

**Consultation Process for Development of new Irish Aid
Development and Global Citizenship Education Strategy**

2021- 2024

Development Perspectives submission

Nature of views (indicate personal / on behalf of an organisation):

The response detailed in this document is a submission that captures the views of Development Perspectives

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Freedom of information: Responses are subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Acts and may be released in total or in part. Please indicate if there are aspects of your response that you seek to have withheld, and the reasons for same.

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Q1. How can Irish Aid support life-long learning and increase public understanding of and engagement with development and global citizenship issues as well as increasing awareness of the Irish Aid programme?

Development Perspectives (DP) contends that (Global Citizenship Education - GCE / Development Education - DE) opportunities must be provided to people within and outside their formal education experience. Hence, the focus articulated for lifelong learning is welcome. A life wide learning perspective enables the multitude of realities that people live through. GCE / DE as practiced in 2021 – 2024 needs to connect to the lived lives of people across this island in order for it to be relevant and valuable.

With the adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015, the world renewed its commitment to eradicating global poverty, hunger and inequality. SDG Target 4.7 calls on all states to provide education needed to promote sustainable development. GCE / DE needs to consolidate and expand its place in educating on the global justice dimension of each of the Goals, inspiring and enabling people to take action at local, national, and global levels. It is critical to achieving the promise of transformative change that defines the SDGs. However, DP would contend that this responsibility cannot be left to the formal education system. Lifelong learning requires a long and wide approach incorporating formal education, non-formal education, and informal education. GCE/DE has a vital role in increasing public understanding of development issues and public awareness but must be ever present in all forms of dialogue and learning. DP would argue that an experiential learning approach that is inclusive, reciprocal, and participatory is key reflecting the emancipatory values that underpin the theory and practice of GCE/DE. This approach and framing would be particularly welcome in the new strategy when referring to traditional forms of “overseas volunteering”. DP would argue that overseas volunteering needs to be reformed with a clear focus on an exchange of learning and reciprocity at the core of the new approach.

GCE / DE has played an integral role in contributing to continued support for development cooperation by the people of Ireland. However, states are experiencing a period of flux that is made up of interconnected financial, social, health, and ecological challenges. Within this reality, we cannot assume that the continued support for development cooperation will continue at the same level. DP sees GCE/DE as having an important role in increasing public understanding of development issues and public awareness of the Irish Aid programme. DP would posit that GCE/DE is an integral part of International Development efforts and should be a key pillar of Irish Aid funded projects and programmes both in Ireland and Internationally.

DP argues that the level of financial support provided to the GCE / DE sector needs to increase in order to cater for the need and demand that currently exists.

However, the recent Joint Oireachtas Review¹ of the Irish Aid Programme found that *‘there is concern around the low levels of funding for communicating the results of Ireland’s development programme and educating people throughout the country about overseas development’* (JCFATD, 2018).

¹ [2018-02-22_report-review-of-the-irish-aid-programme_en.pdf \(oireachtas.ie\)](https://www.oireachtas.ie/publications/2018-02-22-report-review-of-the-irish-aid-programme-en.pdf)

The success of Irish Aids GCE / DE Strategy 2021-2024 requires a strong GCE / DE sector for the delivery of high quality and effective GCE/DE in Ireland and further afield. DP advocates for an increase in the GCE / DE budget to 3.0% of ODA within the lifetime of this strategy to enable this success. DP proposes an increasing allocation of GCE/DE funding increase within the adult and community education (ACE) sector with a particular focus on addressing the geographical gaps and the sectoral gaps evident from the recent Saolta report ² on the initial mapping of Irish Development Education in the adult and community education sector. This call for a 3% investment in GCE / DE resonates as far back as 2005, when a European Commission conference made up of member state ministries, including Irish Aid, Department of Foreign Affairs, and civil society representatives concluded that: *“National and European authorities should ensure there is adequate funding for development education and awareness-raising in their planning. It is proposed that the European Commission and Member states move towards or beyond a figure of 3% of ODA, as proposed in a UNDP Report. This increase in funding implies the necessary quality, efficiency and effectiveness of development education and awareness raising activities”* (Belgian Development Cooperation, 2005). This call was repeated in 2018 in the Dochas Development Education working group submission to the Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade³.

