

## **Partnership In Practice: A Dóchas Survey of NGO Relationships**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **1. Background**

Dóchas, the umbrella organisation of Irish Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), has 39 members, 22 of which have programmes and partners in Kenya - the highest number of Irish NGOs in any one country. As part of its strategic plan for 2008, Dóchas has committed to undertake a poll to gain a 'southern perspective' on the work of Irish NGOs. At the beginning of the year, the majority of member organisations stated that this should be a priority activity for Dóchas this year.

Based on the geographical spread of Irish NGOs, Dóchas has decided to conduct a survey to investigate the views held by Kenyan stakeholders of Irish NGOs. These will include Kenyan NGOs, community-based organisations and other civil society partners of Irish NGOs.

It is hoped that this survey will provide Dóchas and its membership with an impartial, valuable and meaningful, albeit summary and ad hoc, appraisal of their work and allow Kenyan counterparts to contribute to ongoing debates about the role of Irish NGOs, their accountability and effectiveness. Essentially, the research is about finding out how Kenyan stakeholders view and rate their relationship with Irish NGOs so that the latter can do their work better; it is an informal 'performance review'. It should also encourage Irish NGOs to 'take stock' of their relationships with their own overseas partners and engage in critical reflection about how they expect to be viewed versus how they are actually viewed by southern counterparts and beneficiaries. It is also possible that the results of this research may promote the implementation of systems, policies, codes or processes that facilitate the more regular capture of non-technical feedback.

*"As part of its commitment to a rights-based approach to development, in which accountability is a key principle, it is imperative that Dóchas enshrines principles of participation and transparency in all its relationships and understands the factors that can undermine these principles"* Dóchas NGO Accountability Paper, 2006.

Dóchas is uniquely and aptly placed to undertake this research. As an independent organisation with no operations in Kenya or direct links to any organisations or groups there, Dóchas brings neutrality to the research design, implementation, results and formulation of recommendations. Furthermore, Kenyan civil society organisations should feel more comfortable expressing honest views and opinions without apprehension that their comments will have a negative impact on the relationship with their Irish NGO partner or jeopardise future support. The research findings and subsequent report will

not reveal the identity of any individual or organisation and the confidentiality of respondents will be guaranteed from the outset.

This survey is timely given current debate and discussion around NGO accountability and a move by many NGOs toward a 'partnership model'. It is pertinent for NGOs to reflect on what they themselves understand to mean by the term 'partnership' and what it looks like in practice; but also, what Southern NGO partners expect from such relationships. It is also expected that NGOs will be faced with stronger and more robust public scrutiny as Ireland comes closer to the 0.7% ODA/GDP target, increasing the demand for NGOs to demonstrate their impact through independent evidence-based research. This Dóchas research has the potential to contribute here.

*"International aid is fundamentally about relationships.....one of the criticisms of NGDO aid relationships, noted by Fowler (2000a), is that they display a careless application of the partnership principle. Authentic partnerships require a joint commitment to long term interaction, shared responsibility towards achieving common goals, reciprocal obligations, equality, mutuality and a balancing of power in relationships. Aid agencies, therefore, need to honestly assess the realities they confront and learn from them rather than obliquely applying the term 'partnership' to a vast and disparate array of aid relationships"* Dóchas NGO Accountability Paper, 2006.

Although this survey will focus on Kenya, it is hoped and expected that it will reveal lessons and recommendations that are applicable to other contexts and that the research will also inform more general discussions about partnership policies and practices.

It is intended that the survey will capture the views and perception of Kenyan NGOs and facilitate joint-learning to enhance the effectiveness and impact of Irish NGOs.

The research is not a monitoring tool and it does not seek to evaluate partners. Any reference to programme or activity-related issues will not be considered as a part of the analysis or final report, unless they relate directly to the issue of partnership.

## **2. The Survey**

The objectives of this survey project are as follows:

### **Overall objective:**

To gain an insight and understanding of what selected Kenyan civil society organisations (a) know and (b) think of Irish NGOs,

in order to:

Stimulate reflection and learning among Irish NGOs about the nature and quality of their relationship with civil society in the global South.

**Sub-objective 1:**

To create an opportunity for Kenyan stakeholders to give informal and unrestricted feedback to an independent researcher, on their relationship with, and opinion of, Irish NGOs.

**Sub-objective 2:**

Generate general recommendations to Irish NGOs about how they could augment relationships with partners in all countries of operation.

