



GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP SCHOOL'S vision is that all Irish primary school teachers and children will learn about global citizenship and that schools will take consistent primary school appropriate action to help make the world a better place for all. The G.C.S. motto states that "We are working for a better and fairer world for everyone, and it starts with me. Ní neart go cur le chéile." We strive to have Global Citizenship mainstreamed in the curriculum and we also aim to be a go-to support for anyone involved in Primary School Global Citizenship Education.

Irish Aid Development and Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2024

COVER PAGE

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Global Citizenship School submission re Irish Aid Development and Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2024

Irish Aid STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION 2017-2024 states:

“Our long term goal or intended impact is that, through the provision of development education, people in Ireland are empowered to analyse and challenge the root causes and consequences of global hunger, poverty, inequality, injustice and climate change, inspiring and enabling them to become active global citizens in the creation of a fairer and more sustainable future for all.”

Our response to the above Irish Aid Strategy Statement:

We in Global Citizenship School agree that Irish Aid’s existing strategy statement is the correct approach to Development / Global Citizenship Education and should be developed further in Strategy 2021/2024. We particularly like the “inspiring and enabling the people of Ireland to become active global citizens” phrase in the above strategy statement.

‘A Better World’, Ireland’s policy for international development, is a whole of government policy which describes development education as **“action-focused engagement that empowers people to understand the root causes of poverty and global inequalities”**. A Better World states the belief that global problems can only be solved by **collective action** and this concept, we believe, must be enshrined as a core commitment in Irish Aid’s Development / Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2024.

Successive Irish Governments have been committed to reaching the **U.N. target of allocating 0.7 % of our G.N.I to official Development Assistance by 2030**. By 2019 the Sustainable Progress Index statistics put us less than half way there with us contributing 0.31% of our GNI compared with an EU average at 0.48%.

‘Being an ACTIVE CITIZEN’ is one of the 7 Key Competencies in the NCCA draft Revised Primary School Curriculum. **‘Being an active citizen’ states:**

“This competency fosters within children the knowledge, skills, concepts, attitudes, values and dispositions that motivate and empower them as citizens

to take positive actions to live justly, sustainably and with regard for the rights of others. It helps children question, critique and understand what is happening in the world within a framework of human rights, equality and social justice. It places democratic practices at the centre of the learning process. This competency develops children's capacity and motivation for active and meaningful participation in society at local, national and global levels, and fosters their ability to contribute positively and compassionately towards the creation of a more sustainable and just world."

We in Global Citizenship School fully endorse this approach to curriculum.

We also recommend that Irish Aid strategy 2021/24 should allow for flexibility in the delivery of Global Citizenship Education by its partners while at the same time facilitating good governance and realistic performance monitoring. All Irish Aid strategic partner levels should be open to revised ways of working as time and society move on, i.e. key priorities, technology and societal changes both nationally and globally must be recognised, responded to, planned for and acted upon as required.

We now wish to address the 8 questions posed in this consultative process:

Question 1. *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?*

- a. Irish Aid can advocate for a Whole of Government approach and in particular, cultivate closer relations with the Dept. of Education.
- b. Irish Aid can evolve their strategies for working with partners in the NGO sector as well as in the wider society.
- c. Irish Aid could for example, as part of a bottom up approach, align strategically with Global Citizenship School who, from Junior Infant level, encourage the youngest children in our school system, along with their parents/guardians, to become active global citizens. G.C.S. seeks to empower primary school pupils to become active citizens at local, national & global levels and to provide them with the necessary skills, attitudes and knowledge to do so. G.C.S. do this by supporting teachers and whole school communities.

- d. The various Irish Aid programmes can have built-in ‘increased awareness of the Irish Aid programme’ by stipulating this in all Irish Aid funded projects and programmes.

