

KOHA-PICD
Kaihono hei Oranga Hapori o te Ao -
Partnerships for International Community Development

Organisational Reviews
2007-2008

Lessons learned for the NGO community



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Cover photo: Hibiscus and grasshopper, Arawa (Hilary Smith).

Abbreviations

CID	Council for International Development
KOHA (or KOHA-PICD)	Kaihono he Oranga Hapori o te Ao - Partnerships for International Development (formerly VASS)
NGO	Non-government organisation
NZAID	New Zealand's International Aid and Development Agency (a semi autonomous body established in 2002 within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade)
PMC	Programme Management Committee of KOHA-PICD
VASS	Voluntary Agency Support Scheme (renamed KOHA-PICD in 2006)

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Summary

The KOHA-PICD scheme (Kaihono hei Oranga Hapori o te Ao - Partnerships for International Community Development), now often called KOHA, is a co-funding scheme with NZAID (New Zealand's International Development Agency) and New Zealand non-government organisations (NGOs) to support overseas community development.

KOHA organisational reviews aim to confirm the compliance of the organisations with the scheme's criteria and requirements, and their capacity to meet KOHA standards. They also aim to assist the organisations to improve their work with partners in the field by identifying general areas of learning. The reviews assess progress made against the recommendations of the organisation's last review, make suggestions to NZAID and the PMC (Programme Management Committee) about how the scheme can be improved, and identify lessons that can be shared with the wider NGO community in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In this report we present some generic lessons, identified through discussions with the organisations, their partners, and the PMC, for the consideration of the wider NGO sector involved in overseas development. Some of the issues have been included in Lessons Learned reports from the reviews in previous years, but we have included them again this year to emphasise their ongoing importance.

Lessons learned

Lessons for successful participation in the KOHA scheme:

- 1 Effective work in international community development requires the appropriate skills, structures and processes at all levels of the NGO.
- 2 An approach of actively complying with the KOHA requirements will have the best results, both in engagement with the PMC and in development outcomes.
- 3 It may be important to take an active and ongoing role in supporting the development of overseas partner organisations.

Other lessons for work in international development:

- 4 From time to time, New Zealand NGOs working in overseas community development will benefit from re-examining the relevance of the Treaty of Waitangi to their work.
- 5 Building strong relationships with overseas partners takes time and effort, but is rewarded by benefits to everyone in the development process.
- 6 Policies and procedures to address gender equality remain important for NGOs working in development.
- 7 The development of personal security policies and plans for staff based in or travelling to the field will help avoid risk.

1 Introduction

1.1 The KOHA-PICD scheme

The KOHA-PICD scheme (Kaihono hei Oranga Hapori o te Ao - Partnerships for International Community Development), now often called KOHA, is a co-funding scheme with NZAID (New Zealand's International Development Agency) and New Zealand non-government organisations (NGOs) to support overseas community development. It was established in 1974 and originally known as the VASS (Voluntary Agency Support Scheme). It is administered by a Programme Management Committee (PMC) made up of elected NGO peers, the NZAID Programme Manager (Civil Society), and an independent chairperson.

The aims of the KOHA-PICD scheme are outlined in the KOHA Handbook, which is available at <http://www.nzaid.govt.nz>. The Handbook states¹ that the purpose of the scheme is “to improve the lives of people in developing countries by addressing poverty and injustice internationally, through overseas community development projects and programmes supported by New Zealand NGOs”.

1.2 Organisational reviews

Each year the PMC selects a number of organisations participating in the scheme for organisational reviews². KOHA-PICD organisational reviews aim to confirm the compliance of the organisations with the scheme's criteria and requirements, and their capacity to meet KOHA standards. They also aim to assist the organisations to improve their work with partners in the field by identifying general areas of learning. The reviews make recommendations to strengthen compliance and quality of systems, or refer significant issues and concerns to the PMC. In addition, they assess progress made against the recommendations of the organisation's last review, make suggestions to NZAID and the PMC about how the scheme can be improved, and identify lessons that can be shared with the wider NGO community in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Terms of Reference for the 2007-2008 reviews are attached as Appendix 1. We reviewed four organisations: International Needs New Zealand, Family Planning International, UNICEF New Zealand, and the Fred Hollows Foundation. The reviews included visits to partners in Papua New Guinea and the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

1.3 The “lessons learned for NGOs” component

The KOHA-PICD organisational reviews aim to be a participatory process involving the NGOs being reviewed, their partners, the PMC and NZAID. Reviews are regarded as an opportunity to learn and incorporate that learning into future practice. Areas of learning specific to the organisations reviewed in 2007-2008 were discussed in the confidential organisational reports.

