



The Irish Association of Non-Governmental
Development Organisations

Submission to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence

October 2017 – Review of Irish Aid programme

Dóchas Development Education Working Group

“Active citizenship requires the will and the opportunity to participate at every level and in every way – to be the arrow; not the target”, Michael D Higgins¹

The Dóchas Development Education Working Group (DEG) welcomes the opportunity to share its views on a review of the Irish Aid Programme. The Dóchas DEG views Development Education (DE) as a fundamental part of Irish Aid’s development cooperation programme; it highlights Ireland’s many interactions with the rest of the world, and enables people to become effective global citizens.²

The Current Context

Ireland has become a reputable leader in Development Education among its European counterparts both in terms of support structures and the quality of programmes and organisations delivering DE. In 2015, a peer National Report in Development Education in Ireland commended the work and support of Irish Aid in relation to DE and recognised the *‘commitment to results, to improvement, to widespread reach and to building visibility of DE within Development Policy. There has been pronounced achievement with a small team and limited resources.’*³

Furthermore two independent reports at regional level commissioned by the European Commission identify Irish Development Education as an exemplary model for European counterparts to implement and practice.⁴

Irish Aid’s Development Education Strategy 2017-2023 affirms Irish Aid’s commitment to DE and its central role in both International Development programmes and Irish Foreign Policy.

¹ Inaugural Speech November 11th, 2011

² Dóchas Website <http://www.dochas.ie/our-work/working-groups/development-education-working-group>

³ GENE Report, 2016, pg54

⁴ DE Watch: European Development Education Monitoring Report, 2010, 28 and 52; and OECD Development Co-operation Peer Review: Ireland 2014, 74–75.

It is an ambitious strategy that seeks to increase accessibility, quality and effectiveness of DE in Ireland.⁵

In addition other government strategies recognise the value of global citizenship education, including the *National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development 2014-2020* and the *National Youth Strategy 2015-2020*. In recent years, the Development Education Sector has made significant progress in implementing Development Education in the formal, non-formal and informal sectors through Irish Aid's Strategic Partnerships and partnerships with Civil Society Organisations.

At a global level the adoption at the UN in September 2015 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), world leaders renewed its commitment to eradicating global poverty, hunger and inequality. SDG Target 4.7 calls on states to provide education to ensure that *'all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development'*. The principles enshrined in the SDGs of sustainability, global solidarity, universality and local to global interdependence are at the core of DE. As stated by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Charlie Flanagan, *'DE strengthens understanding of the global justice dimension of each of the Goals, inspiring and enabling people to take action at local, national and global levels and therefore is critical to achieving the promise of transformative change that defines the SDGs'*⁶.

The Dóchas Development Education Working Group values its partnership with Irish Aid and believes this partnership can broaden and deepen public understanding in Ireland of issues facing the developing world and of our roles and responsibilities as citizens in that. We ask the Joint Committee to consider our recommendations which we believe would strengthen the Irish Aid programme:

- 1. Recognition that for the successful universal implementation of SDGs, high-quality Development Education is at the core.**
- 2. For the successful execution of the Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017-2023 full and adequate investment and resources are required.**

Successful implementation of the SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were signed in 2015 – following international negotiations co-chaired by Ireland. As SDG 4 clearly sets out, the universal education agenda is comprehensive, holistic and universal, and is inspired by a vision of education that

⁵ The overarching goal of the strategy is *'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'*

⁶ Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017-2023, pg 4

transforms the lives of individuals, communities and societies, leaving no one behind. **The challenges of today's interconnected world can only be met by individuals who are lifelong learners.** Promotion of high quality and accessible lifelong learning initiatives is fundamental to achieving all of the SDGs by providing people with the understanding, skills and values they need to thrive in a complex global world.

Through the development of Strategic Partnerships the implementation of Development Education in the curriculum and practice of the formal education sector has made significant progress. We will need to **continue to invest resources and innovation in this area if we are to build on this progress and to increase “understanding of the global justice dimension of each of the goals.”**⁷

However, we also hope that Irish Aid will continue to **support organisations who carry out development education in the non-formal sector** and especially **those can provide the link between programming overseas and development education** at home.

Funding for Development Education

Irish Aid's Civil Society Section and Development Education Unit is the largest funder of Development Education in Ireland. In 2008 Irish Aid granted €5.7 million to DE projects. As a consequence of the economic downturn in 2009 funding dropped below €3 million in 2013 and again in 2014⁸. According to recent research by Dóchas, Irish Aid allocations to DE through various channels has fallen from 0.73% of the ODA budget in 2011 to 0.51% of the ODA budget in 2016⁹.

While Irish Aid's commitment to Development Education has been acknowledged through its ambitious strategy and its emphasis to work closely with civil society partners,¹⁰ in order to ensure the success of this strategy, **full investment needs to be attributed to its implementation costs.** At its launch, Minister Flanagan stated that it would cost €25 million to meet the goals of this strategy over its lifetime.

The Development Education Working Group recognises that Irish Aid provides funding to Development Education through a number of different grant mechanisms namely Strategic Partnerships, Annual, Multi-Annual and Programme Partner grants. **We would recommend a review of funding modalities that promote longer term quality Development Education programmes and encourage partnerships between organisations in and outside of Ireland on projects.**

⁷ Irish Aid Development Education Strategy, 2017-2023, pg 4

⁸ IDEA 'Development Education in Ireland' 2015 pg45

⁹ Irish Aid Investment in Development Education 2011-2017 (draft), Dochas, pg 6

¹⁰ Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017-2023, pg5

In addition, the Gene Report 2015 recognises the quality and success of Irish Aids DE programme, however the report identifies a gap between real potential for more and better DE and the resources currently available.¹¹ There is a need **to sufficiently resource and increase capacity within Irish Aid's Civil Society Section and Development Education Unit** to address the demands of the current Development Education Strategy.

In making these recommendations, the Development Education Working Group hopes that the review of Irish Aid's Programme will lead to a **strengthening of the support which Irish Aid has given to Development Education**. This should be support which enhances citizens understanding of, and promotes active engagement, with global and development issues into the future.

¹¹ Gene Report, 2016, pg55