Lastly, neither public engagement nor education are in reality, a linear process. Multiple and interconnected pipelines of education and learning need to be created and supported to achieve a long-term sustainable goal. A DE/GCE ecosystem within the ACE sector needs to be enabled and continually supported. DP already has a national network in place and could roll out a “One World Network”⁴ version of what Eine Welt Netz has achieved in Germany. The ACE sector has the formal and nonformal networks to enable this in Ireland.

² Report on the Initial mapping of Development Education in the adult and community education sector (2020) - <https://www.developmentperspectives.ie/ResearchPDFS/Development%20Education%20Report%20Final-Web.pdf>

³ 2018 Submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in respect of Irish Aid White Paper Consultation on Ireland’s New International Development Policy

⁴ <https://eine-welt-netz-nrw.de/about-us/>

Q2. Are there other groups or organisations we should seek to work with in order to build this awareness and engagement?

Aside from the membership of Saolta (AONTAS, Irish Rural Link, Concern Worldwide and the Dept. of Adult and Community Education) and the strategic relationships which Saolta is developing and building on which are listed below, DP believes that there are a number of important relationships that could be established in order to further our collective aspirations.

The Saolta consortium is working with the following groups and will intensify and deepen these relationships over the coming years

- Saolta members (AONTAS, IRL, Dept. of ACE in Maynooth University, Concern Worldwide)
- The 8 providers of Initial Tutor Education for the ACE sector
- Public Participation Networks and local authorities / Local Partnership companies
- ETBs (Adult Education Officers and Community Education Facilitators)
- FE Institutes
- SOLAS

The following organisations are important in building up awareness and engagement.

- Sports National Governing bodies (Through the Federation of Irish Sports / Sports Council)
- The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland / The Irish Film Board / Create Ireland
- Rethink Ireland and the Dept. of Rural and Community Development
- Marginalised groups – Asylum seekers and refugees / Probation and addiction services
- Media and Journalism courses (Staff and Students) across FE and HE

Q3. What has changed in the external environment since 2017, both in the education sector and broader societal changes nationally and globally, and how should that be reflected in our priorities, our relationships and in our revised strategy?

Countries in the global south suffer most from conflicts and an unjust global economic structure whilst also bearing the brunt of climate injustice. Forced (refugees) and labour migration is therefore at the forefront of the global context. At the same time, there is a rise in nationalist populist movements globally. Such movements are fuelled through a narrative of fear and hatred of ‘others’, therefore promoting division and self-interest as opposed to global solidarity and interdependence.

In such a fragile global context, grounded information and education on development processes at home and abroad are needed more than ever. In the absence of a push back to populist information, the influence of divisive groups will increase.

DP believes that the DE/GCE sector must emotionally engage with participants using Experiential learning, Design thinking, Gamification, Storytelling and theatre of the oppressed in order to optimise educational opportunities with adults. Furthermore, inquiry-based methods which explore the nature of identities, beliefs, values, knowledge and understanding need to be at the forefront of Ireland’s efforts to counter the dominant narrative of fear. Problem based learning is also essential in that this approach allows participants practice a key pillar of DE/GCE (problem solving)

The forthcoming IA strategy on GCE / DE needs to target support to the long established and experienced practitioners that can address the issues that are pertinent to people's lives in a spirit of solidarity and justice. The issues that these organisations and practitioners address include

- Climate Change
- Ecological breakdown
- Social cohesion
- Inequality
- Outreach to the most marginalised
- Misinformation / Fake News
- Racism and the need for more inclusive societies

The IA strategy on GCE / DE needs to support a national ecosystem to assist these grass-root based organisations interpret the relevance of the SDGs to their mission and their members.

Q4. What do you consider to be the key areas of progress made since 2017 in the implementation of the Irish Aid Strategic Planning process? Are there any key lessons learnt or gaps in the current response?

The new strategic partnerships (ACE and Youth Sector) in the GCE / DE sector needs to be recognised and commended. There is huge potential within the Saolta consortium and this potential can be fulfilled with further support from the members of the consortium and Irish Aid. DP would like to see more diversity in the way in which GCE/DE is approached and delivered. More innovation is required in relation to how GCE/DE is conducted in order for it to be effective.

Q5 With reference to the five output areas of the current Irish Aid Development Education Strategic Plan, what do you consider the key priorities for 2021- 2024 should be?

