

# Lent 2012: Re-connecting the Irish public with Trócaire



Publicis Dublin and Mediaworks

## AGENCIES



## CLIENT

The logo for Trócaire, featuring the word "Trócaire" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

## AWARDS

**PUBLIC SERVICE, SOCIAL  
WELFARE & EDUCATION**  
Sponsored by PML Group

**SILVER**

The logo for PML Group, featuring the text "PML GROUP" in a white, bold, sans-serif font on a blue rectangular background.

## COMPANY PROFILE

### Publicis Dublin

One of the largest and most awarded creative advertising agencies in Ireland, Publicis Dublin is an affiliated agency of Publicis, the world's third largest and fastest growing advertising network.

We want our Client's brands and business to prosper and creativity is our tool. At Publicis our definition of creativity extends beyond the winning of creative awards, to the development of new ideas, products, brands and business solutions.

We embrace the recession induced challenges our clients face and provide innovative solutions.

We have Irish Advertising's most creative culture so we attract Ireland's most creative minds to work on our client's brands. At Publicis we believe creativity and effectiveness go hand in hand.

### Mediaworks

Mediaworks was launched in 1996 and is part of Core Media, Ireland's largest media buying group.

Our approach has always been to firmly position our clients at the heart of everything we do. We see ourselves as an extension of our clients' marketing department. We don't see our remit as being limited to media planning but as an integral part of the greater communication process.

Our positioning is "Forward Thinking". This means being at the forefront in all aspects of marketing communications, not least the constantly evolving media landscape, in order to ensure our clients remain firmly ahead of the competition.

## INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Trócaire is the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland and is nearly synonymous with fundraising during Lent, the six week observance which culminates in the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday. Established in 1973, Trócaire is an Irish institution with an iconic Lent collection box that everyone has memories of from childhood.

The Lent campaign is Trócaire's flagship appeal and biggest annual fundraiser, but donations had slowly been slipping from its peak in 2006. From 2009 on, however, the pace of decline quickened and in a single year income fell by 19.6% (2009-2010). Ireland had changed so significantly since the onset of the recession and this forced a re-appraisal of which charities deserved the public's attention and their donations. By 2011 the situation had become so significant that we needed to do something different to arrest a decline that was threatening the organisation's ability to retain its relevance and more importantly, continue its life-saving work overseas. We needed to get the public to re-connect to Trócaire at a time when the nation was experiencing a crisis of confidence and a crisis of faith, and when the trend in charity was to give to domestic organisations. This is the story of how we addressed the changing economic and social forces in Ireland and took a calculated risk to change tack in advertising. This is about how we moved away from the category norm of shocking, highly emotional ads to involve the public in the issues in a deeper, more collaborative way by appealing to innate Irish generosity and helping the public to see the impact that they were making in the world.

[1] Irish Charity Engagement Monitor, November 2011

### MARKETING OBJECTIVES

As with other international development aid charities, Trócaire's biggest annual fundraising campaign was suffering from significant decreases in donations. Donations to the Lent campaign had been gradually slipping since 2006, and by 2011 income dipped to its lowest level in ten years. A lack of donations in the charity sector can have devastating repercussions in human terms. The obvious objective would have been simply to increase donations, but we knew realistically that the very first step in turning this around was to arrest the decline. At the very least, we needed to match the funds raised by the 2011 campaign.

#### **Commercial Objective: To arrest the decline in donations.**

Even just arresting a decline meant that we had our work cut out for us. A ten year overview of Lent income told a simple story: when Ireland was doing well, Trócaire was doing well. Donations to the Lent campaign increased steadily year on year from 2000 to 2006; the public had money to spare and gave generously. But when the economy took a downturn in 2008, so did Lent campaign donations, and every year that Ireland was in recession, Lent donations decreased. This was true even for our core Catholic supporters, with Diocesan Lent income declining gradually starting in 2009. It was becoming harder to convince the public to give to causes in developing countries when they were confronted with need on the streets and in communities all around Ireland. Our declining income levels implied that Trócaire was less relevant in a recessionary Ireland, and this theory was confirmed in Irish Charity Engagement Monitor (ICEM) research showing that Saint Vincent de Paul and the Irish Cancer Society had the highest levels of existing support whereas international development charities (like Trócaire) had the highest proportion of respondents who would not consider supporting these charities<sup>[1]</sup>. This told us that we needed to change attitudes toward Trócaire.

