



The Irish Association
of Non-Governmental
Development Organisations

Terms of Reference

Defining Locally Led Development Success Factors: Local Partner Perspectives

Consultancy Services: Local Partner Consultations and Findings

1. Background

Dóchas connects, strengthens and represents a network of international development and humanitarian organisations based in Ireland who have a shared vision of a just, sustainable and equal world. Comprised of 47 full members and 8 associate members, Dóchas plays a unique role in safeguarding Ireland's reputation of punching above its weight due to its long-standing commitment to global development.

Our members are committed to human rights, justice and the eradication of poverty, and demonstrate this through their work in international development, protection, humanitarian assistance, sustainability, education and inclusion. Dóchas members value collaboration and believe that through working together, we can achieve our collective goals. There is a willingness among members to collaborate more systematically, share capabilities and engage in a network where we can learn and act together. The overarching objective in our [strategic plan](#) (2022-2026) is to develop a strong and dynamic network that enhances opportunities for connection, coordination and collaboration.

This project will bring together a cross-section of local partners of Dóchas members in three countries in East Africa to articulate what they see as the most important elements - the key success indicators - in moving to locally led development (LLD). These will be explored in the context of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) frameworks for LLD.

Context

As part of ongoing sectoral transformation Dóchas members are moving incrementally towards models of LLD. A number have significantly strengthened their partnership approach over the last five years, aligning with sectoral requirements for INGOs to prioritise the leadership of local actors and demonstrate a commitment to change. In tandem with Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs, who require concrete LLD processes amongst recipients of funds under [Ireland's Civil Society Partnership for A Better World](#) (ICSP), all ten ICSP partners have now developed LLD policies or

pathways. Other Dóchas members are also evolving policies and initiatives to build more equitable partnerships with local organisations.

While agencies vary considerably in relation to where they fall on a continuum of moving to LLD models, the need to gradually shift power to local partners in the Global South is well recognised across the membership base. From an Irish donor perspective, this momentum is highlighted in Irish Aid's ICSP funding scheme in which Process Outcome 3 is defined as: *Local actors are empowered to represent, and deliver services to communities and people.*

The membership has started a collective examination of how agencies currently measure the move to LLD models. Amongst both ICSP and non-ICSP members, initial discussions have indicated that while considerable progress has been made on policy development, in research, and in the roll-out of specific pilot initiatives in the LLD space, LLD measurement and MEAL frameworks are still limited for many organisations. For some, they are in the very early stages of development. Existing measurements generally focus on qualitative indicators for particular aspects of quality of partnerships, capacity and systems strengthening, and simple quantitative indicators for on-granting.

In most cases across the membership, it is as yet unclear how LLD pillars such as local ownership, agency, leadership, and accountability are assessed in a comprehensive framework. It is also unclear to what extent, if any, local partners have been involved in defining the success factors in moving to LLD models. Notably, in the 2024 OECD DAC LLD peer learning case study [report on Ireland](#), researchers highlighted a need for dialogue with local partners on defining benchmarks and measurement of LLD.

This project will initiate a collective dialogue with a number of Dóchas members' local partners to help unpack what the success factors for moving to a LLD model could look like. Recognising that we are operating in a dynamic context, and that success factors will evolve over time, the work will explore areas including funding, decision-making, and the wider aid architecture. For many local and national actors, financial sustainability and autonomy are becoming core priorities alongside leadership and representation, and it will be important to interrogate how these elements intersect with wider structural changes.

The objectives of the project are to:

- Support Dóchas members in meeting their commitments on LLD by gathering evidence on what local partners consider to be relevant indicators of success in moving to locally led models
- Promote the wider shift towards LLD through the measurement of success factors as defined by local partners
- Begin to understand the more transformative elements, from local partner perspectives, that indicate a shift in power, and what that looks like in terms of MEAL
- Make recommendations to donors on LLD success factors as perceived by local partners in the Global South

2. Scope of work

Work will include consultations with local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in three countries - Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. We have identified 25 - 30 local partners who have agreed to take part, spanning formal and less formal entities, including NGOs, Cooperatives and Women-Led structures. Partners' programmes span a number of sectors including agriculture, health, education, climate, disability inclusion and economic empowerment.