The generic lessons - which we have identified through discussions with the organisations, their partners, and the PMC - are presented in this report for the wider NGO sector involved in overseas development to consider. Some of the issues have been included

¹ KOHA Handbook, p. 12, <http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/what-we-do/koha-picd.html> (05/09/08)

² KOHA Handbook, pp. 80-85, <http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/what-we-do/koha-picd.html> (05/09/08)

in Lessons Learned reports from the reviews in previous years, and we have included them again this year to emphasise their ongoing importance.

We present the lessons in two groups: firstly those lessons which apply to the KOHA-PICD scheme in particular; and secondly those lessons which have wider relevance to organisations working in international community development.

2 Lessons about participation in the KOHA-PICD scheme

In the first group of lessons we focus on ways in which organisations can successfully participate in the KOHA-PICD scheme.

2.1 NGOs working in overseas community development

It is evident that the different NGOs who register for the KOHA-PICD scheme have their own areas of focus, which may be some combination of geographical region (e.g. the Pacific), sector (e.g. health, sanitation), or philosophical approach (e.g. religious). The organisational structures and systems have been developed to meet these specific areas of focus. However, such structures and systems may need to be adapted or supplemented to meet the requirements of effective work in international community development (as defined by KOHA-PICD).

For example:

- Members of the NGO's governing board may have been selected for skills related to advocacy or fundraising relevant to the specific mission of the NGO, rather than for their knowledge of international community development;
- The staffing structure which has developed to meet the needs of the overall mission of the organisation may not include a focus on international development, or international *community* development;
- The focus may have been on implementing effective programmes, rather than on formalising policies and procedures to support them.

When an organisation registers for KOHA-PICD and starts to engage with the principles outlined in the KOHA Handbook, it may see the need for changes in the organisational structures, policies, or procedures. These changes might be at either governance or management level, and will sometimes be incremental (with the help of mentors such as the PMC liaison people or other consultants), as the organisation expands its overseas programmes. However, we suggest that for an organisation to work most effectively in international development, it may also be necessary to re-examine the organisation as a whole, and how all its constituent parts can support a good overseas community development programme.

LESSON 1

Effective work in international community development requires the appropriate skills, structures and processes at all levels of the NGO.

Questions to consider

- a Does our governing board reflect the needs of an organisation which works (wholly or in part) in international community development? If not, how can we address this through training, selection of future members, etc?
- b Do we have the necessary (formal) governing policies and operational procedures to ensure good community development practice takes place through our programmes? If not, how can these be developed?

- c Are our staff and advisors sufficient in numbers and skill to support our international community development programmes? If not, how can this be addressed in the short, medium and long term?

2.2 Accountability in the KOHA scheme

Organisations which register for KOHA-PICD need to have a clear understanding of the requirements of the scheme. The KOHA Handbook outlines the requirements, which focus on criteria “which reflect the attributes and processes of sound development practice”³. For this reason it is useful for appropriate people at all levels of the NGO to be aware of relevant parts of the Handbook. It is also useful for the NGO to share the Handbook with their overseas partner organisations as appropriate, so that the partner organisations can understand more about the New Zealand NGO’s requirements.

The KOHA Handbook is updated regularly, which requires organisations to have some system for making sure that the relevant people are familiar with the changes and their implications for the organisation.

One of the requirements of the KOHA-PICD scheme is an organisational review, carried out from time to time according to various criteria outlined in the KOHA Handbook⁴. This is an important accountability mechanism for the scheme and is based around the criteria outlined in the Handbook. It is important that organisations registered with KOHA-PICD are aware that their KOHA-PICD funding is accepted with the expectation of a review.

