

Terms of Reference

Dóchas Livelihoods, Food & Nutrition Security Working Group

1. Background and Context

As the world has experienced significant economic growth, technological advancement and global integration, hundreds of millions of people have experienced better living standards and have moved out of poverty. Despite this progress however, while the proportion of people living in hunger has fallen, the absolute number has increased.

The Dóchas Livelihoods, Food & Nutrition Security Working Group offers a forum for Irish NGOs and other civil society stakeholders working on related issues. It is a reference group for Dóchas. The group aims to build on the expertise of its members and their strategic partnerships with Irish civil society and with Southern organisations and networks. Group meetings provide a space for members to reflect on issues pertaining to their work in the sector.

The group pursues technical learning within its own and partner organisations, and strategic engagement with policy makers primarily at the Irish level.

These Terms of Reference were developed in September 2012 as part of a review of the group and finalised in February 2013.

Dóchas states that “working groups are set up to benefit the wider Dóchas network through the development of expertise in the sector, by garnering momentum and action for collective advocacy work, and by providing a space for continuing learning, training and development. Groups may also act as a source of advice and capacity building in their specialist area for others in the network. Dóchas working groups are member-led and self-managed. Their formation, mandate and structures are determined by the Dóchas Board but their agendas and activities are determined with support from the secretariat.”

As far as possible the group adheres to and complies with the Dóchas Working Group Guidelines. These Terms of Reference define further the goals, objectives, activities and processes of the Dóchas Livelihoods, Food & Nutrition Security Working Group.

2. Goal

The Goal of the group is:

To strengthen the effectiveness of Irish actors to support resilience in livelihoods, food and nutrition security

By ‘effectiveness’ the group means the achievement of the planned outcomes of a particular development intervention, and ultimately in achieving positive change in people’s livelihoods, food and nutrition security. FINAL Terms of Reference February 2013 Dóchas Livelihoods, Food and Nutrition Security Working Group

By 'livelihoods' the group means the ability of all, but especially the poor, to earn a living in a sustainable manner, with deference to social, economic and ecological factors. While the group's foundations are in the rural sector, increasing emphasis is put on livelihoods in urban areas. Emerging issues of sustainability of training and markets are also included in this 'livelihoods approach'. The group focuses on issues pertaining to development rather than emergencies. For the working group, "Food and nutrition security exists when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to food, which is safe and consumed in sufficient quantity and quality to meet their dietary needs and food preferences, and is supported by an environment of adequate sanitation, health services and care, allowing for a healthy and active life."

CFS (2012): Coming to terms with terminology. Rome, Italy, 15-20 October 2012

3. Objectives

The objectives of the working group are:

1. To facilitate learning: i) of members and, ii) of the sector in Ireland;
2. To promote the links between research, policy development and practice;
3. To enhance technical sharing in Ireland to enhance programming at the grassroots level;
4. To influence policy change in Ireland, and in Europe and Worldwide through engagement with Irish representatives and others as opportunity arises;
5. To highlight these objectives through an annual event showcasing the work of the group through research, case study presentation, links with like-minded groups and / or other events;

The pursuit of the objectives is as follows:

1. To facilitate members' learning and technical sharing in Ireland and at grassroots level

The group members have a shared understanding that one of the benefits of the group is learning, the sharing of knowledge and experiences with each other. Meetings in Ireland facilitate members to spend time with like-minded people, sharing common interests and goals.

The group and the meetings are a safe space to discuss issues pertaining to livelihoods, food security and nutrition.

The group has a strong history of cooperation between agencies at the grassroots level. Several activities take place annually at the field level in organisations' countries of operation. Technical officers from other organisations working on specific topics are often invited to participate in such activities. This practice will continue. Those (usually larger) agencies facilitating these events will endeavour to liaise with other agencies both Irish and partner organisations, to ensure as great a spread of learning as possible.

The group will capture how different technical sharing and learning takes place in different countries across agencies. The group will also discuss cross-funding opportunities.

Through this learning, the professional development of members is enhanced. Their improved understanding of their sector, and sharing of new approaches, research and

methods strengthen the work of their organisations. All these factors tend to promote best practice in the sector.

The four meetings a year in Ireland will include a learning component – the learning objectives and topics for discussion will be determined in the annual planning for the group. Each of the learning sessions will ensure an overlap and linkages between programme/technical issues and policy/advocacy.

2. To promote the links between research, policy development and practice.

The group recognises that its membership is made up of persons who are primarily involved in either one of the two areas of practice and programme / project implementation or policy and advocacy. The group further recognises that these are branches of the same tree, and promotes cross learning within the group as much as possible.

While the group will work as a team and link as effectively as possible between the two areas of interest, the group will endeavour to document how technical issues can work in different policy environments, and how advocacy can assist the grassroots livelihoods and food and nutrition security work of the agencies.

