

Dóchas
The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

Dóchas Board 101 (5-24)
28/11/24

Dóchas Board

held on Thursday, 28th November 2024 at 14:00 in the Dóchas office, Suite 8, Olympic House,
Pleasants Street, Dublin 8

M i n u t e s

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

Apologies: John Moffett (Misean Cara) Vice Chairperson

In attendance: Jane-Ann McKenna (CEO of Dóchas)
Anna Farrell (Finance & Operations Manager, Dóchas)

1. Meeting Opening and Standing Items

a. Welcome

The Chairperson opened the meeting, welcoming those present.

b. Apologies and Agenda

There was one apology, noted above. There were 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 26/09/24 were approved: Paul Donnelly (Proposed), Karol Balfe (Seconded).

e. Matters Arising and To-do List

Most of the items under Matters Arising or on the to-do list, with the exception of anti-fraud training for staff, have been completed or will be addressed during the meeting. We will follow up on the one outstanding item over the coming weeks.

2. Reports and Updates

a. CEO Report

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

The CEO said that this has been a busy period for Dóchas, with the focus very much on tomorrow's General Election. Our General Election Manifesto and Electoral Snapshots data was launched at a CEO Breakfast event (5th Nov) and county-specific manifestos were shared with all election candidates. We engaged with and shared our Manifesto with the leaders and directors of elections of all political parties. We also prepared and shared with members an analysis of each party's manifesto to show where they stand on foreign policy. The post-election and pre-formation of government space will be used to influence the programme for government.

Action:

- CEO to follow up with Martina re: possible resources to support our engagement with the development of the programme for government.

b. Emerging Issues

There were no emerging issues.

c. Worldview

The CEO gave an update on the Worldview project, explaining that a Proposal for Phase 2 (2025-2029) has been developed, shared with DFA and will be discussed with them tomorrow. The annual budget is estimated at €120k. DFA have requested a 50/50 split. We have secured €40k (€38k from 9 members and €2k from Dóchas), leaving a shortfall of €20k. We are proposing a shared cost model with 33% (€40k) coming from the sector and 66% (€80k) from DFA. We have engaged with IDEA and with GCE partners about the possibility of using some of their GCE funding for Worldview but given the uncertainty around their multi-annual arrangements it would be difficult for them to commit to funding the project. Our funding proposal to the Community Foundation is still pending and if it comes through it will fill the gap but a response is not expected until 2025. There are some unknowns in terms of costings as we will have to tender for the research pieces.

In response to a question from the Chairperson, the CEO said that the response to the request to members for a contribution towards the cost of funding the project was positive, with the majority of the 9 agreeing to contribute €5k per annum over the five year period. Some members didn't come forward for a variety of reasons, including that a number of members saw their 2024 membership fees increase.

Action:

- CEO to update the Board following meeting with DFA on Worldview.

3. Strategic Topic - Mid-Term Review – Reflection & Next Steps

The Consultant's report on the Mid-Term Review (MTR) together with a presentation on the 2024 Members Survey were included in the pack for today's meeting. The CEO gave a presentation outlining the top findings from the Members survey, the recommendations from the MTR, and how we might go about taking them forward. She also outlined the criteria used to select member representatives to lead network events and activities (e.g. meetings with the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Sudan briefing, the launch of our pre-budget submission, etc), how we decide what we talk about in those spaces, the international networks we engage with, what we are trying to achieve with the Lead piece and what we are doing to include global voices from the south.

During a general discussion the following comments were made:

- Documenting and sharing the criteria and the process for selection would provide transparency in relation to how the makeup of the panels is decided.
- Greater balance in terms of members leading network events and activities is required.
- A summary management response to each recommendation in the MTR would provide a clearer picture of those areas that have been addressed, are in progress, are practical, impractical, etc.

Karol said that overall Dóchas is in a very healthy, positive and constructive space. Broadly speaking it is a very dynamic, reflective network and while there are some issues there is nothing fundamentally wrong, which is very positive. However, we can strengthen our approach to build a more collective movement with a common purpose.

Actions:

- CEO to prepare a summary management response to MTR recommendations for discussion with the Board.
- Board to decide which elements of the MTR they would like to explore further in a session with Members.
- CEO to follow up with Karol re: seeing ourselves as a collective movement with a common purpose.

