

Dóchas

The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

Dóchas Board 75 (6-19)
21/11/19

Dóchas Board

held in the Dóchas office on
Thursday, 21 November 2019 at 10am

M i n u t e s

Present: Finola Finnan (Trócaire) Chairperson
Siobhán McGee (ActionAid Ireland) Vice Chairperson
Paul O'Brien (Plan International Ireland)
Sarah O'Toole (CBM Ireland)
Louise Supple (Concern Worldwide)
Gerry Egan (External Board Member)
Charlie Lamson (Sightsavers)

In attendance: Suzanne Keatinge (CEO of Dóchas)
Anna Farrell (Dóchas – Finance and Operations Manager)

Apologies: Peter McDevitt (Self Help Africa) Treasurer
Niamh Carty (Oxfam Ireland)
Grace Milton (External Board Member)

The Chairperson opened the meeting by welcoming those present and reminding them that we will be meeting Heydi for lunch this afternoon (House, 12.45pm).

1. Apologies and Agenda

Apologies (see above) were noted. There were no changes to the Agenda as circulated.

2. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

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

3. Minutes of Board Meeting

The Minutes of the 74th Board meeting (19/09/19) were approved: Louise (proposed), Sarah (seconded).

4. Matters Arising and To-do List

Most of the items on the to-do list have either been completed or will be addressed during the course of this meeting. It was noted that:

- The possible Board nominee has decided against putting themselves forward at this time.

Actions:

- Conflict of Interest Policy to be re-circulated to all Board members who are required to complete the 'Disclosure Form' (Appendix 1) and return a signed copy to the Dóchas office.

5. Awards evaluation and planning AGM & conference 2020

An executive summary of the evaluation of the 2019 awards event (23 Oct.) together with a proposal around the organisation of our AGM, Conference and Awards in 2020 was circulated to members in advance of this meeting. The latter contains three options to freshen up our flagship events and maximise their relevance to members.

During a general discussion members acknowledged the huge amount of work that went into organising the Awards and praised those involved on the choice and presentation of the venue and speakers. Disappointment was expressed around the low turnout from the membership (19), food wastage and the fact that 76% of registered attendees were there because they were directly connected to the event (i.e. linked to an award), although it was felt that the latter was fairly typical of an awards type event.

Decisions:

- The AGM (7 May) will be a standalone event in 2020 – allowing time for input from Irish Aid and discussion around our Strategic Planning process.
- Our annual conference and awards will be combined into a single event, to be held in October (date tbc).

6. Members Charter & process

Copies of the latest draft of Charter were circulated in advance. It was noted that the Charter in combination with the Charities Governance Code will replace the Irish NGDO's Code of Corporate Governance, which we will be phased out by 2020.

During a general discussion it was felt that the draft document needs more substance, which could be achieved by:

- including a section that 'positions' the Charter (e.g. why do we need it; why is it important; how does it link with other Dóchas commitments/codes);
- including a description of how we will deliver each 'shared value';
- merging some of the bullet points in the 'principles that guide' sections;
- adding an explanation and unpacking what we mean by some of the bullets (e.g. 'Do no harm');
- adding a final section explaining how the Charter should be used.

In terms of process it was agreed that:

- the document will be amended by the consultant and shared with the Sub-Committee on Governance (by end December);
- the sub-committee will 'finalise' the draft at its next meeting (end Jan/early Feb - tbc) for circulation to members CEOs for feedback (2 to 3 weeks from 'sent' date);
- Dóchas will find opportunities to share/raise/ask for feedback (e.g. possibly at a meeting for small members and/or a CEO breakfast);
- The next draft will go back to Sub-Committee on Governance for recommendation to the Board (before 12 March);
- The final draft will be presented to the Board (26 March) for approval and sign off;
- The final approved version will be presented at the AGM (7 May).

7. Prep for Irish Aid exchange, including ideas on "structured dialogue"

The CEO said that the issue of structured dialogue between the sector and Irish Aid was a key area for improvement that has emerged from the OECD DAC peer review process. The full evaluation will be available at the end of March 2020. It was agreed that it wasn't about increasing the number of meetings, but making sure they were strategic.

During a general discussion it was agreed to raise the following ideas:

- More joint learning type events, similar to the climate dialogue that was recently held in Limerick, particularly around gender and governance;
- The need for a conversation around the burden of compliance, particularly for smaller members – but at a more strategic level than the current conversation at the Results Working Group which is more focused on the details of evaluations/grant management etc.
- A fuller conversation around public engagement, which we can lead once our project is up and running.
- More involvement by the sector in learning from Irish Aid's funded academic research e.g. with ODI and IDS, and possibly closer collaboration around speakers.
- We will continue to request a meeting with the Tánaiste in the first quarter to present our policy priorities for 2020 and to ascertain his views on our chosen topics.

