

Dóchas

The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

Dóchas Board 102 (1-25)
30/01/25

Dóchas Board

held on Thursday, 30th January 2025 at 10:00 in the Dóchas office, Suite 8, Olympic House,
Pleasants Street, Dublin 8

M i n u t e s

Present: John Moffett (Misean Cara) Vice Chairperson – in the Chair
Karol Balfe (ActionAid Ireland)
Olive Moore (Front Line Defenders)
Frank Long (Oxfam Ireland) (Virtually)
Martina Fitzgerald (External Board Member) (Virtually)
Paul Donnelly (External Board Member)
David Donoghue (External Board Member) (Virtually)

Apologies: Rosamond Bennett (Christian Aid Ireland) Chairperson
Siobhán Cassidy (Trócaire) Treasurer & Company Secretary

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

1. Meeting Opening, Introductions and Standing Items

a. Welcome

The Chairperson opened the meeting, welcoming David, who is joining us for the first time today. Following a general round of introductions David gave a short outline of his background and experience to date.

b. Apologies and Agenda

There were two apologies, noted above. There were no changes to the agenda as circulated. However, it was agreed that the suspension of USAID funding will be discussed under item 6 (Any Other Business).

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 28/11/24 were approved: Olive Moore (Proposed), Karol Balfe (Seconded).

e. Matters Arising and To-do List

Most of the items under Matters Arising or on the to-do list have been completed or will be addressed during the meeting. The CEO will follow up with Karol and with the FARC on the outstanding items and anti-fraud training for staff will be organised when there is a full team in place.

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:

- **Staff Changes:** Our Programme Support Officer resigned in December and finished up with Dóchas in mid-January. A replacement has been selected and will start in February. The Head of Policy and Advocacy recruitment process, managed by Charity Careers Ireland, is underway. There has been a good level of interest. The CEO will be in touch with Board members to assist with second round interviews.
- **Programme for Government (P4G):** The CEO briefed the Board on our advocacy strategy to influence government formation and the P4G. Going forward we will work with CEO's and members to shape and align our messaging so that the focus is on Ireland's presence and influence in the world and in the multilateral system. We will also look for meetings with the new Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Harris, and with the new Minister of State, Neale Richmond.
- **Meeting with DFA Civil Society Unit:** The CEO, Head of Policy and Advocacy and Head of Membership Engagement met (28th Jan) with Mark Finegan, Mark Montgomery and Joseph Heade to discuss priorities over the next two years. In a positive step it was agreed that we would: meet quarterly; look at how we can do policy dialogue differently; and organise 2-3 convenings with Dóchas member CEO's and the DG of Irish Aid.

Decision:

- Dóchas to sign Worldview contract with DFA.

b. Emerging Issues

There were no emerging issues.

3. Strategic Topic

• **Mid-Term Review – follow up**

A Management Response to the Mid Term Review was circulated to members in advance. The CEO brought members through the document, highlighting the recommendations we are/will work on as well as those we disagree with or don't intend to prioritise. The review report was shared with Mark Finegan and Mark Montgomery (DFA) and no questions were raised.

Members were happy with the review exercise and felt that the reflections were consistent with what was discussed at the Board Away Day (08/11/24) and at the last Board meeting (28/11/24).

• **Update – New Government**

This item was discussed under agenda item 2(a) [see Programme for Government].

Decision:

- The Board signed off on the Review and was very happy with the Management Response and with the outline of actions to be progressed.

4. Finance, Audit & Risk Committee

a. **Risk Register:** It was noted that:

- Risk 5 (Anti-NGO and civil society sentiment amongst Irish public and EU) has been adapted to include the EU and has moved from Green to Amber due to increased far-right rhetoric giving rise to anti-civil society and anti-ODA sentiment.
- Risk 10 (Irish Aid withdraws support) remains Amber as the contract for Worldview has not yet been signed.
- Risk 13 (Staffing Gaps) remains Amber because we currently have one gap and two recruitment process underway.

5. Governance Committee

a. Report from Committee

It was noted that the committee met on 11/12/24 to review the Protected Disclosures Policy and the Terms of Reference for the external review of the Board. The Head of Membership Engagement also provided an update on the review of the Membership Handbook, the content of which is expected to come before the committee in March. The committee met again on 28/01/25 to discuss the process for elections to the Board of Dóchas. The meeting also noted that the Terms of Reference for the external review of the Board have been shared externally with responses to be reviewed by the Chair of the committee (Paul) after 10th February.

b. Board Succession Planning

Paul said that in discussing this item the committee referred to relevant sections of the Dóchas Constitution and Governance Manual. He circulated a note outlining the committee's discussion and recommendation on the way forward.

During a general discussion it was felt that communications to members around Board elections should clearly articulate the role of the Board, the role of a Director and the skills required by the Board. In the interests of transparency and full disclosure the communications should also include a declaration where a retiring Director is standing for re-election. These points should be reiterated by the Chairperson at the AGM before nominees are invited to introduce themselves and outline what they will bring to the Board and before members are invited to vote on the nominations received.

c. Dóchas Protected Disclosures Policy

A copy of the Dóchas Protected Disclosures Policy, which was reviewed by the Governance committee (11/12/24), was circulated to members in advance.

Karol said that there were some changes to the Protected Disclosures Act last year so we need be sure that these are reflected in our revised Policy.

Actions:

- Karol to send copy of ActionAid Ireland Protected Disclosures Policy to Dóchas for review.
- CEO to send Board skills audit to Paul for review to ensure that we have the right skills on the Board.
- Governance Committee to review communications to members around Board elections to ensure that they include the points outlined above.
- Governance Committee to ensure that 2024 changes to Protected Disclosures Act are reflected in Dóchas Protected Disclosures Policy.

Decision:

- Discussion on the Dóchas Protected Disclosures Policy was deferred to the next meeting.

6. HR Committee

a. Report from Committee

The CEO said that the committee met on 20/01/25 to discuss recent changes to the team (outlined in 2(a) above), the committee's Terms of Reference and the Employee Handbook.

7. Other Business

- **Suspension of USAID Funding Arrangements:** The CEO said that we are trying to get a handle on what is happening and how this is affecting our members. Some of our members are directly affected by the suspension, while others are impacted indirectly. We will reach out to CEO's to see what we, as a sector, can do collectively. We have also approached DFA with a view to organising a CEO meeting with Michael Gaffey. We have been linking in with international organisations (e.g. CONCORD, ICVA, etc) to see how they are responding.

8. Meeting Dates for 2025

Board meetings in 2025 will take place at 2pm on 27th March and at 10am on the following dates: 26th June; 25th September and 27th November.

The AGM and will take place on 8th May 2025.

Chairperson:.....

Date:.....