**Selection of Kenyan civil society organisations:**

The selection of Kenyan civil society organisations is a critical factor in ensuring that the research is viable, representative and insightful. The survey sample will not be exhaustive but will focus on as much of a representative group as is feasible. It is hoped that the survey will have the full endorsement of both Irish and Kenyan organisations and that both will be open to engaging with the results.

- Irish NGOs will be requested by Dóchas to submit a list, including full contact details, of all the Kenyan NGOs, partners and groups they work with at present – as well as a list of recent former partnerships. They will also be asked to submit a summary of their operations in Kenya including budget, number of staff, nature of operation, length of operation, etc.
- Kenyan civil society organisations (CSOs) will be selected by Dóchas and the research team based on location, size, type and sector to ensure that the research sample is representative of Kenyan civil society and the work of Irish NGOs in Kenya. Factors such as costs and feasibility will also be considered in the determination of the sample.
- The sample should also include, if feasible, Kenyan CSOs that are linked with more than one Irish NGO.
- There should also be a representative range of levels of support and length of support i.e. Kenyan CSOs in receipt of substantial support to organisations in receipt of relatively moderate support (financial, material and technical); Kenyan CSOs that have been in partnership with an Irish NGO for a long period of time to partnerships that are relatively newly formed. A range of NGO types will also be included – CBOs, church groups, local government, etc. Also, insight into the changing nature of partnerships over time and relative to levels of support could be documented.
- Where possible and feasible, a minimum of two and maximum of four Kenyan CSOs per Irish NGO will be surveyed. If possible, more than one person from each group will be interviewed – one from management and one from programming, for example.

### **3. Survey methodology**

The research will be a mixture of face to face in-depth semi-structured interviews, following a set of specified questions and postal/email questionnaires. The survey will cover national or local Kenyan NGOs, CBOs and community leaders, rather than the Kenyan offices of International or Irish NGOs.

The survey will contain both quantitative and qualitative elements, assessing opinions, and perceptions among Kenyan civil society about the type and strength of their partnership with Irish NGOs. The research instrument will be culturally sensitive, reflecting a participatory and reflective process. The survey aims to collect views about the relevance, flexibility and accountability of Irish NGOs, based on a series of indicators relating to partnership issues.

The research will be conducted in situ by a Kenyan research team from Strategic Resources Kenya Ltd. Respondents will be fully briefed on the purpose of the research and assured that their responses will have no bearing on their relationship with their Irish partner NGO. Respondents will be encouraged to reflect on the questions openly and honestly, to express their opinions & attitudes, make observations, draw comparisons and conclusions. The final report will not directly quote or mention any individual or Kenyan CSO by name.

The research instrument will be designed to reflect the various research areas.

#### **For the overall objective:**

##### 1) Background information

- To enable Dóchas to make cross-references among the answers, each organisation will be asked some basic information about themselves: size (in staff and financial turn-over), year of establishment, type of presence in Kenya, working languages, regional priorities, etc.

##### 2) What Kenyan CSOs *know* about Irish NGOs?

- Respondents will be asked how they receive or access information about their partner. For example, are they in receipt of annual reports, newsletters and marketing material (especially those which related to their project or country), what form do organisational updates take, do they have access to data about the Irish NGO's size, structure, budget, source of funding, type of work, etc.
- Respondents will be asked who initiated the partnership, and how they understand the partnership to fit in their own overall strategy, and the strategy of the Irish NGO.

### 3) What Kenyan CSOs *think* about Irish NGOs?

- Respondents will be asked to rate their partner organisation(s) along a scale according to a range statement. The statements will focus on issues related to:
  - The Irish organisation's:
    - overall approach
    - focus
    - values & ethos
    - contribution to progress in Kenya
    - approach to participation & transparency
    - openness to feedback
    - skills
    - effectiveness and the overall quality of their work

#### **Under sub-objective 1:**

Respondents will be asked to give examples of the positive elements of their relationship with their Irish partner NGO, as well as the challenges. They will be asked to elaborate on the benefits - or otherwise - to them of working with an Irish NGO (including and beyond financial support) and if there is anything unique about Irish NGOs that make them 'better' or 'good' partners. Respondents, where possible and feasible, will be asked to draw comparisons with other NGOs. Respondents will also be asked what, if anything, they would like to change about their relationship with their Irish partner NGO.