Question 2. *Are there other groups or organisations we should seek to work with in order to build this awareness and engagement?*

- a. *G.C.S. recommends a Whole of Government and a Whole of Society engagement with Global Citizenship Education as we are now clearly part of an interconnected world and we share a common humanity.*
- b. *As regards primary level education, Irish Aid should be involved, directly or via a strategic partner, with all the ‘Partners in Education’ – the Management Bodies (CPSMA, C.of I. Board of Education, Educate Together, An Foras Pátrúnachta, Community National Schools etc), the INTO, the IPPN, the National Parents Council, the evolving pupil ‘school councils’ sector and the Department of Education itself (in particular the E.S.D./CAP unit, the NCCA and the Primary School Inspectorate).*

Question 3. *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?*

- a. Climate Change and Just Transition have become a major survival issue for humanity. The youth of the world are, in many cases, leading the calls for action.
- b. Technology and social media with 5 billion plus internet users worldwide today has facilitated global awareness of justice, equality and sustainability issues in every village around our planet.
- c. Inequalities globally have increased since 2017 and the global Covid-19 pandemic has made these all the more evident. The need to incorporate GCE into the primary school curriculum becomes clearer and more crucial every day. Teaching the skills, values and attitudes of GCE and equally important, giving children a voice, a space, an audience and a reason to act upon these key and core skills to create a fairer and more just society in a globalised world gains more urgency in these unsettled and unsettling times.
- d. Covid-19 with lockdowns, increased on-line learning, the digital divide and a definite growing global awareness of the importance of

- quality education are trends that must be addressed in any future strategies from all global citizenship players and partners incl. I.A.
- e. Black Lives Matter, anti-racism action and education, the potential growth of the Alt-Right (e.g. Grafton St. disturbances in Dublin Feb. 2021), the shame of Direct Provision and the Digital Divide during Covid-19 are samples of a changing landscape in recent years.
 - f. The Rise of Misinformation: Globally and more recently nationally we have seen the effects of the spread of misinformation. At times, this has been used to marginalise certain groups of society and at other times it has been used to discredit positive environmental movements. It is vital that children are empowered from an early age with critical thinking skills. Children need to be able to question, evaluate and to distil the information the information they are receiving to reach their own conclusions and not be misled by alternative false narratives that may be presented by some to further their own agendas.

In light of the above changes, Irish Aid should support GCE as it offers methodologies which are based on the lifelong skills of critical thinking, problem solving and taking action for a fairer world.

Question 4. *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?*

One stand-out gap in the current response is that GCE at primary school level is happening but is very patchy and is in many cases an add-on to the primary curriculum. There needs to be a much more focused, coherent and sustained response and one which is embedded in curriculum, in educational programmes, resources and initiatives and in text-books where used. The NCCA have launched their excellent draft revised Primary School Curriculum but this may take a few years to be embedded in the primary sector.

- a. With regard to the gaps in the Irish Aid current strategic plan, G.C.S. believes that Irish Aid needs a primary education strategic partner to help the c. 550,000 primary school pupils and by extension, their families and communities to become active global citizens. This can be one essential part of Irish Aid's revised Strategy 2021-2024. Other sectors of Irish society may also need partners but comment here is beyond our remit.

- b. We also believe in the mainstreaming of Global Citizenship Education into the primary school curriculum (Curaclam na mBunscoile). This would also greatly improve the possibility of teachers and Principal teachers being provided with quality in-service CPD (Continuous Professional Development) and by extension pre-service training (ITE) in GCE at teacher training level. It would also expand management and inspectorate structures and responsibilities and all primary school programmes and initiatives would benefit. This would involve working with the Education Partners alongside Department of Education officials and Minister and other government and non-government interested bodies in developing the GCE curriculum.
- c. Mainstreaming GCE would not exclude the NGO/Civil Society input to Development/GCE in the formal primary school sector. Others, eg ourselves in G.C.S., Trócaire, GOAL, UNICEF, Give Racism the Red Card, Green Schools, Fair Trade etc , would still be required to produce and offer educational and promotional resources, CPD on-line, blended and Face-2-Face courses and workshops and action campaigns based on justice, equality and sustainability issues.