LESSON 2

An approach of actively complying with the KOHA requirements will have the best results, both in engagement with the PMC and in development outcomes.

Questions to consider

- a Has our governing board seen the KOHA Handbook? If not, how would it be most appropriate to introduce it to them?
- b Do our partners understand the key criteria and principles of the KOHA scheme? If not, what would be the best way to explain the scheme to them?
- c Are all staff and advisory group members involved with KOHA-funded projects actively using the KOHA Handbook? If not, how can this be achieved?
- d What mechanisms do we have for keeping relevant people in our organisation and partner organisations up-to-date with changes in the KOHA Handbook?
- e Are the relevant people in our organisation aware of the likelihood of an organisational review, and the requirements we will have as a consequence?
- f Do our board members, programmes staff, and advisory group members receive copies of these Lessons Learned reports?

³ KOHA Handbook, p. 16, <http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/koha-picd/docs/koha-handbook-introduction.pdf> (09/09/08)

⁴ KOHA Handbook, Part F, pp. 80-8, <http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/koha-picd/docs/koha-handbook-f.pdf> (09/09/09)

2.3 Overseas partner organisations

The KOHA scheme requires local community organisations to work with as partners⁵, and for these partnerships to work well it is necessary for both the New Zealand NGO and the overseas organisation to be strong. In cases where the local organisation is at an early stage of organisational development, the New Zealand NGO may need to provide considerable support for their partner's institutional strengthening. This may include giving advice on governance structures, financial systems, policies and procedures (such as gender policies, or guidelines for faith-based organisations), etc.

Although the New Zealand NGO may be wary of taking a neo-colonial or patronising role in the field, we found the partners we met this year to be very keen to develop their organisations (and their own skills), because they are aware that this is necessary for attracting international donor support. By providing ongoing support for their partner organisations, New Zealand NGOs will increase the likelihood of successful project applications and project outcomes. However, they should not underestimate the investment in time and money that may be required for organisations operating in the constraints of other cultural contexts.

LESSON 3

It may be important to take an active and ongoing role in supporting the development of overseas partner organisations.

Questions to consider

- a How much do we understand about the way our partner organisations are set up and work?
- b Have we talked with our partners about any needs they may have for organisational strengthening? If not, how can this be done most appropriately?
- b What support are we able to provide for partner organisations who wish to develop their systems of governance or management?

⁵ KOHA Handbook, Part B, pp. 40-41, <http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/koha-picd/docs/koha-handbook-b.pdf> (09/09/08)

3 Other lessons for working in international development

In the second group of lessons we address some wider issues for New Zealand NGOs who are working in international development.

3.1 Treaty of Waitangi

The importance of the Treaty of Waitangi for NGOs working in overseas development is included in two significant documents for CID members. The CID Code of Ethics⁶ (agreed to by members when joining CID) includes the following principle:

“The Treaty of Waitangi is fundamental to development in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and to our perspective of development issues internationally.”

The Strategic Policy Framework for Relations between NZAID and New Zealand Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) (2003)⁷ also includes the Treaty of Waitangi in its development principles (page 7), and states in its common undertakings (page 12):

“NZAID and NGOs affirm that they will carry their respective commitments to the Treaty of Waitangi through into organisational policy and practice in ways that are appropriate to their circumstances.”

The implications of these statements for member organisations are discussed in two CID publications available as a resource on the CID website: *Treaty Journeys: International Development agencies respond to the Treaty of Waitangi* (2007)⁸, and *Treaty of Waitangi Resource Manual* (n.d.)⁹. These publications include theoretical perspectives as well as examples of successful practical implementations.

As the circumstances of NGOs develop and change, we consider that it will be useful for them to re-examine their commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi.

LESSON 4

From time to time, New Zealand NGOs working in overseas community development will benefit from re-examining the relevance of the Treaty of Waitangi to their work.

Questions to consider

- a Has our organisation considered how a commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi is appropriately addressed in our current context? If not, in what way could such consideration be usefully carried out?
- b If our organisation has developed policies around the Treaty of Waitangi, are they still appropriate to our current contexts of work? If not, how could we address this?