#### **Marketing Objective: To make Trócaire's work more relevant in Ireland's changed economic reality.**

Both our figures and industry research pointed to the fact that Ireland had changed from 2008 on, which was, unsurprisingly, when the effects of the recession were tangible and observable.

[2] ibid

## MARKETING OBJECTIVES

The public had grown more concerned with issues closer to home – issues such as low income people struggling to pay for the high costs of food and fuel and the effects of the Government’s cuts on families<sup>[2]</sup>. In a changed Ireland, we needed to communicate in a different way in order to increase the public’s propensity to give to international causes supported by Trócaire.

**Communications Objective: To increase propensity to donate by demonstrating that Trócaire is effective in creating real and lasting change.**

[3] Central Statistics Office, Standardised Unemployment Rates

[4] Behaviour & Attitudes, Sign of the Times 2014

[5] Irish Charity Engagement Monitor, November 2011

## THE TASK

Ireland had changed economically and socially, and this impacted consideration of Trócaire.

Economically, by 2012 Ireland was still in the midst of one of the worst recessions in recent history; unemployment had risen to 15% in March 2012 from a low of 3.7% in 2001<sup>[3]</sup> and weekly discretionary income had nearly halved to €46 from a high of €84 in 2008<sup>[4]</sup>. When household discussions turn to whether the family can pay the energy bill or afford a full tank of petrol, donations to charity, unsurprisingly, are vulnerable. ICEM research showed a downward trend in giving and the proportion of people who cut down on how much they donated was four times greater in Ireland than it was in the UK<sup>[5]</sup>. The public simply had less to give, and the three consecutive years of decreased donations to Trócaire's Lent campaign from both the general public and Catholic Dioceses reflected this downward trend in giving.

Socially, the financial collapse caused us to do a bit of soul-searching about who we as a nation had become, and this introspection affected donation decisions. Ireland had donated the most per capita during Live Aid, but after nearly 30 years of donating to causes in developing economies and no perceived evidence of progress, the public were left feeling hopeless that they would ever see money making a difference in "Africa" – which was consumer shorthand for any third world country that needed help. This shift in attitude – aptly known as "Africa fatigue" – was a troubling trend for Trócaire, as many consumers associated them with feeding starving children in Africa. What's more, Trócaire chose Uganda as its focus country for Lent 2012. How were we going to overcome "Africa fatigue" while asking for money to fund projects in Uganda?

While attitudes had shifted over time, the recession ushered in a rapid change in behaviours with regards to international aid. The saying "charity begins at home" suddenly took on more meaning in Ireland as everyone knew someone who had lost their job or was forced to take severe wage cuts. Consumers were prioritising their giving to domestic charities – both the charities they had personal experience with, like the Irish Cancer Society, and the charities that were serving the people that had fallen on hard times, like Saint Vincent de Paul and Barnardos.

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## THE TASK

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The tide of economic and social changes in Ireland had turned against Trócaire, and if we didn't act now, donations surely would continue to decline.

## THE STRATEGY

Trócaire had been part of Irish lives since 1973 and the Lent box was an integral part of our education system, so giving to Trócaire was a uniquely Irish action. This led us to delve into our Irish national identity, only to discover that it is nearly impossible to separate Irishness from Catholicism. This is where we uncovered an insight: Irish national identity is inextricably linked to the values of the Catholic Church. What the Irish are known for – like community spirit and a renowned generosity that puts Ireland at the top of the World Giving Index – stem from an innate sense for helping our fellow man. This very principle is at the core of Catholic Social Teaching. If we could align innate Irish generosity with Catholic values, then we could re-connect the public with Trócaire as an organisation that acts with compassion based on the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

Irish compassion isn't just an innate sense, it is something that we feel. Literally translated, "trócaire" means "mercy" or "compassion", but in the Irish language there is more emphasis on action; "trócaire" implies a physical response – a compassion for others that is felt at the centre of one's body. We decided that everyone had an inner "trócar" (a person who has love for someone who is suffering in life) – we just needed a way to unlock this latent empathy.

