

Dóchas

The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

Dóchas Board 100 (4-24)
26/09/24

Dóchas Board

held on Thursday, 26th September 2024 at 10:00 in the Dóchas office, Suite 8, Olympic House,
Pleasants Street, Dublin 8

Minutes

Present: Rosamond Bennett (Christian Aid Ireland) Chairperson
John Moffett (Misean Cara) Vice Chairperson
Siobhán Cassidy (Trócaire) Treasurer & Company Secretary (Virtually)
Karol Balfe (ActionAid Ireland)
Olive Moore (Front Line Defenders)
Frank Long (Oxfam Ireland)
Martina Fitzgerald (External Board Member) (Virtually)
Paul Donnelly (External Board Member) (Virtually)

In attendance: Jane-Ann McKenna (CEO of Dóchas)
Anna Farrell (Finance & Operations Manager, Dóchas)
Claudia Lynch (Project Coordinator – Worldview) for item 3a only
Gillian Ivory (Head of Membership Engagement) for items 3b and 6c only

1. Meeting Opening and Standing Items

a. Welcome & introduction to New Board Members

The Chairperson opened the meeting, welcoming those present, and noting that Frank is joining us for the first time today following his election at the AGM.

b. Apologies and Agenda

There were no apologies and no changes to the agenda as circulated.

c. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

All members present confirmed that there were no conflicts of interest.

d. Minutes of Board Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting, held on 27/06/24 were approved: John Moffett (Proposed), Paul Donnelly (Seconded).

e. Matters Arising and To-do List

Most of the items under Matters Arising or on the to-do list are in progress or will be addressed during the meeting. Of the outstanding items, the revised bank mandate has been signed and the notice period issue together with the hybrid policy will be considered in line with the review of the Employee Handbook, which is currently in process. We don't plan to make significant changes to our current hybrid practice. The Governance committee will look at strengthening communications around the nomination and presentation of Board members at the AGM in line with the nomination

process in 2025. We also plan to look at the anti-fraud training for staff and briefing for Board members over the coming months.

The Treasurer said that some members are well versed on the issue of anti-fraud measures for the international development sector and could possibly provide support in that regard.

Action:

- CEO to follow up with Treasurer in relation to anti-fraud training for the team.

2. Reports and Updates

a. CEO Report

The **CEO Report**, which was circulated in advance, was taken as read.

The CEO highlighted some key areas of focus during the period covered by the Report:

- Dóchas together with the CEO's of a number of networks met with the new Charities Regulator CEO, Madeleine Delaney (16 Sept.) to discuss the implementation of the Charities Act 2024. The meeting also discussed plans re. 'the advancement of human rights'. Dialogue was open and constructive and ended with an agreement to establish a more structured approach to dialogue, with meetings taking place three times a year.
- Dóchas will host a webinar (12 Nov) on safeguarding during Charities Trustee Week (11-15 Nov) and the Regulator is planning to organise an online panel discussion on the Charities Act 2024.
- Our press conference (9 Sept) on the crisis in Sudan went very well, attendance was high and included members, politicians and the media, and media coverage was extensive (details in report). In terms of keeping up momentum, we will have an op-ed in the Irish Independent next week and will address the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (8 Oct).
- Recent changes to EU funding for development, proposed cuts in the MFF budget and in its Global Gateway instrument are a cause for concern. We are working with CONCORD to advocate for Ireland to protect funding and development principles.
- Sixteen members of the Policy Working Group, representing 12 Dóchas members, travelled to Brussels (25 Sept) for a roundtable meeting with Irish MEP's as well as meetings with DG ECHO, UNRWA and CONCORD.

The Board congratulated the CEO and the team on the success of the Sudan event.

In response to a question from Martina around engagement with government and opposition around Budget 2025, the CEO said that it has been very challenging to secure meetings with senior level politicians in the run-up to Budget 2024 (1 Oct). Both the Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade directed us to the Tánaiste, who was unavailable to meet in advance of the budget. We met (19 Sept) with Matt Carthy, Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs and Defence for Sinn Fein.