⁶ <http://www.cid.org.nz> (08/09/08)

⁷ <http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/what-we-do/working-with-ngos.html> (08/09/08)

⁸ <http://www.cid.org.nz/publications> (08/09/08)

⁹ <http://www.cid.org.nz/training/resource-kit> (08/09/08)

3.2 Relationship-building

NGOs working in international community development are very conscious that overseas travel can be perceived as an expensive luxury, and it needs to be justified to donors, other staff who are based in New Zealand, etc. In an era of modern technology increasingly reaching into different countries, the frequent use of email or Skype calls may cause overseas travel to be perceived as less necessary. Also, spending time with partners in the field may add to the workload of partners who are already busy or overworked.

However, it is clear that good relationships are the key to good partnerships, so against these concerns we consider that it is important to weigh the importance of spending time with overseas partners, building relationships in whatever ways are appropriate.

It is well-recognised that cultural attitudes towards time differ, such as the renowned “Pacific time”, and attitudes towards communications also differ (especially in places where communications cannot be relied on). Tight scheduling in field visits may in fact result in time and money being wasted when meetings do not occur, are held up, or do not result in meaningful interactions. We would like to emphasise that spending time with partners will have benefits for good development outcomes.

Relationship-building is also important for non-programmes staff and members of the organisation. As well as helping them to understand the challenges which programmes staff may have in working with partners in other countries, appropriate field trips will help them become more involved. For example, there may be short-term training tasks for finance officers who deal with the transfer of funds to the field, or opportunities for reference group members to be involved in assignment identification.

A further opportunity for relationship-building may be available at home in Aotearoa New Zealand, if there are diaspora communities from the NGO’s partner country here. While there may also be sensitivities around engaging with some communities, e.g. refugee groups, there is a huge potential for increasing the organisational knowledge and effectiveness by building relationships with people who already have some of the cross-cultural and language abilities necessary to work in both countries.

LESSON 5

Building strong relationships with overseas partners takes time and effort, but is rewarded by benefits to everyone in the development process.

Questions to consider

- a How well do we understand the expectations our partners have of us? How well do we think they understand the expectations we have of them?
- b How well do programmes staff understand the cultural mores of our partners? How could we improve this knowledge? In the field? At home?
- c How well do our partners understand our cultural mores? What could we do to help them develop this knowledge?
- d When members of our organisation visit the field, do they schedule in time to engage in some activities to get to know the partners and/or their culture and languages better?
- e Have we considered sending non-programmes staff or volunteers to the field to learn about our partners and carry out short-term tasks relevant to their position in our organisation, e.g. kaumātua, board members, finance staff, advisory group members?

- f Do we have a relationship with any New Zealanders from the countries we work in? If not, are there any benefits which relationships with them could provide for our work in their countries of origin? How would we go about building the relationships?
- g Have we considered employing people from such communities who could provide relevant language or cultural skills in our organisation?

3.3 Gender equality

Gender equality is becoming a regular issue identified in the KOHA Lessons Learned reports for NGOs, and still remains an important area for NGOs working in development. A useful starting point is the resource available for download on the CID website, *Gender and Development* (2007)¹⁰.

Even if there is a good organisational understanding of the principles of gender equality, we consider that it is important to have formal policies and procedures as a reference point when talking with overseas partners. This will reinforce the perception of an issue which is relevant at policy level for New Zealand NGOs as well as for their overseas partner organisations.

The challenge of in-depth analysis rather than a simplistic approach to gender equality remains. A good understanding of the contexts in which the partner organisation is working goes some way to address this issue, as does the provision of high quality training for programme staff.

LESSON 6

Policies and procedures to address gender equality remain important for NGOs working in development.

Questions to consider

- a Is there a good awareness by the people in governance and management of our organisation of the issues of gender in development? If not, how could we increase their awareness?
- b If we do have a good awareness of the issues of gender equality, do we have policies and procedures which we can refer to, e.g. with our partners?
- c Do our programmes staff have access to opportunities to develop an in-depth understanding of the gender relations in the communities we are working in? If not, how might these opportunities be provided?

