better, global system. Our investment in countries in the global south will **strengthen partnerships, forge alliances, and show how fairness, cooperation, and competence can drive meaningful global progress**.

Irish people are concerned about global insecurity and instability and want to see us working with other countries to build a safer, more sustainable world. We can be a stabilising force in an increasingly unstable world, demonstrating that **aid is a crucial investment in global peace, security, and economic resilience**.

It Works

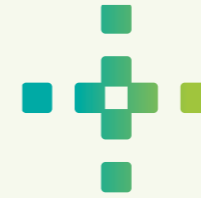
Having benefited greatly from European Union (EU) funding to build up its own economy and infrastructure, Ireland understands the **power of international financial support**. As a small nation, Ireland's own success has been rooted in global cooperation, peace, and shared economic growth.

Over the last two decades, ODA has been a **critical tool in improving global health, education, and food security**. Aid invested in healthcare has saved 91 million lives worldwide, including 30 million children under five, while providing a vital lifeline to prevent disease outbreaks and respond to natural disasters. In education, international funding has nearly doubled school completion rates and halved the number of out-of-school children. In agriculture, it provides better seeds, climate-smart training, and market access – successfully increasing food availability and rural incomes.

Beyond immediate relief, international aid is a vital **long-term investment that builds a safer, more stable world**. By funding essentials like healthcare, education, farming, and peacebuilding, it drives economic growth and creates a shield against global emergencies like pandemics, climate change, and economic downturns. Crucially, it fosters more equal societies where women, girls, and marginalised groups have a voice. Investing in human development reduces the need for expensive crisis interventions and prepares future generations for major global shocks. Conversely, aid cuts put decades of hard-won progress at risk, with more than 22 million preventable deaths predicted globally by 2030.²

Our **principled aid** delivers life-saving support and builds community resilience in the world's most forgotten and long-lasting crises. In 2024 alone, Ireland supported people in more than 100 countries, reaching over 8 million people through Irish development and humanitarian organisations.³

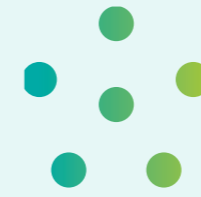
Action Agenda



Financial Investment

ODA is a critical investment for global stability, security, and prosperity. There is a need to:

- Progressively increase ODA spending to fulfil our commitment to reaching the 0.7% of GNI target.
- Provide at least 30% of Ireland's ODA through civil society across humanitarian, development, and climate programmes.
- Provide transformational climate finance that reaches our fair share under the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on Climate Finance agreed at COP30.
- Mobilise new and alternative sources of climate finance, based on 'polluter pays' and social equity principles.
- Invest in Global Citizenship Education across all education settings—formal, non-formal, and informal—to ensure people of all ages understand the root causes of structural problems driving global poverty and inequality.



Policy Coherence

Ireland needs to align its trade, climate, and development policies so that domestic and international priorities reinforce each other. There is a need to:

- Establish a cross-party parliamentary working group on Development Cooperation.
- Develop a renewed International Climate Finance Roadmap for Ireland.
- Fulfil Ireland's ambition to become a global climate leader by bridging the gap between domestic and foreign policy:
 - Expedite the transition away from fossil fuels and the required reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, towards achieving our commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050.
 - Establish a cross government mechanism to address the inconsistencies between Ireland's climate finance contributions and fossil fuel expansion through the financial sector.⁴
- Commission and publish an independent assessment of the impact of Ireland's national and international tax policy on developing economies, as recommended by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.⁵

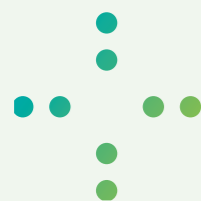
¹ Dóchas Worldview research conducted by B&A with a representative sample of 2,047 Irish adults in February–March 2026. See: www.dochas.ie/worldview

² *ibid.*

³ Irish Aid, Annual Report 2024, September 2025.

⁴ ActionAid Ireland and Trócaire, The Hidden Truth, Ireland's Role in the global fossil fuel industry, April 2025.

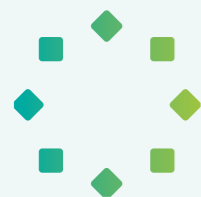
⁵ UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Ireland, March 2024.



Institutional Reform

Ireland's respected voice as a convener enables it to advocate for reform in global systems, where representation and legitimacy are lagging. There is a need to:

- Support the finalisation of an ambitious, binding UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation for adoption in 2027.⁶
- Support the opening of formal negotiations on a UN Framework Convention on Sovereign Debt, that supports debt relief for low-income countries and enhances the effectiveness of ODA.⁷



Capacity Support

Knowledge partnerships can create deep and resilient systemic changes. There is a need to:

- Convene like-minded actors, to support collaboration and learning opportunities on the trajectory of the future of development cooperation and the reform of multilateral institutions.
- Leverage our candidacy for the UN Human Rights Council to foster coalitions of actors who place the universality of human rights at the centre of foreign policy.
- Lead efforts to highlight the importance of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the protection of civilians in conflict.
- Elevate the critical role and expertise of civil society actors as enablers and partners in foreign policy forums.