1. Enabling and coherent policy environment

- Work in partnership with the Dept. of Environment, Climate and Communications on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Ireland.
- Engage with the Dept. of Rural and Community Development on their "Sustainable, inclusive and empowered communities" and the synergies that this strategy has with GCE / DE.
- Engage with Rethink Ireland and the Dept. of Rural and Community Development in order to include GCE / DE in the National Social Enterprise Policy post 2022.
- Work with the Dept. of Education on the forthcoming Education for Sustainable Development strategy to ensure there is adequate coverage of the adult and community education sector in their plans and support for the sector in its implementation.
- Establish a strong working relationship with DFHERIS to ensure GCE / DE is included in policy goals and departmental objectives for the Further Education sector.
- Support and fund the GCE / DE sector to review existing policies in education, local government, environment, etc. to identify synergies with GCE / DE, gaps and opportunities for collaboration.

2. Capacity, collaboration and partnership

- DP believes it is crucially important to build relationships with the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, the Irish Film Board and Create Ireland.
- Implement a “One world network” style solution in Ireland. This could be based on the work of Eine Welt Netz, which was referenced previously.
- Support Saolta to deliver tailored capacity building measures for the adult and community education sector. This should include trainings and workshops that focus on storytelling, gamification, theatre of the oppressed, sports and outdoor education.
- Continue to support Saolta in developing a framework for ITE provision with the eight HEI providers
- Saolta is also creating a clear CPD pathway for adult and community education practitioners. This should be continued.
- A global passport type initiative for Further Education needs to be explored with key FE stakeholders.

3. Mainstreaming and integration of GCE / DE in formal education

A global passport type model for FE and HE is worth considering. The work that Saolta is doing in relation to ITE provision is critically important. GCE / DE focused post graduate qualifications are required in order to build clear CPD pathways for practitioners.

4. Increased integration, quality, and spread of development education programmes in non-formal education programmes and structures.

DP feels that this area needs to have further focus and emphasis in the new IA strategy. In particular, we feel that working with Sports National Governing Bodies, Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) the Irish Film Board (IFB), Create Ireland and Media and Journalism students are areas that need to be addressed. The extensive reach of the Sports bodies and the influence of the media should not be underestimated. Providing further financial support to the sector generally through the annual grant call will contribute significantly to this priority. DP would like to see far more use of participatory methodologies and approaches (Experiential learning, Gamification, Storytelling, Socially engaged arts etc.)

5. Increased awareness within the education sector of Ireland’s Development Cooperation programme and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

This is an area that needs to be prioritised. The awareness rate of the SDGs across Ireland is relatively low. DP sees this as a key leverage point for educational engagement in order to ensure that the international dimension of GCE / DE is kept central. Working with the Dept. of Environment, Climate and Communication and Coalition 2030 is key in this regard.

Q 6. Irish Aid is considering changing the name of the programme and strategy to Global Citizenship Education, do you have any comments or concerns in relation to this suggestion?

In short, DP agrees with the change to “Global Citizenship Education”. This will make alignment with work conducted in the international arena easier, however there is one area of concern that we feel is worth noting. Some marginalised groups (Asylum Seekers / Refugees – both programme and non) may have negative experiences of dealing with the language of “Citizenship”. This is something that policy makers and practitioners need to be cognisant of.

Q 7. What opportunities have arisen from the COVID-19 experience and how can we learn from it in order to reach a broader audience?

COVID-19 has exposed existing inequalities in our society and communities but it has also served to highlight the intricate web of interdependence that we live in both geographically and thematically. The power dynamics at play in relation to vaccines is also sadly revealing.

At a more practical level, COVID-19 has opened up the world of distance learning with many GCE / DE providers moving their activities online in 2020. DP believes that this has been a positive development with the potential to reach a wider audience clear to see. However, that story has a dark side. The ‘digital divide’ is apparent with many marginalised communities further distanced because of Covid. A lack of broadband, physical equipment and IT skills all contribute to a widening of access to GCE / DE opportunities, which we need to be individually and collectively aware of.

Further research is needed on the outcomes and impact of online learning versus in-person learning. GCE / DE focuses on building a sense of solidarity and collective empowerment – it is not yet clear if online learning matches the emotional impact and connection of in-person delivery.

Q 8. How can technology and digital outreach help us?

Community Education hubs such as members of the Community Education Network, National Rural Network or Family Resource centres provide opportunities for people to come together in a supported manner that can address fears surrounding digital literacy but can also address physical isolation. Blended learning can contribute to reaching more people across Ireland. DP would argue that more video and audio resources are needed within the GCE/DE sector. DPTV is an example of a project that is worth supporting in this arena.