3.4 Security policies

We consider that it is essential for organisations with staff working or travelling overseas to have risk policies and/or guidelines for personal and property security. In addition, staff should have personal security plans, signed and updated regularly. It may be possible for those organisations who have well-developed policies to share these with other members of CID.

¹⁰ <http://www.cid.org.nz/training/resource-kit> (11/09/08)

LESSON 7

The development of personal security policies and plans for staff based in or travelling to the field will help avoid risk.

Questions to consider

- a Do we have risk policies and/or guidelines for the security of personnel, equipment and money? If not, is there another NGO who can share their policies and guidelines with us to adapt?
- b Do we currently have up-to-date personal security plans for staff based in or travelling to the field?

APPENDIX 1

Terms of reference Annual KOHA Organisational Reviews of Selected New Zealand Non- Government Organisations 2007/2008

Background

The KOHA Scheme, formerly known as the Voluntary Agency Support Scheme or VASS, was established in 1974 in recognition of the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as partners in the delivery of international development assistance managed by the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID).

The primary purpose of the KOHA Scheme is to improve the lives of people by addressing poverty and injustice internationally through overseas community development projects and programmes supported by New Zealand NGOs. This is achieved through:

- Providing funding for New Zealand NGOs involved in supporting partners providing high quality overseas community development projects and programmes;
- Supporting the continuation and development of a strong and effective New Zealand NGO sector involved in development through international partnerships; and
- Facilitating partnerships and linkages between the New Zealand community and New Zealand international development NGOs¹¹.

The annual KOHA organisational reviews assess four or five New Zealand NGOs that access KOHA funding to ensure that their development approach and practice is consistent with the requirements of the KOHA Scheme. Organisations chosen for review and field visits to be undertaken as part of the 2007/08 KOHA reviews are identified in Annex A to these terms of reference.

Reviews cover the period since each NGO's last organisational review, or, where there has been no previous review, for the last five years, or from the time when the NGO began accessing KOHA or VASS funds if it has been using funds for less than five years. The review period for the 2007/08 reviews begins on 1 July 2007 and ends on 30 June 2008. The terms of reference for the reviews should be read in conjunction with the *KOHA Handbook*, particularly the section entitled Review, Accountability and Learning and the section on the Principles and Criteria of the scheme.

Objectives of the 2007/08 KOHA organisational reviews

- Objective 1 To ensure that the development approach applied by NGOs being reviewed is consistent with the purpose, community development focus and criteria of the KOHA Scheme.
- Objective 2 To ensure that the NGOs being reviewed have appropriate capacity and systems and processes to support their KOHA development work. This includes appropriate organisational capacity, financial systems, and project identification, appraisal, management, monitoring and evaluation arrangements, as set out in the KOHA Handbook.
- Objective 3 For organisations that have undergone a previous review, to assess what progress has been made in implementing the recommendations of that review.

¹¹ KOHA Handbook, 2006 (2nd ed.), page 12.

- Objective 4 To identify any areas where NGOs being reviewed need to make changes in order to comply with requirements of the KOHA Scheme and to make suggestions as appropriate for other practice improvements.
- Objective 5 To identify general lessons from the organisational reviews that will be of interest to the New Zealand NGO sector involved in development work as a whole, and lessons on the operation of the KOHA Scheme for NZAID and the Programme Management Committee (PMC) of the KOHA Scheme.

Responsibilities

The review team will:

Stage 1: Preparation

- Meet with NZAID and the PMC for a briefing and decide which two organisations will be reviewed in the first six months and which in the second six months of the review year.
- Prepare the self-evaluation questionnaire and additional questions for the organisational profile and send them to the organisations being reviewed.
- Ask organisations to complete these and return them to the reviewers.
- Discuss and confirm dates for domestic reviews with PMC liaison person and each of the organisations being reviewed.
- Collect and read documents covering the review period from NZAID's and the KOHA Administrator's files on each organisation being reviewed.