#### **Under sub-objective 2:**

- Respondents will be asked to describe "good partnership" in theory, to provide a basis to rate the responses relating to the existing partnerships in relation to the ideal.
- Respondents will be asked to rate their partner organisations along a number of indicators, for example, they listen, they communicate, they consult, they engage, they change based on feedback, they are efficient, they are cost effective, they are flexible, they are adaptable, they are open to change.
- Respondents will be asked to indicate whether partner organisations are fully aware of the country context (political, cultural and historical dynamics), how they address language barriers and their understanding and respect of cultural norms.
- Respondents will be asked their opinion of the partnership, how funding proposals are written or how funding is requested and received.
- Respondents will be asked to rate the partnership/relationship, in terms of impact and effectiveness. What works well in the partnerships, what are the challenges and opportunities, now and in the future?

- Respondents will be asked if they are satisfied with current decision-making and consultation processes. If not, they will be asked to elaborate on the barriers to challenging these processes.
- Respondents will be asked to explain how feedback mechanisms work & if they feel that they can be entirely honest with their Irish NGO partner. Do they plan and learn together?
- Respondents will be asked if the partnership has been a positive experience for them and if they feel secure in that relationship (and if not, why not).
- Respondents will be asked to elaborate on what they perceive to be the challenges and opportunities in the partnership.

In all cases, respondents will be given an opportunity and encouraged to elaborate on their responses and to give examples.

#### 4. Timeline

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Delivered by</b>
Approval of research project by Dóchas Board	July 2008
Appointment of Irish research coordinator	August 2008
Irish NGOs requested to submit summary of their Kenyan operations, including a full list of partners.	August 2008
Call for proposals from Kenyan researchers	July 2008
Lead researcher (in Kenya) appointed	September 2008
In consultation with Dóchas and Irish NGOs, identify Kenyan NGOs, partners, communities and beneficiaries (min. of 2, max of 4 per Irish NGO)	September 2008
Questionnaire and research methodology developed by research team, and approved by Dóchas.	October 2008
Briefing sheet for Kenyan CSO developed and approved	October 2008
Establishment of research team in Kenya, briefing and training and initial contact with Kenyan organisations.	October 2008
Primary research	November – December 2008
Collation of results	January 2009
Report submitted to Dóchas	February 2009
Dissemination of report by Dóchas and follow up workshop	Early 2009
Dissemination of report to Kenyan CSOs.	Early 2009

## 5. Notes

- Dóchas will retain full ownership and rights of this research.
- All organisations surveyed will receive a copy of the Terms of Reference for the research, and a copy of the final report.
- Any images captured in relation to the research will comply fully with the Dóchas code of conduct on images and messages and will not be published as part of the report without the express permission of the subject (and/or related organisation/group).
- Irish NGOs will not be informed about the names of the organisations that have been selected for the survey, although a list of organisations consulted will appear in the final report.
- For validity reasons, the research instrument will not be shared with Irish NGOs until after the research has been conducted.

For all further information, please contact

Dóchas  
12 Harcourt Street  
Dublin 2  
Ireland  
[www.dochas.ie](http://www.dochas.ie)

## **ANNEX: Dóchas members working in Kenya**

- ActionAid Ireland
- Aidlink
- Bothar
- ChildFund Ireland
- Children in Crossfire
- Church Mission Society Ireland
- Concern Worldwide
- Friends of Londiani
- Gorta
- Irish League of Credit Unions
- Irish Missionary Union
- Irish Red Cross
- Oxfam Ireland
- Plan Ireland
- Self Help International Ireland
- Suas Educational Development
- Trócaire
- Vita
- Volunteer Mission Movement
- Voluntary Services International
- Voluntary Service Overseas
- World Vision Ireland.

### **List of all Dóchas members:**

ActionAid Ireland, Afri, Aidlink, Amnesty International, Bothar, Centre for Global Education, ChildFund Ireland, Children in Crossfire, Christian Aid Ireland, Church Mission Society Ireland, Comhlámh, Concern Worldwide, Galway One World Centre, Friends of Londiani, Gorta, Irish Commission for Justice and Social Affairs, Irish Council for International Studies, ISI, Irish Family Planning Association, Irish Foundation for Cooperative Development, Irish League of Credit Unions, Irish Missionary Union, Irish Red Cross, Kerry Action for Development International, National Youth Council of Ireland, Oxfam Ireland, Plan Ireland, Self Help International Ireland, Skillshare International Ireland, Suas Educational Development, The Hope Foundation, Trócaire, Vita, Voluntary Services International, Voluntary Service Overseas, Volunteer Mission Movement, War on Want Northern Ireland, Wingspread Ireland, World Vision Ireland