

Dóchas

The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

Dóchas Board 89 (3-22)
23/06/22

Dóchas Board

held via Zoom on
Thursday, 23 June 2022 at 10.00am

M i n u t e s

- Present:** Sarah O'Toole (CBM Ireland) Chairperson
John Moffett (Misean Cara) Vice Chairperson
Siobhán Cassidy (Trócaire) Treasurer
Peter McDevitt (Self Help Africa) Company Secretary
Eamon Sharkey (GOAL)
Bobby McCormack (Development Perspectives)
Lucia Ennis (Concern Worldwide)
Una Murray (Sightsavers)
Grace Milton (External Board Member)
Martina Fitzgerald (External Board Member)
- In attendance:** Jane-Ann McKenna (CEO of Dóchas)
Anna Farrell (Finance & Operations Manager, Dóchas)
- For Item 11 only:** Louise Finan (Head of Programme & Policy, Dóchas)
Ronan Doyle (Head of Communications and Public Engagement, Dóchas)
Séamus O'Gorman (Head of Membership Engagement, Dóchas)
- Apologies:** Karole Balfe (ActionAid Ireland)
Senan Turnbull (External Board Member)

1. Apologies and Agenda

The outgoing Vice Chairperson (Sarah O'Toole) opened the meeting welcoming those present. There were two apologies, noted above. One member (Eamon) had to leave at 11am and one member (Una) joined at 11.30am. There were no changes to the agenda as circulated.

2. Election of Officers

- **Chairperson:** Sarah O'Toole has indicated her willingness to serve in this capacity. Her nomination is supported by Peter McDevitt.
Decision: Sarah was elected Chairperson. Bobby McCormack (Proposed). Peter McDevitt (Seconded).
- **Vice Chairperson:** John Moffett has indicated his willingness to serve in this capacity.
Decision: John was elected Vice Chairperson. Sarah O'Toole (Proposed). Siobhán Cassidy (Seconded).
- **Treasurer:** Siobhán Cassidy has indicated her willingness to serve in this capacity.
Decision: Siobhán was elected Treasurer. John Moffett (Proposed). Eamon Sharkey (Seconded).
- **Company Secretary:** Peter McDevitt has indicated his willingness to serve in this capacity for a further term.

Decision: Peter was elected Company Secretary. Lucia Ennis (Proposed). John Moffett (Seconded).

3. Welcome to new Board members

The Chairperson said that two new Board members (Siobhán Cassidy and Karol Balfe) were elected at the AGM (13/05/22). She welcomed Siobhán to her first Board meeting and noted that Karol was unable to attend due to a previous travel commitment. It was noted that both Siobhán and Karol have: received an induction pack, had induction meetings with the CEO, returned their signed letters of appointment and Code of Conduct for Board members, and have been registered with the CRO, CRA and ROB.

4. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

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

5. Minutes of Board Meeting

The Board approved the Minutes of the 88th Board meeting (27/01/22): Sarah O'Toole (Proposed), Lucia Ennis (Seconded).

6. Notes on Irish Aid Exchange

The document on the Exchange (24/03/22) was noted.

Action:

- Anna to correct typo on Bobby's surname.

7. Matters Arising and To-do List

Most of the items on the to-do list, with the exception of the following, have either been completed or will be addressed during this meeting:

- The CEO said that it hadn't been possible to find an agreeable date for a meeting of the advisory group (Grace, Martina, and Eamon) which was tasked with working on the development of our funding diversity strategy. This item will be discussed further under Agenda item 8.
- The auditor's recommendation around a fraud risk assessment will be discussed by the sub-committee on Finance, Audit and Risk (FARC) at its next meeting (date TBC).
- The review of structural costs will be completed as part of the process around the development of a 4-year funding application to Irish Aid.

Actions:

- FARC to follow up on auditor's recommendation around a fraud risk assessment.

8. Appointments to Board sub-committees

A list of current members of sub-committees was circulated in advance. It was noted that the Chairperson will move from the HR & Remuneration to the Governance committee, leaving a vacancy on that committee. Four Board members don't currently participate on a sub-committee but three of those (Eamon, Grace and Martina) have volunteered to work on the development of a funding diversity strategy.

Martina queried if the advisory group on funding diversity should be formalised into a sub-committee. Over the last two years there was an informal group (Grace and Martina) which met with members of the team in advance of the budget to advise on strategy and focus around the pre-budget submission and the ODA campaign.

The CEO said that she wasn't aware of the existence of such a group or committee but will check with the Head of Programme and Policy in that regard. The process for developing the pre-budget submission included extensive consultation with members over three months. The launch was timed to coincide with the Horn of Africa event (14 June) for increased impact. The political engagement strategy that was developed in 2021 with external support, is the framework for our 2022 plan. Support will be needed from the board for political contacts and engagement. It is preferable not to have another committee given the additional workload and small size of the organisation. There is also a risk of duplicating the process that has been conducted with members. We are committed to having a funding advisory meeting and whilst this has not occurred yet, the team have been actively involved in applying for grants.

