Comhlámh is seeking a new Chair of the Board

Terms of Reference | November 2026

WHO WE ARE

Comhlámh, the Irish Association of Development Workers and Volunteers, supports solidarity-based engagement on the most pressing issues of our time. We are a membership organisation with over 50 years' experience of supporting people and organisations to mobilise for global justice.

All Comhlámh's work is underpinned by a commitment to Global Citizenship Education (GCE), which deepens understanding of the structural causes of inequality and unsustainability, as well as the connections between local and global challenges.

Through education, values-led volunteering, reflective practice, partnership and sector development, we create spaces and opportunities for people and organisations to connect, learn, reflect and take action towards a more just and sustainable world.

HOW WE WORK

Comhlámh believes that transformational change can emerge from creating spaces where people work in solidarity, recognise our shared humanity and interdependence, and collectively work towards a world beyond injustice.

All areas of our work are connected, particularly in deepening understanding of the structural causes of inequality, injustice and unsustainability. We prioritise collaboration, actively seeking synergies within our own work and with others.

Comhlámh seeks to be the change it is trying to bring about. We work to bring our values of respect, integrity, solidarity and ecological sustainability into all areas of our engagement. We commit to looking honestly at ourselves, our policies and practices, identifying where and how we need to change, and taking action to make those changes.

We recognise that this work is ongoing and requires collective effort. We cannot achieve change alone, and work closely with individuals, members and organisations nationally and internationally whose goals are aligned around transformational change.

PURPOSE OF THE ROLE

The Chair provides leadership and stewardship to support Comhlámh in fulfilling its mission as a membership organisation working to advance solidarity, global justice and transformative change.

Working collaboratively with the Board and CEO, the Chair helps safeguard Comhlámh's mission and values, provide strategic leadership and ensure that the

Board remains connected and accountable to the membership. The Chair supports the Board to fulfil its responsibilities in line with Comhlámh's Constitution and the direction and mandate provided by members through general meetings.

The Chair leads the Board in fulfilling its governance responsibilities, supporting effective strategic direction and oversight, and fostering a constructive and supportive relationship with the CEO. They also help strengthen Comhlámh's relationships, visibility and influence, supporting the organisation to build on its strengths and position itself for the future.

As an ambassador for Comhlámh, the Chair will help communicate its distinctive contribution, build strategic relationships and identify opportunities to advance its mission.

The role calls for a collaborative and values-led approach, grounded in collective leadership, critical reflection, accountability and a commitment to organisational learning.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Governance and Board Leadership

- Provide effective leadership to the Board, supporting it to fulfil its governance responsibilities and provide strategic oversight.
- Help ensure that Board discussions and decisions remain focused on Comhlámh's mission, values and strategic priorities.
- Chair Board meetings in a purposeful, inclusive and effective way, encouraging constructive discussion, critical reflection and sound decision-making.
- Promote collective responsibility, accountability and effective governance across the Board.
- Support the Board to identify and consider strategic risks and opportunities.
- Help ensure that the Board remains connected and accountable to Comhlámh's membership and wider community.
- Support Board development, effectiveness and succession planning.

Strategic Leadership and Organisational Stewardship

- Work with the Board and CEO to guide Comhlámh's strategic direction and longer-term development.
- Help the organisation navigate change, renewal and uncertainty while remaining grounded in its mission and values.

- Support the Board to consider Comhlámh's sustainability, resilience, strategic positioning and future opportunities.
- Help ensure that Comhlámh's distinctive contribution is recognised and maintained within the international development, volunteering, GCE and wider civil society landscape.
- Act as a guardian of Comhlámh's mission, values, reputation and long-term sustainability.

Leadership and Partnership with the CEO

- Build and maintain a constructive, trusting and effective relationship with the CEO.
- Provide strategic support, constructive challenge and advice, while respecting the distinction between governance and operational management.
- Act as a sounding board for the CEO, particularly in relation to organisational change, development and strategic decision-making.
- Support the CEO in navigating significant organisational challenges and opportunities.
- Work alongside the CEO in key external engagements where appropriate.
- Support the development of strategic relationships and opportunities that advance Comhlámh's mission.

External Relationships, Influence and Representation

- Act as an ambassador and advocate for Comhlámh, helping to strengthen its profile, visibility and influence.
- Use relevant experience, credibility and networks to build relationships across international development, volunteering, education and wider civil society.
- Encourage and support the Board to draw on its collective experience, expertise and networks to build relationships with government, policymakers, funders, philanthropic organisations and strategic partners.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration, partnership and organisational development.
- Support Comhlámh's contribution to policy discussions, sector debates and wider conversations about global justice and solidarity.

WHO WE'RE LOOKING FOR

We are looking for a Chair who shares Comhlámh's commitment to solidarity, global justice and meaningful, values-led change, and who can bring strategic insight, sound judgement and collaborative leadership to the role.