Backed by strong public support, a trusted reputation, and decades of hard-won soft power, Ireland is uniquely positioned to be a model power. In an increasingly volatile future, Ireland must lead through action – demonstrating that global influence is built on cooperation and credibility, rather than dominance and defence.

⁶ The Tax Justice Network

⁷ FP analytics, Moving Beyond Aid – Transforming global development for long-term prosperity, August 2025; UNDP, Navigating the Debt Crisis: Reforming the common Framework for African Countries, August 2025.

Recommendations for Budget 2027

ODA

Ireland has committed to spending 0.7% of GNI on Official Development Assistance in our Programme for Government. However, we are off track, and are now going in the wrong direction.

- In 2025, the percentage of ODA, excluding In Donor Refugee Costs (IDRC), decreased from 0.32% to 0.30%.
- Our average annual rate of growth in ODA (excluding IDRC) from 2018 to 2025 was 0.0039%. At that rate, it will take us 100 years to reach 0.7% ODA of GNI.

Recommendations:

- Make real progress to our commitment of 0.7% of GNI on ODA. Increase the ODA budget, excluding IDRC, by 10% in 2027. This is the equivalent of €132m.
- Set out a clear pathway to achieve our 0.7% target through increasing our ODA budget, excluding IDRC, by 10% year on year.

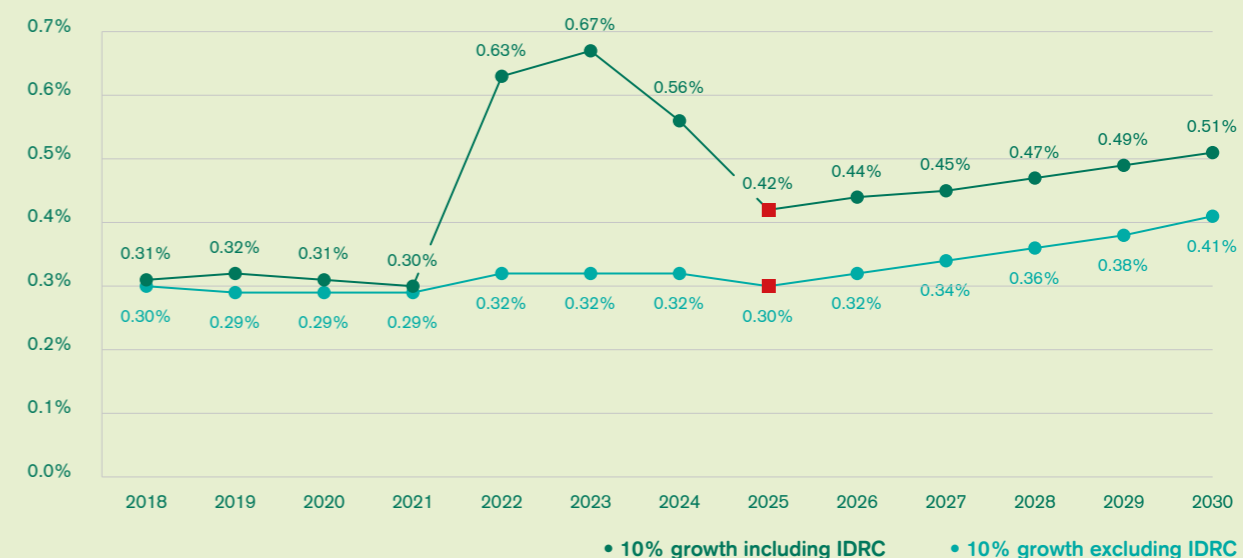
Climate

A renewed International Climate Finance Roadmap is urgently needed to demonstrate that Ireland is serious in its commitments to support climate resilience through its development cooperation policy.

Recommendations:

- Increase our overall international climate finance contributions to meet our fair share of the existing global target, to at least €500 million per year. This should increase in accordance with the augmented NCOG.
- Make a separate and specific commitment to financing the Loss and Damage Fund, consistent with our fair share.

10% growth: ODA/GNI Trajectory vs. 0.7% Target



GNI & ODA for 2018–2025 source OECD DAC. Projected GNI for the years 2026 to 2030 is calculated using GDP growth (as a proxy for GNI growth) from the IMF's World Economic Outlook data (as of April 2026), applied to the latest available GNI figures (in current prices, national currency—euros) from the OECD.

Projections: 10% growth including IDRC assumes IDRC is maintained at 2025 levels (€529m)

Provided by Seek Development

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