But what stood in the way of empathy was apathy. Qualitative research revealed that the public felt that they had been giving to the developing world for decades and the situation never seemed to improve. This of course was not the case. Trócaire's supporters have made an incredible contribution over nearly four decades. Given the collective state of mind, we felt that a strategy of recognition and endorsement would be far more effective than 'guilting' our audience into giving through the shocking, highly emotive imagery typically used in charity communications. Old strategies were insufficient so we posited a theory on how we might change the script: we could encourage fundraising by shining a light on the good that donations make possible rather than the problems that the lack of funds create. This positive reinforcement would be more motivating to a battered public who, in the context of consistently bad news – of homes in negative equity, of Ireland as the poster child for bailouts – were desperate for any kind of good news about Ireland.

## THE STRATEGY

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There was considerable risk associated with adopting this pivot to positivity, but it was one we were willing to take in the context of declining donations.

Our strategy was clear: We needed to make donating to Trócaire an expression of our Irish values (a reflection of our Catholic heritage) and present the positive impact that Trócaire and its donors are making in the world.



### THE IDEA

Our creative idea needed to draw parallels between the act of donating to Trócaire and our Catholic values. We felt like there was something hugely motivating in tapping into our uniquely Irish generosity, in so moving our inner “trócar”. This was a creative challenge: to make an old Irish truth as real and relevant today as it always has been without coming across as old-fashioned and stuck in the past. This search for a new way of connecting with Irish consumers had us thinking outside the box, but in the process we realised that we had to look no further than the box ... the Trócaire box. Nearly every adult in Ireland has fond memories of collecting money in their Trócaire box during Lent. As children, we were excited by the sound of new coins going in and by how much heavier the box got as Lent went on. The Trócaire box itself represents the values imparted to us from a young age – of giving whatever we had, no matter how small an amount, to those who needed it the most. This perfectly represents Irish generosity and reflects our values, and the element of nostalgia offered an opportunity to keep Irish adults connected to Trócaire in a positive way.

Our strategy pointed to a need to bring back the hope that was lost in the clutter of sad imagery and in the lack of positive news stories coming from the charity sector. One thing that was abundantly clear from a content review of charity advertising was that charities were doing little to stop the pervasive feeling of hopelessness. We had to move away from the norm of showing people in desperate situations. We could no longer risk being ignored or not even being noticed. Although it was risky, our research pointed to a unique space that Trócaire could fill, a way to stand out by adopting a positive messaging strategy. This meant using our communications to introduce the effect that Trócaire donors have made in helping communities living in poverty to change their lives.

The foundations of our creative idea were in place: we would re-connect the public with Trócaire by using the Trócaire box – which represents our Irish values and has positive childhood memories attached to it – and we would motivate the public to give by telling a positive and uplifting story about how their donations are making a difference.

[6] Nielsen Ad Dynamix, Charity Sector, 2011-2012

### THE IDEA

There was an added caveat, however; because this was a Lent campaign, we were required to tell the story of Daniel (the child whose picture would be on the Trócaire box), his family and the town of Bar Kawach in Uganda. This was a story about a community re-building their lives after a devastating civil war waged by the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda. They were penniless from having their homes and farms burned to the ground. They were traumatised from watching as friends and family members were kidnapped, never to be seen again. They were forced to flee from their land, only to return after the war and try to re-build their lives.

It was a challenge to work this story full of pain and sadness into the creative structure we had identified, which was to tell a positive story and feature the Trócaire box. What inspired us was the resilience of Daniel and the village of Bar Kawach; the fact that they returned to the very place where they had lived through something truly awful and were determined to build their lives up again. The positivity we were looking for was in the spirit of this community who wanted nothing more than the chance at a future. It occurred to us that every coin that goes into every Trócaire box empowers Daniel and his community to work their way out of poverty: helping them buy seeds to farm so that they can grow food, which they can sell to buy school books and uniforms so that the children can get an education, which gives them better opportunities in the future. Every coin had a positive effect in transforming the lives of Daniel and his community, so our creative idea was to show the positive knock-on effect that starts with donors in Ireland putting coins in the Trócaire box and ends with a community in Uganda getting the chance to change their lives.