3. Approach

Working with Dóchas members and local partners in the Global South we propose to carry out this work between October and December 2025.

We will use DFAT Australia's Locally Led Development Continuum (see Annex 1) as a framework for consultations with local partners.

Led by the Dóchas secretariat and a small steering group, we are seeking consultant(s) to undertake the following:

- An initial piece of data gathering (desk based) to establish what Dóchas members measure currently in relation to LLD, both in their external and internal reporting frameworks
- Design of a mixed-methods approach to data gathering and consultations involving:
 - preparation and briefing between Dóchas members and their participating local partners (numbering 25-30)
 - a pre-survey (online) for local partners
 - online consultations and focus group discussions (FGDs) with local partners
 - in-person workshops bringing together a mix of local partners in three geographical clusters (by country)
- Preparation of initial draft report and presentation for discussion and validation with 1) participants (local partners) 2) Dóchas membership 3) other stakeholders where appropriate
- Analysis of findings to assess if or how they apply to a wider set of local partnerships, beyond the scope of this project, such as local/national authorities and private sector providers
- Based on validation stage, preparation of final report including considerations for:
 - emerging success factors in moving to LLD and implications and propositions for LLD MEAL frameworks
 - an outline of pathways forward with this qualitative evidence base - implications for members' and local partners' ways of working, policy and advocacy etc., further development / next steps
- Project management of above activities (planning, scheduling, tracking and coordination, stakeholder management, communications, budgeting, reporting etc.)

Note:

- Language challenges will be addressed with translation/interpretation providers
- It may be possible to incorporate some currently-planned member events with local partners as one input to consultations
- We will also give consideration to if and how local MEAL systems can be integrated into this process

4. Outputs

The expected outputs are:

- Sample qualitative evidence base on LLD success factors from perspective of local CSOs and CBOs
- Shared dialogue and analysis between members and members' partners on success factors for moving to LLD
- Networking, peer learning and information exchange between members' local partners
- Preliminary set of dimensions and indicators for measuring the move towards LLD (from emerging to advanced), from the perspective of local partners (recognising the need for adaptability according to local context)
- Set of recommendations for how our members' MEAL and co-creation processes can be inclusive of local partners and systems (scope allowing)

5. Contract and Timing

This consultancy should run from October 2025 to year end.

Dóchas will not be liable for payment of taxes e.g. PAYE, PRSI or USC in respect of this consultancy. Payment of all appropriate taxes remains the responsibility of the Consultant(s).

6. Confidentiality and Data Protection

A normal duty of confidentiality is expected in relation to Dóchas business, both during and after this consultancy. All documents (e.g. records, reports, plans, policies, papers, files) relating to work carried out in the course of this consultancy with Dóchas will remain the property of Dóchas at all times. The consultant will not retain copies of such records.

The consultant will not at any time either during the period covered by this contract or after its termination make use of or communicate to any unauthorised person/body any confidential information about Dóchas which may have been obtained during the course of this consultancy.

On termination of this contract by either party the consultant will deliver to Dóchas all records, documents, equipment, etc. in their possession or control relating in any way to this consultancy with Dóchas.

Confidentiality relating to Dóchas data and processes not in the public domain will be respected by the consultant.

7. Application Process

Please submit your expression of interest, including proposed approach and outline of costing, to Gillian Ivory, Head of Membership Engagement gillian@dochas.ie, by Monday 29th September at 17.00 IST. Dóchas particularly welcomes applications from consultant(s) based in or with a presence in the East Africa region.