8. Report by the CEO

Copies of the CEO Report were circulated to members in advance of this meeting. In presenting the report the CEO mentioned that our new Programme Support Officer (Niamh Kingston) started on 21

October and our Head of Communications and Public Engagement (Ronan Doyle) on 11 November. Both are settling in well and are getting to grips with their roles.

It was noted that the Dóchas Disability and International Development Working Group event to mark the International Day for Persons with Disabilities (3 Dec) is not going ahead because there were major challenges in terms of sourcing a venue. The Disability Research Network in Trinity College Dublin will run an event instead, which will include a presentation from a member of the working group. The group will run a lunchtime session on disability in January for key staff and heads of mission in Irish Aid.

During a conversation around Dóchas' political engagement plans, while it was likely that we will have a General Election next year, it was noted that Dóchas' policy capacity is fairly limited. One idea we are exploring is to bring in a consultant to look at party manifestos and identify some TD's to approach. We will raise the matter with the Policy WG (22 Nov.) to gauge interest. There is a commitment by the WG to do an event with MEPs early next year but there isn't a huge appetite to do more than that.

It was noted that from what we know of the political environment in Ireland, we should be concerned that politicians' interest in international development remains very low and we no longer have a wide range of political allies to draw on. Meanwhile there is an emerging racism and 'Ireland First' narrative in reaction to the tensions around direct provision, and also the use of ODA for in-country refugee costs is likely to continue to rise which may put pressure on other international development funding streams. It was agreed that we can't afford to be complacent and that these are the kinds of conversations we should be having around this table.

Action:

- Dóchas to facilitate a more in-depth conversation on the political environment, and will start by asking the Policy Working Group about their planning around a possible general election.

9. Report from Sub-Committee on Remuneration and Human Resources

The chair of the Sub-committee reported that at its last meeting (13 Nov.), it was decided not to co-opt an additional non-Board member as it was felt that the current membership is sufficient.

[The CEO and FOM left the meeting to allow a discussion on staff remuneration. The CEO re-joined the meeting to discuss recruitment.]

The Board discussed the recruitment process that is underway for the Head of Membership Engagement and negotiating parameters, for the CEO to take forward, were agreed.

The Board recognised and appreciated the work of the CEO in working to address the current recruitment challenges and recognised and appreciated the work of the team in keeping activities moving forward.

Action:

- Dóchas to share the revised ToR for January Board meeting.

10. Report from Sub-Committee on Finance, Audit & Risk (FARC)

A full report on the last meeting (5 Nov.) together with a reforecast budget for 2019 were circulated to members in advance of today's meeting.

In presenting the report the CEO noted that the payment from 2into3 has been received; income from fees is likely to be down on budget figures (by approx. €6k). Programme costs have reduced (by approx. €56k.) mainly because of the delay in starting various projects (e.g. public engagement, website and CRM system). We will bring a draft budget for Q1 of 2020 to the Board in January.

11. Report from Sub-Committee on Governance

A full report on the last meeting (24 Oct.) together with copies of the revised application forms for full and associate membership were circulated to members in advance of today's meeting. In presenting the report, the Chairperson focussed on the following:

- The latest draft of the Membership Handbook was reviewed and is almost complete. The final draft will be presented at the next Board meeting.
- Minor changes were made to the sub-committee's Terms of Reference (ToR). These will be formally brought to the next Board meeting.

The committee also reviewed the revised application forms for full and associate membership which it recommended to the Board for approval. Changes have been made to the criteria. We will be asking the chair of any new applicant to sign the application form as well as the codes. Whether we will continue to ask for an annual confirmation of compliance will be decided as part of the conversation around the member's handbook.

Decision:

- The Board signed off on the Application Form for Full Membership, with the addition of including a reference to the need to provide details of two referees.

12. Review of the Risk Register

It was noted that copies of the Risk Register, which was reviewed by the FARC (5 Nov.), were circulated to members in advance of this meeting.

Risks that remained 'amber' (there are no red ones) were briefly discussed:

- Risk 1 – 'reputation is damaged' - remains amber because we've had a number of staff changes, which will take time to bed down.
- Risk 4 – 'poor governance of a member leads to the sectors reputational damage' - remains amber
- Risk 6 – 'members leave the network' - remains amber particularly as a number of our smaller members have left recently. While it was agreed that members leaving the network is often beyond our control, we need to keep tracking this to understand if members are leaving because they don't see the value of their membership.
- Risk 12 – 'staffing gaps lead to failure to implement strategy' - remains amber pending upcoming staffing changes and recruitment processes (see item 9)

13. Other Business

There was no other business.

14. Dates of future meetings

It was agreed that the Dóchas Board will meet in the Dóchas office on the following dates in 2020: **30 January, 26 March, 25 June, 24 September and 19 November.** The 2020 AGM will take place on 7 May 2020. The 2020 Conference and Awards will be held in October (date to be agreed).

Actions:

- Anna to send a diary notice via Outlook to Board members for each of the above dates.
- CEO to confirm date for 2020 Conference and Awards

Chairperson:.....

Date:.....