



**Submission by
IDEA Youth Taskgroup
to the
Consultation Process for Development of new Irish Aid
Development and Global Citizenship Education Strategy
2021-2024**

1. **Nature of views (indicate personal / on behalf of an organisation):**
Organisation/Sectoral
2. **Organisation (if applicable):** IDEA Youth Taskgroup
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1
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6. **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: **No** IDEA Youth Taskgroup wishes to have all of its submission released publically.

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Strategy Questions

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?

- Having a shared understanding of LLL is important. Suggestion: *Ongoing learning in formal, non-formal and informal ways, cradle to grave learning and knowledge building* (CANDO, 2011).
- Support DE youth sector with secure funding that allows long-term engagement. Pilot projects that test ideas are suitable for 1 year funding. Proven programmes that increase public understanding and engagement should be eligible for 2-5 year funding.
- Meet with Strategic Partners as a collective on a yearly basis to identify issues, challenges, successes, gaps, etc.
- The Irish Aid DE Team should include a Youth Development Education Officer who would support a greater understanding of and linkages with the Youth Sector including The National Youth Strategy 2015 – 2020 [National Youth Strategy 2015- 2020 - National Youth Council of Ireland](#) and UBU funding scheme for youth projects [UBU Policy and Operating Rules.pdf](#) (page 17).

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

- The youth sector is very large with reach into every community in Ireland. Irish Aid must adequately support the stakeholders – young people, youth organisations, youth workers, volunteers, youth leaders, third level youth work educators, policy makers, and funders.
- Allocate funding to research and map the youth sector stakeholders to establish where DE engagements are and identify gaps and opportunities.
- We welcome recognition of the development of the National Action Plan against Racism and call for the engagement with the youth sector in creating this important plan.
- Young climate activists (e.g. Fridays for Future) and racial justice activists have played an important role in drawing attention to and bringing about societal change. Irish Aid should support these activists to continue and deepen their work.
- Public sector engagement could be stronger in particular the Gardaí, probation service, social workers. Other government departments could also be more engaged including DECEDIY.

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?

- The impact of the pandemic has brought to the surface inequalities faced by young people all over the world - those impacted by digital poverty & with additional learning support needs; those whose homes are not a safe space and who do not have the escape of school or extra-curricular activities; those whose families are navigating more immediate health and safety issues e.g. lack of appropriate sanitation infrastructure and lack of space for activities e.g. on halting sites; in addition, for these families, extra resource support would be required to overcome challenges with literacy; the impact of Covid 19 on the mental health of young people, separated from friends and out of normal physical and sporting routines¹; anxiety arising from the Covid 19 pandemic puts extra pressure on mental health services that are already oversubscribed, the fact that youth workers are picking up this deficit in mental health services and responding to young people who present is an important feature of the present pandemic and highlights the ever present role of the youth sector in responding to societal changes impacting on young people's lives.²
- The expansion and further divide of far right groups utilising online spaces to share their opinions has exacerbated the [infodemic](#) youth are vulnerable to online. At a time where youth are spending even more time online, infodemic management in the education sector should be a priority and critical thinking and systems thinking of DevEd should be emphasized to encourage objectivity online of what they read and communication skills to equip youth with the skills to understand and speak about what it is they are experiencing and with the skills to have respectful dialogue with groups they are in disagreement with on particular issues.
- Young people's voices on climate issues have increased and the mainstreaming of climate actions by young people is a change from pre 2017. Recent work and data³ highlights this. Young people are more concerned about global issues and the intersectional nature of these issues – climate emergency, conflict, migration, social justice, poverty, gender inequality, racial equity, racism, etc at local, national, and international levels. There is also an increased sense of anxiety around these issues and young people are more fearful for their futures and need greater levels of support. Greater acknowledgement of and supports for youth-led activity should be in place.
- Wellness needs to be a health priority in our strategy in the local and global context
- The fast move to working online has opened up new opportunities to work together internationally in new and innovative ways and has presented opportunities for increased

¹ See [How's Your Head?](#)-Department of Children and Youth Affairs and SpunOut.ie.

² NYCI hosted a series of youth worker check-ins in June 2020 and again in Feb/March 2021, this issue was identified by youth workers during these sessions.

³ ECO-UNESCO and SpunOut.ie:

<https://ecounesco.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/YouthClimateJusticeSurveyReport.pdf> and Youth 2030 Young People's Committee youth climate justice manifesto: [Young people of Ireland want climate justice - National Youth Council of Ireland](#)

engagement beyond borders, partnerships exchanges and projects with a global reach - but this should not replace direct youth engagement.