3. To influence policy change in Ireland, Europe and Worldwide

In order to strengthen the effectiveness of Irish actors in the sector, the group strives to influence policy. Emphasis is on working with the Irish Government, through providing technical support based on the groups' fields of expertise, but policy change will also be sought at the European and International levels, primarily through engagement with the relevant Irish Representative.

Advocacy and opportunities for policy influencing will be flagged in each meeting and will be addressed in a systematic way by the group.

The working group members have links with Irish Aid, the EU and UN agencies. There are also links with agencies such as Teagasc and academic institutions. These links will be strengthened between the group and the institutions through a more organised/ mainstreamed/efficient communications process. Representatives from academia may be invited to attend group meetings. Research activities and outcomes will be shared closely with key stakeholders. The group will continue to participate in activities such as the recent Irish Aid White Paper Review in order to ensure policy makers hear the views of the group.

Group members will share their interactions as individuals and through their agencies with policy makers and influencers as well as reporting/feeding back to the group, for example in relation to Concord meetings. They will also document their work as a group in sharing ideas and endeavouring to influence policy and change in the sector.

The group will take advantage of strategic opportunities as they arise to use its collective voice to influence policy.

4. To highlight these objectives through an annual event showcasing the work of the group through research, case study presentation, links with like-minded groups and / or other events.

An annual meeting will be facilitated by the group to highlight research, emerging evidence and learning, partnerships, academic alliances or other topics of interest to the development community, and specifically the livelihoods and food security community primarily in Ireland.

These events will highlight the visibility of the group in the sector, attracting new members and facilitating learning at a much broader scale than solely within the group itself and the membership organisations.

4. Communications

A core value / activity / process of the group is communications. While the group has tasked itself with improving communications about issues in its sector within that sector, it also is conscious of the need to ensure effective communication within its own membership.

A schedule of meetings will be developed at the annual planning meeting for the entire year. This is a fixed schedule and facilitates members to plan their overseas travel around meeting dates as far as possible to facilitate participation in the group activities.

Where possible to Google groups and docs should be used to share and store information. The group will discuss with Dóchas and decide how best some of the deliberations of its meetings, and its learning events, can be communicated with other Dóchas groups and members, academia, and non-members.

The group may engage with non-traditional partners for some learning events and meetings as deemed appropriate due to the topic, the coincidence of events, or other happening.

5. Membership

Membership is open to relevant staff of Dóchas members. Details on how to become a member of Dóchas are available from www.dochas.ie. The term of working groups is generally three years.

6. Role of Members

The working group will elect a Chair and Deputy Chair annually. While both can be re-elected, the principle of rotation among member organisations will be respected by the group. A recording secretary/minute taker will be appointed at each meeting. The Chair reports to the Board of Dóchas via the Director. The Chairperson will report annually to the Board of Dóchas, and may attend the relevant Board meeting on behalf of the group. The Chairperson will write the report from the Working Group with assistance from other members as required. The report will be shared with the membership and members will be given the opportunity to comment on the report before it is delivered to the Board of Management of Dóchas.

Sub groups of members and others may be established to carry out specific tasks or pieces of work.

Further information on the operations of Dóchas working groups is available in the Dóchas Governance and Procedures Manual.

7. Role of Dóchas

Dóchas is the umbrella organisation for Irish non governmental development organisations.

Dóchas provides a budget to the group to support approved projects. Dóchas may also provide meeting space and some secretarial support. Dóchas will monitor the activities of the group, and supporting the group in its submissions to the Board of Management of Dóchas.

8. Three-Year Rolling Plan

Meetings of the group take place quarterly. The first meeting of the year, usually held in January, will be dedicated to planning. This meeting defines the topics to be addressed at meetings. One meeting of the year will usually be centred on a larger event that will take the form of a conference, report of research done by the group, a link to a larger activity or another event deemed appropriate by the group. For other meetings, when learning is being shared, programme issues will note policy consequences, and policy issues will note practical and technical implications.

Meetings will be scheduled where possible on Wednesdays, usually every three months. The 'event meeting', will be held at a time before year-end that is most conducive. For example, the meeting may take advantage of other gatherings in the sector or academia that will bring interested persons to Dublin or whatever location is decided.

9. Meetings

The Chairperson or Deputy will chair meetings of the working group.

Meetings will take place as defined in (8) above.

Minute taking will revolve between members. It is assumed that the minutes will be shared with the Chairperson as soon as possible after the meeting, but not more than two weeks after the meeting. The minutes will then be circulated to members for information, and approval at the next meeting. It is assumed that this process will be carried out in as timely a manner as possible. Where possible Dóchas will provide a venue for the regular meetings of the group or they may take place in member organisation offices.

10. Annual Event

The event is the public face of the Dóchas Livelihoods, Food and Nutrition Security Working Group. Events that may be facilitated include conferences, discussion groups, debates, films, theatre, other media, field trips and so on. The topic and outline of the event will be discussed at the January planning meeting. A sub committee may be appointed by the group to lead the planning of the event.