With our creative idea confirmed, we had an additional challenge in the limited window we had to drive Lent donations: to be exact, it was 46 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday (the start and end dates of Lent). In an average month, Irish people can be faced with up to 300 charities all vying for their attention and donations<sup>[6]</sup>. Coupled with a limited time frame and a new, positive tone to showcase, we had to ensure our media strategy worked exceptionally hard to build awareness quickly, but also crucially drive donations at a time when most consumers were cutting back on giving to charities, or giving to domestic charities instead.

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## THE IDEA

Striking the right balance between an awareness building and direct response driving campaign was key. This is why we chose to lead our multi-media campaign through Television and Radio. Both were given almost equal budget weightings with Outdoor, Print and Digital playing complementary but secondary roles. Trócaire is a fully operational charity in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, hence our campaign ran across the island.

Since we had built our whole communications strategy around communicating in a different way, it was important that we carried this desire to do things a little bit differently through to our media placements. Some of the differences we chose for the Lent campaign were:

### Television

Rather than look for an up weight in daytime, which typically performs well for direct response and is often cluttered with competitors, we planned to behave as a new brand, up weighting our position in break and our peak viewing. Up weights here are proven to aid recall and message recognition. Buying into particular programmes such as news, current affairs, community interest programmes as well as heavily viewed soaps ensured that we reached a coverage peak quickly.

### Radio

In addition to a heavy weight number of spots on national and local stations across Ireland, we also negotiated interviews for Trócaire on LMFM and Downtown radio to allow Trócaire to bring the message to life in their own words outside of 30 second ad spots.

### Outdoor

Large format 48-sheets and Metropoles and smaller 6-sheets and transport formats complemented our TV and allowed us to showcase both the iconic Trócaire Box and a picture of Daniel, whose beautiful smile was infectious and radiated positivity.

[7] Joint National Readership Survey, 2012

## THE IDEA

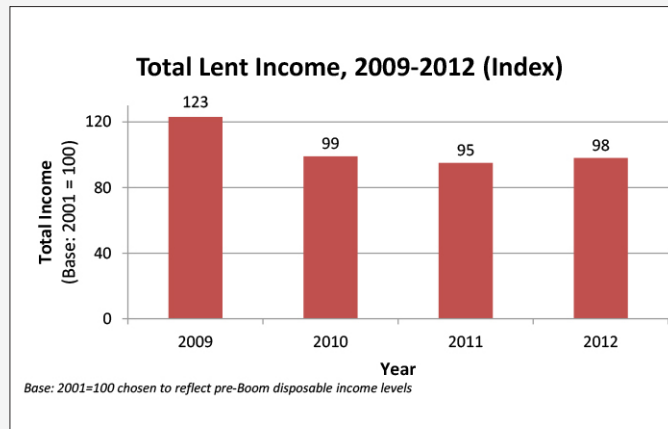
### Print

As distribution of the Trócaire Box is limited to those that either have children in primary school or those that attend church, we used this as an opportunity to run the Trócaire Box as an insert. Past learnings taught us that adults aged 45+ tend to donate more to charity<sup>[7]</sup>. Given that the average press reader is aged 45, this was a strong fit. We ran 120,000 inserts in the Irish Times, a national broadsheet title. We also ran a variety of display adverts in religious titles knowing that Trócaire resonates well with their readers, and in farming titles as we felt that this segment would recognise the Ugandan community's struggle with the land.

### Digital

We had the ability to target behaviourally through high frequency network buys, allowing us to buy significant impressions at a low entry fee. Here we were able to specifically target the behaviour of users interested in current affairs sites, charitable tendencies and older audiences.

With a creative idea based on a positive messaging strategy and a media plan playing outside of a typical charity direct response strategy, the Lent 2012 campaign was well placed to grab attention, cut through the clutter and engage the audience in the incredible effect that Trócaire donors have made.



