

# Trocaire

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*Fossil Fuel Divestment Campaigning for Climate Justice*  
*Trocaire's experience*  
27<sup>th</sup> Nov 2018

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# Outline

1. Why we decided to embark on divestment campaigning (the problem)
2. What were our objectives?
3. Who did we target and why?
4. What strategies did we employ?
5. Who were our key allies?
6. Timeline
7. Key contextual/success factors
8. Reflections/lessons learned

# 1. Why we decided to embark on divestment campaigning (the problem)

- Deep concern in late 2015 that politicians, media and public would consider Paris Agreement as having 'solved' climate change. Paris Agreement essential but is not the solution, it is a call to action!

*'Emphasising with serious concern the urgent need to address the significant gap between the aggregate effect of Parties' mitigation pledges in terms of global annual emissions of greenhouse gases by 2020 and aggregate emission pathways consistent with holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above preindustrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C'.*

Decision adopting the Paris Agreement

- Identified need for new energy, new tactics, new allies to build urgency and new momentum

## 2. What were our objectives?

- At one level - to get the parliament to divest the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund. BUT central strategic objectives of the campaign from outset were:
- GROW THE MOVEMENT: raise awareness and engage existing and new allies with compelling, concrete campaign focused on the need for new and urgent overall ambition, and rapid phase out of fossil fuels.
- Raise awareness with politicians, give them a concrete action they could take with aim of BUILDING POLITICAL WILL, creating NEW DIALOGUE, and OPENING POLITICAL SPACE for further action.

Every divestment win is important. But for organisation like Trocaire, divestment was a tactical strategy with a consistent focus on the PROCESS and LONGTERM objective, as well as achieving the campaign ask.

### 3. Who did we target and why?

- Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF. Sov Wealth Fund)
  - National level fund headed up by Minister for Finance with oversight of the Parliament.
  - Funded by tax payer money so democratic link.
  - Irish researchers had assessed fossil fuel holdings of the Fund.
  - Precedent: Fund had divested from cluster munitions following public campaign 10 years ago.

## 4. What strategies did we employ?

- On and offline campaigns materials establishing the link between fossil fuels, divestment and climate change impacts in developing countries (policy report, online divestment explainers, documentary)
- Campaign actions and outreach (partner visit, e-actions, petition – 11,000 in three months, festival outreach, documentary screenings e.g. in parishes, inviting local TDs, flooding public gallery during parliamentary debates)
- Supported student divestment campaigners in their campaigns, who then supported national campaign and now integral to climate movement in Ireland. Supported local climate change groups in their mobilisation and advocacy activities.
- Research (on climate impacts in our programme countries ('Feeling the Heat' report), impacts of fossil fuel holdings on ISIF returns)
- Approached parliamentarian to introduce Private Members Bill to divest ISIF.
- Engaged directly with relevant Ministers and ISIF.

## 5. Key allies

- Existing allies: Stop Climate Chaos Coalition
- New allies: student divestment campaigners
- Number of supportive individuals from finance sector for technical support and more!
- Broader civil society orgs, including domestic agencies, rolled in at key moments for sign ons.
- International divest-invest contacts for technical support and to bring the campaign win to the global level.
- Trocaire Bishops supportive from outset. Sustained engagement led to Irish Bishops' Conference public commitment to divest August 2018.

## 6. Timeline

- **Feb 16:** organised alliance building event for civil society. Featuring Mark Campanale, student divestment campaigners and supportive stakeholders from finance sector.
- **April 16:** public campaign launch with policy report and event right by the Parliament, featuring speaker from global movement.
- **Nov 16:** 25 different Irish CSO write to Ministers and ISIF setting out case for divestment. Partner visit from Malawi: Stop Climate Chaos 'mass lobby' features divestment as one of 3 key asks: Trinity and NUIG universities announce commitment to divest: Thomas Pringle introduces Divestment Bill to Parliament: Research on impact of fossil fuel investments on ISIF holdings published.
- **Jan 17:** Divestment Bill drawn for first stage debate (much earlier than expected). Civil society mobilises with e-actions, lobby, phone banks, flood public gallery for debate. Bill passes first stage thanks to support from all Opposition Parties. Govt opposed but minority Govt.



- **May 17:** local climate action group holds divestment event in key constituency, bolsters support and reinforces momentum.
- **June 17:** Bill undergoes pre-legislative scrutiny in Finance Committee, featuring finance experts, Trocaire, Dept of Finance, ISIF and others. Govt remains opposed.
- **Feb 18:** Opposition Party Bill to end licensing for fossil fuel exploration passes first stage in Parliament, thanks to Opposition Party support.
- **March 18:** Minister for Finance meets with Thomas Pringle and Trocaire, conveys wish to find consensus and have Govt support the Bill. Bill goes to Committee/amendment stage but consensus not yet achieved.
- **April-June 18:** negotiations with Dept Finance and ISIF on a consensus text.
- **July 18:** Bill returns to Parliament with consensus text for debate and is approved.
- **Nov 18:** Bill passes through the Senate

## 7. Key context and success factors

- Minority Govt meant Bill could progress despite Govt opposition.
- Campaign fronted and led by NGO with strong moral standing, compelling justice message based on impacts on poorest people.
- NGO leading the campaign dedicating staff time to accompaniment of the political process from start to finish – highly important.
- Good relationships with and empowerment of civil society allies and champions within the Parliament
- Local activism in key constituencies.
- Minister for Finance previous ‘exposure’ trip critical to his wish to bring Govt on board.
- Willingness to compromise to find consensus.

## Divestment Bill passed: 'Ireland becomes world's first country to divest from fossil fuels'. The Guardian, July 2018



Opening up of political space:

*'There was much talk in Dáil Éireann this week of divestment from public funds invested in fossil fuels and of banning oil and gas exploration, as politicians with newly-found energy expertise speculated on the possibility of stranded assets'.*

Irish Times July 2018





**Paschal Donohoe**  
10.6K Tweets

**Tweets**

Tweets & replies

Media

Likes

2

4

13

**Paschal Donohoe** @Paschald · 4h

Visited Malawi with [@trocaire](#) a number of years ago. Memories stayed with me. Met [@ThomasPringleTD](#) on Bill. Wanted to support this new approach. My department developed amendments, tabled by [@michaeldarcy](#) today. Congratulations Thomas, I will ensure this strategy happens.

