

Dóchas
The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

Dóchas Board 96 (5-23)
12/12/23

Dóchas Board

held via Zoom
on Tuesday, 12th December 2023, from 10:30 to 11:30

M i n u t e s

Present: Rosamond Bennett (Christian Aid Ireland) Chairperson
John Moffett (Misean Cara) Vice Chairperson
Siobhán Cassidy (Trócaire) Treasurer & Company Secretary
Karol Balfe (ActionAid Ireland)
Lucia Ennis (Concern Worldwide)
Eamon Sharkey (GOAL)
Paul Donnelly (External Board Member)

Apologies: Bobby McCormack (Development Perspectives)
Martina Fitzgerald (External Board Member)
Grace Milton (External Board Member)

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

1. Meeting Opening and Standing Items

The Chairperson opened the meeting, welcoming those present.

a. Apologies and Agenda

There were three apologies (noted above) and no changes to the agenda as circulated.

b. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

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

c. Minutes of Board Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting, held on 29/09/23, were approved: Paul Donnelly (Proposed), John Moffett (Seconded).

d. Notes on Irish Aid Exchange

The notes on the Exchange, which took place on 29/09/23 were taken as read.

e. Matters Arising and To-do List

Most of the items under Matters Arising or on the to-do list have either been completed or will be addressed during this meeting. The remaining items will be completed over the coming weeks.

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:

- **Budget 2024:** The ODA allocation was disappointing as the increase was a third of what we had called for in our pre-budget submission. We welcomed the increase, pointing out that it doesn't go far enough and isn't keeping pace with the ever-increasing humanitarian needs and crises around the world. Some members welcomed the increase without referencing the fact that it didn't meet our advocacy asks. We will need to adopt a different approach for budget 2025 and will discuss this with CEO's early in the New Year.
- **Conflict in Gaza:** following the outbreak of the conflict we brought members operational in the area together to discuss their operations, advocacy messages, collective actions and/or communications. We issued some statements with details of members active in and/or running appeals for Gaza. Our focus was very much on pushing out members key asks and talking points and on calling for a ceasefire.

During a general discussion the following points were made:

- The ODA allocation announced in Budget 2024 is disappointing and is out of step with Irish Aid's messaging. Ireland is going backwards in terms of its commitment to 0.7%. We need to work on our advocacy in advance of budget 2025.
- Influencing the election manifestos of political parties will be key in 2024 as we prepare for MEP and local elections and possibly also a General Election. The Policy Working Group met in November to begin to plan for political engagement in 2024. They will continue to work together to develop key messages and a strategy for political engagement in 2024.

b. Emerging Issues

There were no emerging issues.

3. Finance, Audit & Risk Committee

a. Report from Committee

The minutes of the last meeting (30/12/23) together with the January to October financial report and narrative were circulated to members in advance. All three documents were taken as read.

The Treasurer said that some membership fees remain outstanding, but we are following up with those concerned. In terms of expenditure, we had budgeted for a deficit but instead will have a surplus. This is a timing issue as the full amount of our Irish Aid Grant and project specific income from members wasn't confirmed until mid-way through the year (June) which impacted our ability to spend all of our budget in 2023. The committee was comfortable with the year-to-date financials and with our cash flow forecast.

- **Budget 2024:** Copies of the draft budget and narrative were circulated to members in advance. The Treasurer said that our main sources of income will be membership fees, Irish Aid and project specific income from members. There will be an increase in staff costs, mainly due to the maternity cover for the Head of Programme and Policy and a 2% salary increase for all staff from 1st January 2024. We are also planning some celebrations to mark our 50th anniversary next year. The budget was reviewed by the FARC at its last meeting and the committee is happy to recommend it to the Board for adoption.

The CEO presented the draft budget focusing on the following:

- The budget is based on what we assume our reserves will be and also that we will have an underspend at year end. As already referenced, much of the underspend relates to the fact that we only received confirmation of our Irish Aid grant and project specific income from members mid-year.
- Income is budgeted at €772k (€597k unrestricted; €175k restricted) and expenditure at €879k (€674k unrestricted, €205k restricted). In addition to our principal sources of income we will receive a small grant (€3.2k) from New Foundations Research for work around our Guide to Ethical Communications. We have also budgeted for ticket sales for our annual conference.
- Key areas of expenditure relate to:
 - ✓ Staff costs (€543k).
 - ✓ Operational costs (€97k).
 - ✓ Network (€64k): IT and Digital Infrastructure costs; Annual conference and 50th anniversary celebrations; Membership of other networks; etc.
 - ✓ Transform (€28k): Localisation – building on work done in 2023; Safeguarding – reinvigorating the Code; Guide to Ethical Communications – 2 workshops will take place in 2024; etc.
 - ✓ Influence (€36k): ODA Campaign; Electoral Research Project; Climate; etc.
 - ✓ Lead (€4k): Evaluation of Leadership Programme; Engagement with CEO's. We are hoping to repeat the success of this year's leadership course in 2025 and will be looking at grant options in the latter part of 2024 to enable us to do that.
 - ✓ Worldview Project (€102k): 2024 is the last year that Irish Aid will fund this project so we will be looking at options for funding the project going forward.

c. Risk Register: The Risk Register was circulated in advance. It was noted that risks 11 (Fraud, theft by 3rd parties) and 12 (Staffing gaps or turnover) remain Amber for the reasons identified in the 'Actions to be taken/or taken since last review' column. In relation to Risk 12, it was noted that the deadline for the maternity cover for the Head of Programme and Policy has been extended to 18th December.

Decisions:

- The budget for 2024 was approved.
- There were no changes to the Risk Register as presented.

4. Other Business

- **Christmas Drinks for Members:** The CEO reminded Board members to join us for Christmas drinks this evening at 5.00pm in The Rag Trader on Drury Street.

5. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, 25th January 2024 at 10am.

Subsequent meetings in 2024 are scheduled for 10am on the following dates: 26th March, 27th June, 26th September and 28th November.

Chairperson:.....

Date:.....