Criteria for the selection of consultant(s) include:

- Knowledge and experience in moving to locally led development models in the development sector
- Demonstrable experience with MEAL and participatory, community-based research
- Strong programme design skills, including capacity to prepare logical, coherent, and consistent documents including logframes and budgets
- Commitment to flexible availability during the period outlined
- Experience in and understanding of international development and humanitarian sector and stakeholders and the relevant landscape in East Africa
- Excellent English language skills, knowledge of local languages an asset
- Ability to work with local providers including translators / interpreters where relevant

Please outline how you fulfill the criteria outlined above, and include CV(s).

If you are shortlisted, you should expect contact from October 1st, when an interview call will be arranged. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

Annex 1: DFAT Australia's [Locally Led Development Continuum](#)

DFAT aims to progress investments along the locally led development 'continuum' over time to meet their specific objectives, informed by the local context, capabilities of local and international partners, the scale of operations, choice of modalities, and management of risks and safeguards.

Dimensions of Local Agency ⁷	Emerging Local actors consulted	Partial Local actors co-responsible	Advanced Local actors primarily responsible
Ideation, planning, concept and design	Consultation with partner government and diverse local stakeholders at DPP, strategy and design stages	DPPs and intermediary-led designs codesigned with local partners; local reference groups and quality assurance processes; local members on design teams.	Partner-led strategies and designs, including local partners determining outcomes, priorities, logics, governance, MEL, resourcing; alignment with local plans, budgets and systems
Implementation and delivery approach	Local organisations used for logistics and program administration	Local stakeholders have significant roles in program governance, with partial adoption of local systems	Local partners lead in key areas, including priority setting, work planning, governance, management, MEL, reporting
Decision-making and responsibility	Decision making mostly resides with donors and implementing agents; limited consultation with partner government and local stakeholders	Local actors have increased autonomy over selected components	Local actors have a high degree of responsibility for programs, including determining priorities, managing resources, and making decisions
Resource distribution	Local stakeholders, partner governments, or regional bodies receive donor funds with a narrow scope and limited timeframe; parallel systems	Local stakeholders, partner governments, or regional bodies receive funds with greater flexibility in scope and multi-year timeframe; partial use of local systems	Resources provided as directly as possible to local stakeholders, partner governments, or regional bodies, aligned with own plans and budgets; partners have autonomy in expensing funds in line with program objectives; use of partner systems
Partnership approach	Limited partnership with government and local suppliers; local stakeholders involved are often members of an elite or have well-established relationships with donors	Partnership through specific instruments, including joint steering committees, subsidiary arrangements; some partnerships with local suppliers; diverse local stakeholders involved	Equitable partnership with respectful policy dialogue, resource allocation, program co-design, co-evaluation and shared risk management, using local governance mechanisms; diverse local stakeholders empowered to drive change
Staff profile & procurement	Limited national personnel in senior positions where appropriate skills and experience can be found; limited use of local suppliers	National personnel hired by implementing partners in management roles, staffing strategies support local leadership; mix of local and international suppliers	Mostly local program team including in senior positions; junior staff mentored and supported; international staff managed by local teams; enabling HR and procurement policies; majority use of local suppliers
Technical advisers	International technical advisers/firms are substituting local capacity or international firms are delivering an end-to-end technical package	International technical advisers/firms are substituting some capacity but also playing a capability development role	If present, internationally sourced technical advisers/firms play a supporting or complementary role; majority local advisers.
MEL approach and Accountability for results	MEL system mostly designed for donor accountability and reporting, parallel indicators and data collection, with limited tailoring to local data sets	Local knowledge and expertise used to adapt and tailor systems for the local context; MEL system designed to balance a mixture of local learning with accountability; some supplementation of local systems with additional data sets.	Locally tailored MEL systems developed, aligned with local plans, using longitudinal local data sets, drawing on local expertise; donors adopt local MEL systems and harmonised reporting for shared accountability purposes; can influence international best practice.
Role of intermediaries	International project management services with limited tailoring, both capacity supplementation and substitution	Capacity and capability development; hybrid systems for planning, budgets, governance, decision making	Support and facilitation role; ongoing capacity assessment and handover, majority use of local systems for planning, budgeting, governance, decision making