Quality and Impact working group submission to Irish Aid on new strategy for DevEd

- Nature of views: organisation
- Organisation (if applicable): IDEA Quality and Impact working group submission with input from the IDEA Formal Education Working group
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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.
- Date of posting response: March 19th 2021

To whom it may concern

The IDEA Quality and Impact working group welcome the opportunity presented by a new strategy for Dev ED. The role of the Working Group focuses on quality Development Education. There is a strong framework for this in the Code of Good Practice for Development Education. This has been supplemented by a critical reflection tool created by the Q&I working group. We recommend that the Irish Aid strategy recognises the value of the Code of Good Practice for Development Education, while ensuring that it does not become a 'tick box' exercise. The Code itself is sector-driven and this is crucial to maintain to ensure it's worth as a self-assessment process which DE actors voluntarily join. It is surrounded by a strong Community of Practice aiming to advance quality DE and share lessons learned. Research is an important aspect to our work, which has been under-funded in recent years. Research funding is necessary to fully assess the impact of Dev Ed work, and to explore innovative forms of measurement and evaluation of Dev Ed.

If we are to target and reach increased numbers of schools/young people/ teachers, then the Dev Ed strategy needs to be fully and substantially resourced, with a much greater level of investment from Irish Aid.

Overall recommendation-

- The new Dev Ed strategy needs to be fully and substantially resourced
- Large-scale research funding to examine the application of appropriate measurement and evaluation tools for Dev Ed learning

Key points on evaluation of learning from Dev Ed

Our submission focuses on impact, monitoring and evaluation concerns. We particularly wish to emphasise that the new strategy incorporates ways of measuring the qualitative impact of development education. This submission, we feel in responding to all questions set out, specifically relates to 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.

1. The Irish Aid PMF works in some areas for monitoring and evaluation work, notably providing numbers and quantitative measures, suitable for tracking progress and for reporting on organisational features. But Results-Based Approaches are not appropriate for measuring the learning are not appropriate for measuring the learning outcomes of Dev Ed work.

The outcomes are complex; for instance some learners may be overwhelmed by the complexity of development issues and learning is not always linear; similarly, it can be difficult to articulate the outcomes and the sector needs support to carry out alternative evaluation processes.

At present, there are no clear indicators of success in Dev Ed learning; raising awareness of ODA for example may raise more questions that it does answers, a learning process which may not be immediately tangible. Furthermore, learning arising from DE does not necessarily manifest itself in the context of international development. Learning outcomes, particularly in the short-term, may relate to more locally-based contexts.

Example:

Use of standardised measures does not capture the whole learning process, nor are they addressing attitudes or values relevant to Dev Ed learning. There are examples where we are of the view that the data collection is meaningless, inaccurate or inappropriate. All funded projects are obliged to supply data for PMF Outcome One. In order to collect the required data, organisations resort to questions that are overly broad in scope and shallow in depth, and also are highly unlikely to elicit a negative response. For example, after participating in a DE programme, who would say that they did *not* gain some knowledge of a broadly-stated global issue? Or, given a list of anticipated behaviour changes such as 'buying Fairtrade products' or 'supporting an online petition', who would say that they planned to do *nothing* differently?

Recommendation:

- Consider the emphasis on data in relation to breadth versus depth of engagement. We would appreciate appropriate indicators of quality and quantity for measurement of our work
- Third level PMF indicators need to be updated in consultation with GCE/DE practitioners.

2. There is a major time gap between the submission of the PMF data to IA and the distribution of the data to the Dev Ed community. The data from 2018/2019 Performance Management Framework only became available in Nov 2020. For any data to have meaning and influence the data needs to be made available sooner and in a more efficient manner. Some of this data gap may be a reflection of the way the data is collected by Irish Aid, which may be cumbersome and resource intensive in terms of gathering and analysis.

Recommendation:
>   More efficient ways of data collection and analysis should be implemented by Irish Aid.

3. In previous submissions and communications with IA, we have requested a short 2-3 line explanation for educators to explain to learners the rationale for Irish Aid's request for demographic and background data. Many learners ask the purpose of this data, and have questions on what use will be made of it. We would like to see a clear explanation from Irish Aid which can be quoted to learners.

Recommendation:
>   A two line explanation for Irish Aid's request for demographic and background data that ca be shared with Dev Ed learners and participants

4. We have previously questioned the purpose of disaggregated data. This point is connected to the next

5. We ask IA to review their processes of data gathering on Dev Ed. At present there are multiple data reporting's to Irish Aid; the PMF/RF data, case study templates, and end of year reports.
First of all, this reporting process is arduous for Dev Ed grant recipients and we do not want any extra burdens put into place. Secondly Dev Ed grant recipients complete detailed end of year reports, giving accounts of learning and programmes, which could be mined for qualitative findings and/ or developed into case studies of learning

Recommendations:
>   As part of the New Strategy development process, we request that Irish Aid ask themselves if all of these reporting mechanisms are necessary. And then consider how can Irish Aid streamline this data gathering process and to make clear links between application and report forms.
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>   Secondly Irish Aid should consider whether the questions currently being asked provide the information needed by IA?
>   Irish Aid need to reassess: (i) what information they require and for what purpose (ii) how this information will be specifically analysed and used to further the development and delivery of quality DE.

Thirdly more efficient use of technology may help in the data mining process, or the use of a robust on-line application/reporting system. Also the use of open access would ensure PMF data is available to Dev Ed grantees.

6. With Irish Aid's focus on impact, the organisation should invest time and resources in preparing and writing up case studies of learning of DE projects similar to those undertaken in its ODA programmes.

Recommendation:
Irish Aid to invest in preparing and writing up case studies, by visiting Dev Ed activities, bringing photographers, interviewing participants on various aspects of their DE programmes. This would generate the case studies and qualitative data, as well as create more understanding of Dev Ed work undertaken in Ireland. We feel this approach has multiple benefits - strengthening the relationship between donor and grant recipient, deepening understanding of DE by IA staff and not adding additional reporting burdens to the grant recipient.

7. In the grant application process, we have questions on how learning outcomes relate to curriculum alignment at the grant application and appraisal stage.
Recommendation
we would like Irish Aid to clarify what they define as learning outcomes when it comes to curriculum alignment at the grant application and appraisal stage.

Question on Covid and impact of the pandemic/lockdown
COVID-19 may have an impact on data collection and delivery of results, for 2020-2021 and possibly beyond this.
Recommendation:
Irish Aid to invest in a data gathering exercise at this time, to review work over the past year, and to gather the best practice from across the sector on how Dev Ed was implemented and to gain insights into what changes are being made by organisations to adapt.

Yours sincerely,

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The IDEA Quality and impact Working Group