The experience, perspectives and qualities that would be valuable in this role include:

- **Strategic leadership and perspective:** Experience of providing leadership, direction or stewardship within an organisation, network or initiative, and the ability to think strategically about its future, sustainability and wider contribution.
- **Governance and organisational understanding:** An understanding of good governance and the respective roles of a Board and its executive leadership. Previous Board experience, ideally in a leadership or Chair role, would be valuable.
- **Relationship-building and influence:** The confidence and credibility to build relationships, bring people together and represent Comhlámh in relevant external spaces. Experience across international development, volunteering, education, civil society, public policy or related fields would be an advantage.
- **Collaborative leadership:** The ability to listen, encourage different perspectives, support constructive challenge and help a group work towards shared decisions and goals.
- **Values alignment:** A genuine commitment to solidarity, participation, equality, critical reflection and ecological sustainability, and an appreciation of the importance of putting these values into practice.

We would particularly welcome someone who can bring experience or connections that strengthen Comhlámh's strategic relationships, organisational sustainability and influence across the sectors in which we work. Experience in areas such as organisational development, funding, philanthropy, public policy, advocacy or partnership-building would be useful, but is not essential.

We recognise that no one person will bring all of these qualities and experiences in equal measure, and we welcome people with different backgrounds and perspectives. If you feel connected to Comhlámh's mission and values and are interested in contributing to the organisation's next chapter, even if your experience does not match everything outlined above, we would very much encourage you to get in touch for an informal conversation.

THE KIND OF LEADERSHIP THAT WILL MATTER

The Chair will combine strategic thinking with a collaborative and grounded approach. They will be comfortable navigating complexity and uncertainty, able to offer constructive challenge and support, and committed to ensuring that Comhlámh's decisions and direction remain rooted in its mission and values.

Above all, the Chair will understand that the role is one of collective leadership and stewardship, working with the Board, CEO, staff and membership to help Comhlámh build on its strengths, respond to change and shape its contribution for the future.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IN THE CURRENT ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

Comhlámh is entering an important period of development and renewal. The Chair will help the Board provide the leadership and oversight needed to support the organisation through this next phase.

Some of the key priorities include:

- Strengthening Comhlámh's sustainability, resilience and long-term financial security.
- Supporting strategic change, renewal and organisational development.
- Maintaining and expanding relationships across international development, volunteering, education and wider civil society.
- Strengthening engagement with government, policymakers, funders and strategic partners.
- Increasing Comhlámh's visibility, influence and credibility.
- Developing new funding, collaboration and partnership opportunities.
- Protecting and communicating Comhlámh's distinctive contribution and role within the sector.
- Supporting the CEO's strategic leadership and external engagement.
- Ensuring strong, accountable and values-led governance, with meaningful connections between the Board, membership and wider Comhlámh community.

The Chair will play an important role in helping the Board hold these priorities together, maintain a clear sense of direction and support the organisation to respond thoughtfully and confidently to change.

Ultimately, the Chair will help Comhlámh build on its history, strengthen its contribution in the present and shape its role in advancing solidarity and global justice for the next generation.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Appointment and term: The Chair is appointed by the Board from among its members. Board members are elected by Comhlámh's membership at the Annual General Meeting and may serve for up to five consecutive years, in accordance with Comhlámh's Constitution. The Chair's appointment is subject to their continued membership of the Board.

Time commitment: The Board meets at least five times between Annual General Meetings, with additional Board sub-group meetings or engagement as required. The Chair will also need to make time for regular communication with the CEO and Board members, preparation for meetings, engagement with the membership and occasional external representation on behalf of Comhlámh. The overall time commitment can be discussed with interested candidates.

Voluntary role and expenses: The Chair serves in a voluntary capacity as a member of Comhlámh's Board of Directors. In keeping with Comhlámh's Constitution, no remuneration is paid for undertaking Board duties. Reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred in carrying out the role will be reimbursed in accordance with Comhlámh's policies and constitutional provisions. The role represents a commitment to supporting Comhlámh's mission, membership and collective work towards solidarity and global justice.

Inclusion and accessibility: Comhlámh welcomes expressions of interest from people with a range of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. We are committed to making the recruitment process and the role as accessible and inclusive as possible. Please let us know if you require any adjustments or support to participate.

How to apply: To express your interest in the role, please send a short cover letter outlining your interest in becoming Chair of Comhlámh, what you would bring to the role and how your experience and values connect with Comhlámh's work. Please also include your current CV. Applications should be sent to caroline@comhlamh.org by **Friday 11 December 2026**.

Informal conversation: If you are interested in the role but would like to find out more before expressing an interest, or are unsure whether your experience is a good fit, we would warmly welcome an informal conversation. Please contact caroline@comhlamh.org to arrange this.