- Education for Sustainable Development is being given more of a focus from the Department of Education and a new strategy is being developed.
- Sustainable Development Goals are in place but awareness is still low.
- Racial Justice [Racial Justice - An Introduction - YouTube](#) has emerged from the BLM social movement in the US, impacting at a global level. This is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures. This presents as an opportunity for the youth sector to show leadership in defining a racial justice approach in Ireland and in terms of its global relationships.
- The administrative/governance burden has increased since 2017 in terms of SORP, Charities Regulator, and GDPR.

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?

- The Youth Strategic Partnership with Irish Aid is a good start to supporting deeper DE engagement by the youth sector whilst recognising more needs to be done.
- Digital tools have enabled an expansion in the breadth of DE work, but should not be used to replace the depth that DE work necessitates, aligned with a strong youth work practice which is about relationship building and trust.
- A 3 year multi-annual funding option should be included in future grants rounds along with dedicated funds to support greater engagement by the non-formal youth sector.
- Difficult to have job security in organisations when Irish Aid funding may or may not be granted year on year.
- There are many benefits from cross-sectoral working by organisations and Irish Aid should fund work spanning different sectors. Explore if current partnership mechanism could allow for this.
- Monitoring youth participation requires qualitative tools that differ from what is currently encouraged - see suggestions on page 8 (PMF/M&E). There is limited scope for qualitative M&E currently.
- The focus on numbers and not on quality is a problem in the youth work space where work is undertaken often with smaller numbers of young people but in a more in-depth way that will reap stronger benefits.
- Irish Aid's strategic partnership with the [developmenteducation.ie](https://www.developmenteducation.ie) consortium has worked well through the production of accessible digital resources, online dissemination and audits of DE resources, and open resources library.

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 1: Policy Coherence

- Irish Aid should seek from the forthcoming SDG National Implementation Plan acknowledgement of the central position of SDG 4.7 to the achievement of the 17 SDGs and to include specific targets and goals that will deliver fulfilment of 4.7 - nationally and internationally.
- Develop a cross-departmental measurement strategy for SDG 4.7 that captures DE/GCE contribution in Ireland. SDG 4.7 continues to be problematic in that there is no capture of non-formal education youth contribution to achieving this target. See Bridge 47 Envision 4.7 Roadmap for more:
https://www.google.com/url?q=https://bridge47.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/envision_4.7_roadmap_0.pdf&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1616094142704000&usg=AOvVaw0OuPOn7NVuo3g8ZRtleDsz

- Irish Aid should instigate a forum involving Departments Taoiseach, Youth, Environment, Foreign Affairs, Education, and Rural and Community Affairs to work collectively on SDGs and global citizenship education and to specifically ensure the youth sector are aware of the SDGs and global citizenship education and have access to training, policy makers, and events.
- The important link with development cooperation should be recognised in the new strategy as being a cornerstone of the work, focus, and engagement. Also, the continued linkages with civil society, including Dóchas, IDEA, Irish Aid and their strategic partners, DE organisations and work across all sectors be recognised, celebrated, and remain within the remit of the Department of Foreign Affairs whilst supporting engagement from other government departments.

Output 2: Capacity Building

● Youth Sector Engagement and Collaboration

- The number of youth organisations funded by Irish Aid to deliver DE should increase over the duration of the next SP. There are over 40 national youth organisations and only 3 of these receive Irish Aid funding. A dedicated fund to support youth sector engagement could see an increase of 10-15 youth organisations (minimally), ensuring an increase in DE breadth and depth.
- Funding applications should be simplified and ways found to make engagement easier.

● Training, CPD

- Organisations delivering DE should be adequately supported to deliver CPD and training with the view to creating whole organisational approaches (including boards, CEOs, regional managers, staff, volunteers, students, and young people).

Output 4: Non-Formal Education: Global Youth Work and DE in the Youth Sector

● Non-formal education

- Non-formal education in the youth sector is unique and very specialist. It is recognised in law [Youth Work Act 2001 - National Youth Council of Ireland](#)
- Greater collaboration across the youth sector through a Global Youth Work Showcase event to spotlight transformative Youth led education experiences, initiatives that are a result of Irish Aid funding and strategy.