Decisions:

- The groups working on the funding diversity and political influencing pieces will be amalgamated as their membership and the skill sets of those involved overlap somewhat.

Actions:

- CEO to check if Karol is available to join the HR & Remuneration committee.
- CEO to reach out to larger members to see if they might nominate someone with HR expertise to participate on the HR & Remuneration committee in a non-Director capacity.
- CEO to circulate a Doodle with suggested dates for a meeting on the funding diversity and political influencing pieces.

9. CEO Report

The **CEO Report** was circulated in advance, and Jane-Ann outlined the main highlights:

- The conference (12/05/22) was the catalyst for our discussions on Locally Led Development (LLD). We are working on a report on the event, which will be shared with members over the coming weeks as we engage with them on next steps.
- To support the development of a more dynamic network we invited each Member to nominate a Network Delegate (ND) to act as their point of contact with Dóchas (see CEO report for further details on role). David Ehrlichman (Converge.net) facilitated the first meeting of ND's on 20 June. We are developing a member's survey to capture members experiences of Dóchas and map their activities, interests and potential areas for collaboration.
- The Horn of Africa 'Sounding the Alarm on Famine' briefing (14 June) for Oireachtas members focused on the food crisis and its underlying causes. Four members (Concern Worldwide, GOAL, Trócaire and Oxfam) presented at the event, which was a huge success in terms of collaboration among members. 22 members of the Oireachtas were in attendance and there was a lot of dialogue with others who weren't in a position to attend. President Michael D. Higgins has offered his support in terms of amplifying our messages. There was considerable media interest in the event, which has provided opportunities for further political and media engagement around the issue and around ODA. We need to maintain the momentum going forward.
- We met with Jon Williams, MD and Head of News & Current Affairs at RTE (13 June) to see how we can engage more effectively as a sector.
- We presented our pre-budget submission to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (JCFAD) (21 June).
- Two staff (Niamh Kingston, Project Manager – Worldview and Seamus O'Gorman, Head of Membership Engagement) have resigned to take up new posts elsewhere. Today is Niamh's last day and Séamus will finish up on 8 July, but will be on annual leave for his last week with us.
- We have applied to the Training Links Programme for €48k to support leadership training for the sector. We expect to hear the outcome next week and will keep you posted in that regard.

The Board congratulated the CEO and the team on the huge amount of work that has gone on over the last few months. The Horn of Africa event was exceptional in terms of raising the profile of the issue and the collaboration among members around the event was really positive.

10. Emerging Issues

Emerging issues were dealt with under agenda items 9 and 11.

11. Strategic Topic: ODA Campaign 2022

Louise, Ronan and Séamus joined for the discussion on this item only.

The CEO outlined the process to date that led to the development of our Pre-Budget Submission 2023, copies of which were circulated in advance. It was necessary to finalise the document in advance of the Horn of Africa briefing so that we could link the key issues with the key asks outlined in the submission. Our focus now is on political engagement and what support we need from members and the board on this.

Louise said that over the last nine months we have been building on and implementing the political engagement strategy developed by Olwyn Enright in 2021. Our strategy involves engaging outside the pre-budget cycle, engaging on current issues while weaving in overall ODA messaging, encouraging members to engage with politicians based on their individual interests, engaging with politicians outside the traditional foreign affairs setting, and engaging with key advisors and officials. We have met with several ministers and advisors since March, appeared before the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs & Trade on three occasions since February and organised a briefing on the crisis in the Horn of Africa, which was attended by 22 politicians. Over the coming weeks we will continue to seek meetings, create political interest in the issues outlined in our submission, nurture emerging champions and work with members to plot out potential for political visits to overseas programmes.

Ronan outlined our media and public campaign for September, which will involve targeting European Multilateralists and National Pragmatists (the moveable middle). The campaign will complement the Worldview experiment. We will target local and regional media through a series of local features/interviews with people from the area working in development. The focus will be on issues around hunger, climate, conflict and COVID. We will also look for national media coverage with the focus on tying the ODA asks to the issues in the Horn of Africa.

The Board congratulated the team on a very impressive campaign. The submission is really comprehensive and contains clear asks, the Horn of Africa briefing was great, the media work and political engagement work has been very successful and it's a real achievement to have secured meetings with the various Ministers.

During a general discussion the following comments were made:

- The focus on the regional/local media should be balanced with national also.
- We need to be mindful of the language we use - words like development and vulnerable are outdated. Marginalised is more apt.
- We need to engage more with opposition parties. A key interlocuter would help us to engage with them at a more strategic level.