Martina said that it is important to secure meetings with the Tánaiste around Budget 2025 as well as other political parties as they are working on their General Election Manifesto.

Action:

- CEO to follow up with Simon to see if we are required to disclose the engagement with MEPs to the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO).

3. Strategic Topic

a. Progress update: Worldview

Claudia Lynch, Worldview Project Manager, joined the meeting for this section only. It was noted that a copy of the external evaluation of the project was included in the pack for today's meeting.

The CEO gave a short presentation on the project focusing on the: launch of Wave 4 results (March); proposal for phase two (May); External Evaluation of phase one (August), with recommendations incorporated into proposal prior to submission to Irish Aid (Oct); All Together Now Festival – Worldview joined GOAL, Sightsavers Ireland and Trócaire in the Global Solidarity Hub (August); National Ploughing Championships – Worldview joined Brighter Communities Worldwide, Concern Worldwide, Self Help Africa, Sightsavers Ireland and Trócaire in the Global Solidarity Hub (September); Wave 5 is underway, results are due in November and will be followed by a launch event. She outlined the key findings, challenges and recommendations from the evaluation and gave a short synopsis of the proposal for phase two of the project.

b. Progress update: Network Development

Gillian Ivory, Head of Membership Engagement, joined the meeting for this section. Gillian gave a short presentation during which she outlined progress to date, which included scoping various CRM systems (2020), implementing Salesforce (2021) and developing and embedding the system (2021-2023). We are now in the discovery phase, which will look at our current systems and at how we can improve our processes and efficiency and enhance our collaboration with and among members and stakeholders. There are two parts to the project, the first will look at our business processes and the second at offering members a community platform or portal which would enable members to collaborate online.

In response to a question from Frank, the CEO said that we have a budget of €30k, which was carried forward from 2023, for this project. Finding a consultant to work with us on this project was challenging and resulted in a delay in starting the project. For the November meeting we will have an update on costings, including how much will be spent before the end of 2024 and what the costings are likely to be beyond that.

4. Nominations to Dóchas Board Sub-Committees

Frank volunteered to join on the Sub-committee on Finance, Audit and Risk (FARC) and Olive said that she would be happy to join the Sub-committee on Governance.

Decision:

- Frank will join the FARC and Olive will join the Governance committee.

Action:

- Anna to send diary notices for November meetings of FARC and Governance committee to Frank and Olive respectively.

5. Finance, Audit & Risk Committee

a. Report from Committee

The Treasurer said that Lucia Ennis (Concern Worldwide) stepped down at the last meeting (25/09/24). She welcomed Frank to the FARC and noted that the committee now consists of two Directors and two Non-Directors. The minutes of the last meeting together with the January to July financial report and narrative were circulated to members in advance and were taken as read. These documents together with a review of the Risk Register and the Dóchas Procurement Policy were the key focus of the meeting. The committee also received an update from the CEO on project funding, including Worldview. The committee was comfortable with the financial report and with the Cashflow forecast and noted that plans are in place to spend project funding from members (€33k) as well as the unrestricted reserve carry forward (€30k) which has been assigned to the digital infrastructure/network development piece. In relation to the latter, due to the delays in getting the project underway it is likely that the total amount won't be spent in 2024 and so it may be necessary to amortise some of it. The focus for Q4 will be on spending and by the time the FARC meetings again (19 Nov), we will have a clearer picture of where things stand.

b. Risk Register: The Risk Register, which was reviewed by the FARC at its last meeting, was circulated in advance. It was noted that:

- Risk 5 (Anti-NGO and civil society sentiment amongst Irish Public) has moved to Green as we have appropriate actions in place to mitigate the risk.
- Risk 13 (Staffing Gaps) remains Amber because while the team is settled and there are no issues at present, we are a very small team and so if there is a departure or other issue, it will impact on our ability to fulfil our strategic ambitions or potentially delay our annual objectives.

c. Dóchas Procurement Policy

A copy of the revised Policy was circulated to members in advance. The Treasurer outlined the main changes, which relate to strengthening the authorisation levels and derogation lines.