Question 5. *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?*

Output area 1 – Policy Coherence:

We need some Government of Ireland led plan as to what SDG no. 4.7 means in practical terms within our school system at the very least. Teastaíonn treoir agus tacaíocht uainn freisin chun acmhainní a chur ar fáil i nGaeilge.

Output area 2 – Capacity Building:

At primary school level we require research and GCE Resources and CPD for all school staff to precede/coincide with the mainstreaming of GCE.

Output area 3 – Formal Education and within that, the primary sector is, in our opinion, a key priority for 2021- 2024. A strategic partner at primary level, who has the understanding, relevant contacts, experience, insight to the primary sector and the ability to facilitate real and meaningful engagement would be a hugely positive move with the potential to involve over half a million children and the whole school communities of more than 3,250 primary schools and their hinterlands across Ireland.

Output area 4 – Non-Formal Education:

This is not part of our brief but good communications and relations between the formal and the non-formal education sectors are absolutely necessary as learners don't differentiate and all learning is complementary.

Output area 5 - Increased awareness within the education sector of Ireland's development cooperation programme and the UN Sustainable Development Goal.

Whole of government coherence and financial and resource investment in the various NGO's and strategic partners involved in Development/Global Citizenship Education would incrementally increase awareness of the SDG's and in Ireland's Development Cooperation Programme.

Question 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?*

Global Citizenship Education as the new name of the programme is without doubt an excellent suggestion. GCE is as much a right as it is a responsibility and the term is easily understood by the general public. The words 'global' and 'education' are self-explanatory and the term 'citizenship' is widely understood to mean citizen's rights with responsibilities and a recognition that justice, equality, fairness, inclusivity and sustainability are intrinsic to this term and are part of what a good citizen is and does.

We believe that the term 'development education' is often misunderstood. The term Global Citizenship Education has also become more universally accepted than Development Education.

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

The COVID-19 experience outcomes are still unclear and some form of pandemic Covid-19 variant may linger for years to come. Society is experiencing different ways of doing things and/or restrictions on doing other things. Some of these changes do involve the digital world and many are of a traditional nature. Some Covid-19 experience outcomes may improve society and others may destroy what we once recognised as 'normal'.

Digital citizenship includes digital fluency, digital relationships and digital rights and responsibility and there is new learning and teaching involved in this space. There is an obvious digital divide alongside a growing need to equip all pupils, students and life-long learners with the skills of problem solving, critical thinking and intercultural competencies for a globalised and interdependent world.

Some of the negative effects of Covid-19 lockdowns include an increase in mental illness, abuse and isolation. Some positive effects are in genuine neighbourliness, a growing appreciation of nature and the convenience and in many cases family life changing benefits of not commuting to workplaces.

The process which many people have undertaken internally into questioning their pre-lockdown lives may open a space for the concept of global citizenship to reach a broader audience. An appreciation of live sporting and musical events, local venues to congregate in and the questioning of aspects of social media may possibly be harvested for the betterment of society as time goes by. Changing societal needs require serious consideration in these momentous times.

Question 8. *How can technology and digital outreach help us?*

Global Citizenship Education plays a critical role in equipping learners in the formal education system with the necessary knowledge, competencies and values to fully engage with the dynamic, diverse, unequal and interdependent world of the twenty-first century.

Technology and digital outreach must be a growing part of any Irish Aid GCE strategy involving our citizens. Learning in the formal education sector must also be blended as in having on-line, real-time and face-to-face components. Inclusivity must ensure accessibility for all and a significant online presence must be ensured whilst at the same time constantly working to narrow the digital divide in Irish society. Digital skills and digital media literacy can help promote GCE and a better world for all, but we must be aware of digital divides locally, nationally and globally.

Consideration should be given to the development of a 'One Stop Online Hub' which all GCE players would be linked in to and which would provide educators in both the formal and non-formal sectors with easy access to GCE resources.

Deireadh na hAighneachta.