[8] Concern Worldwide, Annual Report & Accounts 2012

[9] GOAL, Annual Report & Audited Financial Statements 2012

## THE RESULTS

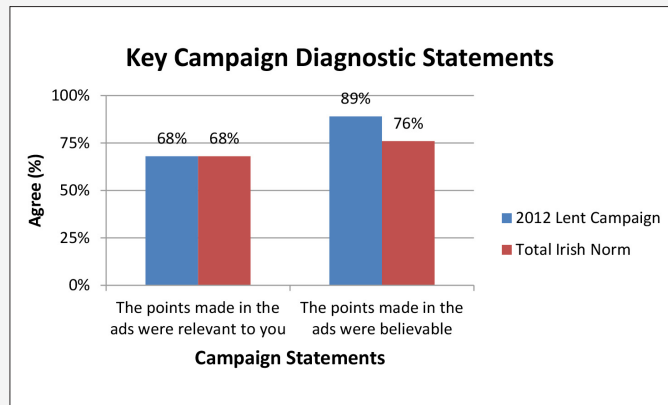
### Commercial Objective

We had set out to halt a decline in income that was threatening Trócaire's ability to continue its truly life-saving work overseas. The 2012 Lent campaign was successful in achieving our commercial objective of arresting a decline: for the first time in three years, donations to Trócaire's Lent campaign increased by 3%. This was a significant increase given that we managed not only to arrest the decline, but also to increase income above what was raised in 2011.

We had an additional difficulty in that donations from our core Catholic supporters had been in decline since 2009. The trend amongst the general public was to give domestically in the recession. With donations to Saint Vincent de Paul increasing at a time when donations to Trócaire were decreasing, it was highly likely that Catholic supporters had shifted their donations to a domestic Catholic charity.

The 2012 Lent campaign also saw a 3% increase in Diocesan income, meaning that we proved to our core Catholic supporters that there was great need in development aid in addition to the need the public could see in Ireland.

These income figures are a phenomenal result considering that other international development aid charities in Ireland were experiencing severe declines: Compared to the previous year, in 2012 Concern's income from public donations fell 17%<sup>[8]</sup> and GOAL's voluntary and fundraising income fell by over 50%<sup>[9]</sup>. We didn't just arrest a decline, we actually increased income at a time when the international development aid sector of the charity market had contracted.



[10] Millward Brown, Lent Campaign Evaluation Research, May 2012

## THE RESULTS

### Marketing Objective

Against a backdrop of a country which had changed so significantly that it forced a re-appraisal of which charities deserved the public's attention and their donations, our marketing objective was to make Trócaire's work more relevant in Ireland's changed economic reality.

Post-campaign research<sup>[10]</sup> indicated that the 2012 Lent campaign met the Irish norm for relevance and was perceived as extremely credible, exceeding the total Irish norm on this metric.

Meeting the Irish norm for relevance may seem underwhelming, but in context this was actually a huge achievement: Trócaire was a Catholic international development aid charity fundraising for a community in Uganda at a time when the Irish public was in the depths of recession and was intensely focused on donating to Irish causes. Matching a baseline for relevance was a sign that our Lent campaign was cutting through at least as much as campaigns in other categories – which makes a difference when the typical response to charity advertising was for consumers to ignore the appeals or change the channel.

Additionally, the Lent campaign was seen to be credible, exceeding the Irish norm on how believable the points made in the ad were. This was critical for our strategy, because if the public did not believe that their donations were making a difference they would have no reason to re-connect and thus continue to donate to Trócaire.

Just as Lent income figures prove that we were able to arrest a decline, post-campaign research shows that we were able to stop the attitudinal slide to irrelevance that was likely to result from the changing tide of economic and social forces.

## THE RESULTS

### **Communications Objective**

We decided to stop 'selling' aid to donors through the traditional means of sad images and hopeless situations. Our communications objective was to increase propensity to donate by demonstrating that Trócaire is effective in creating real and lasting change.

Our Total Lent income figures indicate that we indeed increased propensity to give, with the 2012 Lent campaign increasing donations by 3% on the previous year. Additionally, in post-campaign research, over 6 in 10 claimed that the campaign increased their likelihood to donate to Trócaire, with 26% of these respondents selecting 'I am a lot more likely'.

At 62% more likely, propensity to donate as a result of this campaign was significantly higher than the 38% of respondents that indicated they 'Would consider supporting Trócaire' in ICEM research (November 2011).