Stage 2: Domestic visits

- Undertake a domestic review of each organisation being reviewed to consider whether it has appropriate capacity and systems to support its KOHA development work.
- Provide oral feedback on preliminary findings to each organisation being reviewed.
- Discuss and confirm dates and arrangements for field visits.
- Ensure that each organisation being reviewed provides copies of in-depth reports on the projects to be visited before the field visits.

Stage 3: Field visits

- As required, identify and contract an in-country interpreter in consultation with the local NGO.
- Undertake field visits to the projects nominated by the PMC (including the communities they serve) to look at how the New Zealand NGO's work plays out in the field with particular reference to its development approach, the nature of its partnerships and the application of the KOHA criteria in the partnerships and projects.
- Provide oral feedback on preliminary findings to each partner visited, ensuring that they understand that it is the New Zealand organisation and not the project visited that is the subject of the review.

Stage 4: Report writing and discussion of reports

- As appropriate, consider the suitability of the organisation being reviewed to move to block grant status or to move to programme funding.
- Complete separate draft reports on each of the four organisations which identify compliance and practice improvement issues as appropriate.
- Submit drafts to the PMC for consideration and meet the PMC to discuss them.

- Incorporate PMC comments as appropriate and submit resulting drafts to respective organisations, seeking their feedback on factual errors in the report.
- Meet with each organisation being reviewed to discuss the draft report prepared on it. These meetings will usually be chaired by the Independent Chair of the PMC.
- Finalise reports and submit them to the PMC.

Stage 5: Lessons learned

- Complete a report on lessons learned for the New Zealand NGO development sector on generic lessons learned from the reviews.
- Complete a report on lessons learned for NZAID and the PMC on the operation of the KOHA Scheme with suggestions for improvements as appropriate.
- Submit draft lessons learned reports to the PMC for consideration and meet with the PMC to discuss the reports.
- Finalise reports and submit to the PMC.
- Brief PMC members for discussion of the lessons learned for the NGOs at the NGO forum.

Other

- Provide periodic reports to the PMC on the progress of the review.
- Provide a financial progress report to each PMC meeting.

Outputs

- Expenditure reports for each PMC meeting.
- A presentation to the PMC in verbal or written form outlining the reviewers' activities and conclusions and commenting on any issues regarding the review process.
- A report incorporating the findings for each organisation (one report per organisation)
- A report to NZAID and the PMC on lessons for the effective operation of the KOHA Scheme.
- A report to the wider NGO community on the generic lessons from the reviews.

Composition of organisational review team

The core team for the organisational reviews will consist of:

- Two independently contracted consultants
- a member of the PMC who will join the reviews as a full team member and be responsible for acting as the point of liaison between the review team and the PMC. When necessary and appropriate, there may be an additional team member who may be a second PMC member, an NZAID staff member or other person as agreed by the PMC. The specific roles and responsibilities of PMC or other New Zealand NGO representatives on the review team in any particular year will be covered by a separate short contract between NZAID and each of the representatives concerned.

NGOs being reviewed are encouraged to send their own representative with the review team for the visits to their projects in the field. Costs of accompanying the review team may be met by applying for Assessment Monitoring & Evaluation (AM&E) funding under KOHA - or for block grant NGOs, by allocating AM&E funding within the usual block grant requirements.

Workplan

A detailed workplan for the reviews will be negotiated between the NZAID Civil Society Programme Manager, the Programme Management Committee (PMC) and the two independently contracted consultants. If determined necessary by NZAID, this Workplan will be incorporated as Annex B into this Schedule of this Contract by means of a mutually agreed and written Letter of Variation (LOV).

**Annex A to
Schedule One****New Zealand NGOs to be reviewed and/or visited in the 2007/08 KOHA reviews****Organisations selected for review**

- a. Organisation: International Needs NZ
Country: Papua New Guinea

- b. Organisation: Fred Hollows Foundation
Country: Papua New Guinea

- c. Organisation: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Country: Papua New Guinea

- d. Organisation: Family Planning Aid
Country: No visit planned

It is intended to combine the three Papua New Guinea visits into one trip.

In-depth reports:

The KOHA PMC will request each organisation under review to provide an in-depth report on those projects that are to be visited prior to the start of the domestic review.