The Board acknowledged that it is often difficult to get three quotations for a service and agreed that retaining the evidence that quotations were sought is sufficient.

Frank suggested that the document would be strengthened by the inclusion of a definition of what we mean by a tendering process.

Action:

- The Dóchas Procurement Policy will be revised to include a definition of what we mean by a tendering process and will be brought to the FARC (19 Nov) for final sign-off.

Decisions:

- The Dóchas Procurement Policy, incorporating the above amendment, was approved. Siobhan Cassidy (Proposed), Karol Balfe (Seconded).
- There were no changes to the Risk Register as presented.

6. Governance

a. Report from Committee

Paul welcomed Olive to the committee and noted that the committee now consists of three Directors and one Non-Director. The minutes of the last meeting (17/09/24), which were circulated to members in advance, were taken as read. Key agenda items included reviewing the Charities Governance Code Compliance Record Form, Safeguarding Charter and Complaint's Log. The committee received an update on meetings with David Donoghue regarding the external Director vacancy and with the new CEO of the Charities Regulator, Madeleine Delaney.

b. Dóchas Charities Governance Code Compliance Record Form

Copies of the completed form, which has been reviewed and approved by the sub-committee, were circulated in advance.

Decision:

- The Board approved the CRF for 2023. Paul (Proposed). John (Seconded).

Action:

- Dóchas to submit Annual Return to the CRA, declaring full compliance with the Charities Governance Code, in line with the 31 October deadline.

c. Review of Dóchas Policies – Dóchas Safeguarding Charter

Gillian Ivory, Head of Membership Engagement, joined the meeting for this section.

A copy of the revised Charter together with a PowerPoint presentation were circulated to members in advance. The review, which was led by the Safeguarding Working Group (co-chairs: Valerie Philpott, Mísean Cara and Sarah Barnes, Self Help Africa), involved a rigorous consultation process.

The aim is to reinvigorate the Charter. The approach will be voluntary and non-regulatory, with members confirming their commitment to its principles by paying their annual membership fee. The Charter has been reviewed and approved by the Sub-committee on Governance and is presented here today for formal sign-off. If the Board is happy to sign-off on the Charter today we will proceed to the design stage and will organise a formal in-person launch event (Q4).

In response to a question from Olive, the CEO said that there is no requirement on members to formally sign on to the Charter. Members will be deemed to be committed to the principles of the Charter virtue of the fact that they are a member of Dóchas.

Frank said that members can use their annual report and website to confirm their commitment to the principles of the Charter.

The Board thanked Gillian and the members of the Safeguarding Working Group for their work in revising the Charter.

Decision:

- The Dóchas Safeguarding Charter was approved. Paul Donnelly (Proposed), Rosamond Bennett (Seconded).

7. Board Away Day

The Chairperson said that our away day is scheduled to take place on Friday, 8th November, from 09:30 to 13:30 (venue TBC) and we now need to consider what we want to focus on during the session.

The CEO said that the Mid-term review is underway and the Members Survey will go out today, with the results feeding into the review. The away day offers an opportunity for the consultant to present draft findings and to engage the Board in the process, in advance of completing the document. The second part of the day could focus on governance, with a refresher on Directors' roles and responsibilities, including a briefing on anti-fraud measures.

During a general discussion it was suggested that, in addition to the above, we also have a facilitated session on scene setting, where we would look at the big picture and at what's going on in the world.

Decision:

- The Away Day will include a session on each of the following: scene setting, the mid-term review of the Dóchas Strategy and a refresher on Directors' roles and responsibilities to include a briefing on anti-fraud measures.

Action:

- CEO to consider options for facilitators for sessions on scene setting and on Directors' roles and responsibilities.

8. Other Business

There was no other business.

9. Dates of future meetings

The next meeting will take place on 28th November at 10am.

A list of dates for meetings in 2025 will be circulated in the pack for the November meeting.

Chairperson:.....

Date:.....