Louise said that while we have some interaction with Sinn Fein representatives we have struggled to engage with them in any depth. The key is to send information on topics that are of interest – we managed to do that successfully with Ukraine. They use language around social justice and rights so we need to look at that. We are actively looking for the right person to support/advise us in building relationships with them.

The CEO said that our next steps will be around implementing our political engagement strategy and media and public campaign as outlined above. The submission is a useful tool for members to have and to use in their own advocacy work. We want to involve members in the political engagement piece, and linking with local constituencies. We would value Board input around political engagement. As agreed earlier (see item 8) we will organise a meeting of the group working on the funding diversity and political influencing pieces to take this forward.

12. Report from sub-committee on Human Resources and Remuneration

The Chairperson said that the committee met with the CEO on 2 June. An update on staff and HR issues was circulated in advance.

The CEO said that following a benchmarking exercise and a review of exit interviews it is proposed that:

- with effect from 1 July 2022 the contract for the Programme Support Officer (PSO) role be extended under a newly refined job description in line with the proposal from the sub-committee on HR and Remuneration.
- the contract for the Worldview Project Manager role be offered on a fixed term basis from September 2022 to 31 December 2024 in line with the proposal from the sub-committee on HR and Remuneration. In the interim we plan to engage a consultant on a part-time basis to manage the experimental campaign.

The CEO said that the job profile and salary bandwidth for the Head of Membership Engagement role is currently under review but it is anticipated that the current salary will be sufficient to attract suitable candidates. The CEO, supported by the PSO, will fill the gap until a suitable replacement can be found.

It was noted that the sub-committee will look at the salary issue later in the year as part of the annual budgetary process.

Decisions:

- The PSO will be offered a permanent contract.

13. Sub-committee on Governance

13.1 Report from Committee

The CEO said that the last meeting of the committee (13/6/22) focused on our Charities Governance Code (CGC) Compliance Record Form (CRF) for 2021 and on the constitutional review process. We will discuss the CRF under item 13.2 and will bring a draft of the revised Constitution to the Board for discussion at its next meeting.

13.2 Review of Dóchas Charities Governance Code (CGC) Compliance Record Form (CRF) for 2021

Copies of the completed form, which has been reviewed and approved by the sub-committee, were circulated in advance. Anna explained that the only outstanding item relates to section 5.11 and the need to define what we mean by a diverse board. The Chairperson of the committee (Senan) has agreed to draft a definition for discussion with the committee (22 Aug.) and then with the Board at its next meeting. The committee is comfortable that we will be in a position to declare full compliance when we file our return in line with the 31 October deadline.

Decision:

- The Board approved the CRF for 2021. Sarah O'Toole (Proposed). John Moffett (Seconded).

13.3 Dóchas Complaints Policy and Procedure

The CEO said that the document, copies of which were circulated in advance, has been approved by the sub-committee on Governance. It will need to be updated to reflect the fact that our current Head of Membership Engagement has resigned.

In response to a question from Grace, the CEO said that the policy includes a number of escalation points for dealing with complaints (e.g. by email to the CEO or in writing to the Chairperson of the Board) which could also be used to make a complaint confidentially.

Decisions:

- The policy will be updated to note that complaints can also be made using either the 'Contact form' or 'Email us' buttons at the bottom of each page on our website.
- The Board approved the Dóchas Complaints Policy and Procedure, incorporating the above alteration. Siobhán Cassidy (Proposed). Lucia Ennis (Seconded).

14. Other Business

14.1 Meeting Schedule

The Chairperson said that the CEO will be away for much of September and so we need to move our next meeting (scheduled for 22 Sept.) to give her time to work on the background documentation for the meeting on her return.

Decision:

- The next meeting of the Board will take place in person on Thursday, 6 October at 10am.

Actions:

- Lucia to check availability of space in Concern Worldwide to host next meeting.
- CEO to set date for meeting of sub-committee on Finance, Audit and Risk (FARC).

14.2 Updates from Irish Aid

The CEO said that:

- Ruairí de Burca, Director General of Irish Aid, is leaving in July. He will be replaced by Michael Gaffey, who will take up the post in September.
- Irish Aid is working on an MoU with the Regulator, which they hope to finalise before Ruairí's departure.
- We have been engaging with Irish Aid in relation to the crisis in the Horn of Africa they have asked us to support them in organising a political visit in late August/early September. They issued a press release on the day of our Horn of Africa crisis briefing and are happy with our approach to the issue.
- The Exchange with Irish Aid will take place at the start of our next meeting (6 Oct.).

15. Board Dates for 2022

The **next two meetings** of the Board will take place at 10am on the following dates:

- Thursday, 6 October
- Thursday, 24 November

Chairperson:.....

Date:.....