Thus far, we have demonstrated that the points made in our Lent 2012 campaign were believable, that propensity to donate was high and that actual donations to Trócaire indeed increased as a result of the campaign. None of this would have been possible if the public did not believe the key message that Trócaire was creating real and lasting change.

### **Return on Marketing Investment**

For every €1 that was spent on the Lent campaign, nearly €8 was donated to Trócaire. Lent 2012 yielded a Return on Marketing Investment (ROMI) of 6.99.

We have calculated ROMI for the four year period from 2009 to 2012, including a comparison of expected 2012 income had we not changed our messaging strategy.

## THE RESULTS

This is based on a 3% decline in income in 2012 – a conservative estimate, far lower than the average income decrease of 11.6% between 2009 and 2011 and more in line with the single year income decrease of 3.5% in 2011. With expected income for 2012, ROMI with the same campaign spend would have been 6.61, but actual income in 2012 shows ROMI of 6.99. This proves that our campaign was more efficient than the previous two Lent campaigns. We can make this assumption based on all things being equal: there was no uplift in development aid in 2012, consumer sentiment and discretionary income both remained low, and there was no additional campaign spend in 2012 (in fact, campaign spend decreased in 2012).

Perhaps what is most important, however, is the return on human investment from the Lent campaign. We can present all the figures and charts in the world, but at the end of the day, what Trócaire's Lent donations have made possible for Daniel, his family and the community of Bar Kawach go far beyond simple calculations and bar charts. It is thanks to the generosity of the Irish public that a small community in Uganda can put a horrific past behind them and focus on a brighter future.



## THE IMPACT

In 2012, Trócaire was approaching 40 years in the Irish market and while that kind of tenure was in many ways a strength, it was also potentially a source of weakness. For many consumers, impressions of Trócaire were formed in their childhood years and had not evolved beyond the days of filling the Trócaire box with spare change. By featuring the donor and the Trócaire box, our communications strategy and idea were successful in re-connecting consumers with Trócaire both by appealing to their sense of nostalgia and also instilling a sense of pride in how donations to Trócaire have transformed the lives of those who suffer. By juxtaposing the donor's action in Ireland (putting money into the Trócaire box) with real evidence of change (a community in Uganda working their way out of poverty), we were able to overcome a bias that plagues international development aid: consumers' ability to ignore faraway tragedies. We so moved the public's inner "trócar" by connecting the donor and the iconic Trócaire box with the impact that these donations to Trócaire have made and can continue to make.

What's clear from our 2012 Lent income results compared to charities such as Concern and GOAL is that our communications gave consumers a reason to engage with international development aid, and specifically with Trócaire. We found a way to appeal to the public's innate sense of giving by showing that Irish generosity truly can change the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in the world. We did this not by pulling at heart-strings in the traditional sense – showing desperation and impossible situations – but instead by showing what is and can be made possible by supporting Trócaire's annual Lent campaign. Our communications really elevated the act of giving to Trócaire during Lent to an important part of who we are as a nation; an expression of our Irish values.

Ultimately, we believe that the key success factors from the Lent 2012 campaign are the visual of the donor in Ireland and the Trócaire box, which made our communications relatable to the public; the demonstrable impact of donations, which gave consumers a reason to engage with an international development charity; and the positive message and tone of voice, which was a refreshing change of tack in charity advertising.

## NEW LEARNINGS

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We posited a theory that we could motivate the public to donate to Trócaire through a pivot to positivity and our results proved this to be a strategic risk worth taking. Believing that we had created a platform for success, we brought an even more positive message to the public for Lent 2013, but unfortunately income dropped back down to pre-2012 levels. We have learned that a positive messaging strategy only works if we strike the right balance between positive outcomes from past donations and the impact that more donations can make.

## SUMMARY

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Trócaire is an Irish charity with an iconic Lent collection box that everyone has memories of from childhood. The Lent campaign was suffering from declining donation levels. In 2012, the situation warranted that we do something different to arrest the decline. This is the story of how we addressed the changing economic, social and cultural forces in Ireland and changed tack in advertising. This is about how we motivated the public by elevating the act of giving to Trócaire during Lent as an expression of our Irish values and increased donations by 3% while the development aid category was contracting.

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## MEDIA GALLERY

### CREATIVE