4. Finance, Audit & Risk Committee

a. Report from Committee

The minutes of the last meeting (21/11/24), together with the January-October financial report and narrative, draft budget for 2025 and risk register were circulated to members in advance. The Treasurer reported that it is anticipated that expenditure will be at €810k by year end (budgeted: €879k). The main underspends relate to the infrastructure piece and to work on the locally led project, both of which will be progressed in 2025. As a result our planned unrestricted deficit (€77k) will be less than anticipated and we will finish the year with unrestricted reserves in line with our reserves policy. There are no current concerns around cash flow but the team will furnish the committee with an updated forecast post year end. The committee recommended that Dóchas explore overdraft facilities which could be drawn on in the event that there is a delay in the receipt of funding in 2025. The committee reviewed the Data Incident Log, Register of Interests and Risk Register, and signed off on the Dóchas Procurement Policy. Given that we have had two successive years of deficit and are budgeting for a deficit in 2025 the committee agreed to work on a multi-annual budget, which would help to demonstrate that, based on a high level of assumption, we will return to a break even situation at the end of the period.

b. Budget for 2025

The CEO presented the draft budget focusing on the following:

- Income is budgeted at €751k and expenditure at €881k, a deficit of €130k. Our principle sources of income remain membership fees (€220k) and Irish Aid (€365k). We have included income from Irish Aid (€60k) and from Members (€60k) for Worldview, which we discussed under agenda item 2(c). Staff costs remain our largest area of expenditure (€471k).
 - Operational costs are likely to increase (approx. €20k) to cover recruitment (€8k), the external review of the Board (€4k) and support with the EU Presidency application (€8k).
 - Network: A budget of €25k has been included for an extra resource (e.g. a project manager) to support us with the digital infrastructure piece so that we can move it forward in 2025. This piece has been taking up a lot of staff time and so this additional resource would help free up those staff so that they can progress other pieces of work. This programme also includes allocations for partnerships with the following:
 - ✓ IDEA: An application has been submitted to the Shared Island Fund (€25k) – decision pending. The project will be led by IDEA but involves co-funding from Dóchas (€2k).
 - ✓ DSAI: To establish a research repository. The project will be led by DSAI but involves co-funding from Dóchas (€7.5k).
 - ✓ Access Europe Training: The project will be led by the Wheel but involves co-funding from Dóchas (€5k).
- This programme also includes memberships (€12.5k) of other networks, including CONCORD (€10k).
- Transform: The main components of this piece relate to progressing our work on Locally Led Development (€20k) and promoting the Dóchas Safeguarding Charter (€2.5k) and Guide to Ethical Communications (€4k).

- Influence: The main components of this piece are work around our pre-budget submission (€8.5k), research consultancies (€8k), a media briefing event (€3k) and media training for members (€2.5K).
- Lead: We have secured a grant (€30K) from Training Links to run our leadership training again in 2025.

The Treasurer noted that the FARC discussed the earlier draft of the budget which was circulated in the Board pack (25 Nov) and showed a deficit of €88k. The revised version (circulated 27 Nov) shows a deficit of €130k, an increase of €42k, which relates to spend on P1(Network). The budget sets our 6 months of projected recurring expenditure at €310k. We need to be careful that we don't reduce our reserves too much and so we will work on the two-year budget so that we can get a clearer picture of where things will stand in 2026.

Decision:

- The recruitment of a new Head of Policy and Advocacy will be managed externally.
- The budget for 2025 was approved. Paul Donnelly (Proposed). Siobhan Cassidy (Seconded).

Action:

- FARC to work on two-year budget to show where reserves stand at the end of 2026.

c. Risk Register: It was noted that:

- Risk 10 (Irish Aid withdraws support) has moved from Green to Amber due to the uncertainty around Worldview funding.
- 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.

5. Nomination to Human Resources & Remuneration Sub-committee

It was noted that the committee's Terms of Reference require that its membership includes two Directors. As we currently have just one Director the issue was discussed with the Chairperson, who indicated her interest in joining the committee.

Decision:

- The Chairperson will join the HR & Remuneration Sub-committee.

6. Other Business

There was no other business.

7. Proposed Meeting Dates for 2025

Board meetings in 2025 will take place at 10am on the following dates: 30th January; 27th March; 26th June; 25th September and 27th November.

The AGM will take place on 8th May 2025.

Chairperson:.....

Date:.....