● Research

- Research is currently excluded from Irish Aid strategy and it must be included in any new strategy to inform and enhance delivery and practice of DE in Ireland.
- Establish a working group to develop a research agenda and to advise Irish Aid on areas for research within the sector.

- Work with the Irish Research Council to develop a research funding stream for Development Education.
 - Provide grant funding for research/policy officers within selected organisations so research can be completed at a local/national level.
 - It is critical that research is funded to understand the impact of Development Education delivery online versus face-to-face delivery - Fund research into effective online active learning methodologies and on the impact of online remote delivery. Facilitate the development and roll-out of high quality online training programmes through funding.
 - Fund research on the long-term impact of Development Education on values and attitudes and how to measure that impact/legacy.
 - Provide research funding to support and inform third level youth work researchers, third level youth work educators and educational modules, programmes and projects, support Irish Aid to tell their and our story better, and be able to inform the work better at national, European and global levels.
 - Establish and support a learning network for youth work DE researchers.
 - Research should be longitudinal, and participatory.
 - Undertake research on how Covid-19 has impacted the DE sector.
- **Capacity Building**
 - The continued support for training and upskilling of the youth sector around Global Youth Work principles and DE methodologies is vital. Youth Workers and volunteers must have the tools to support young people to find their voice on issues that matter to them, to support young people who have an interest in change making, and support young people to engage with external influences which could occur between 2021-2024 and beyond.
 - Continued support for youth engagement and upskilling is critical including additional supports for youth led DE to prepare young people to deal with whatever issues emerge.
- **Broader focus**
 - Inclusion of racial justice work in any new strategy will support more inclusive DE programmes.
 - The inclusion of the National Action Plan against Racism is important. Ensure that the Youth sector is a stakeholder in the development of the plan and a key partner in delivering racial justice DE engagements
 - Formal and non-formal education should be facilitated and supported to explore each-others work, the methodologies being used, and the legacy/impact of each-others work.
- **Funding**
 - Continued flexible funding (enabling youth led, intercultural and racial justice/anti-racism approaches) is required.

- A 3-5 year multi-annual funding option to be included in future grants rounds with the view to building organisational capacity over the long term.
 - A Global Youth Worker in every funded youth organisation would push DE within and to contribute towards a whole organisation approach.
 - Review and revise the funding application process to make it more accessible to the youth sector. Look also to the Erasmus model of accredited centres for a more streamlined funding process.
- **PMF/M&E**
 - It is important to recognise the value of deeper engagement with smaller groups - facilitates real and in depth conversations and exploration of issues; supports building of relationships and creation of an environment where individuals can be heard and interact with and learn from others who might be going through similar struggles or situations
 - Revise Monitoring tools - the youth sector needs to represent change happening that reflects the work over-time using a range of qualitative tools, as well as responding with quantitative data.
 - Qualitative tools that could document work include: case studies, focus group interviews, reflective padlets/journals, documenting walking debates, interviews conducted at intervals in a project, reflective tools e.g. spoken word pieces, art projects that critically engage and produce pieces that reflect change work. This also importantly allows a way to represent the emotional connection with issues.

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?

- We would welcome greater collective consideration be given to the use of terminology. There is a welcome for GCE though clarity is needed around the definition of 'citizenship' and terminology. In terms of youth work, the intention is to use the terminology of Global Youth Work. Whilst GCE is seen as the umbrella term for DE and ESD in Ireland, within 4.7 of the SDGs, both are named in their own right which could lead to confusion.

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

- Being catapulted into working online means there is no such thing as borders. These new opportunities should be explored as much as possible. It also opens up more opportunities for young who might not always be able to access quality youth work

services such as those living in very rural or isolated areas, those in Direct Provision or engaged in the criminal justice system.

- There is still need for in person, face to face delivery. The relationship between the youth worker and a young person is a unique and defining feature of youth work. This person centred approach is what allows for skill development, experiential learning and an engagement with critical consciousness, towards socially just outcomes. The online space can maintain this relationship but it is very hard to initiate this kind of person centred relationship online. NYCI undertook research on the opportunities and challenges brought about by Covid-19 - [NYCI research shows Covid-19 pandemic impacting most severely on 'at risk' youth - National Youth Council of Ireland](#)
- On-line e-learning can be used effectively but not relied on completely as in some instances, face to face delivery is preferable.

8. How can technology and digital outreach help us?

- Technology and digital outreach can help spotlight voices and communities and issues we need to focus our attention on at local, national and global level through participatory and community-based approaches. Facilitating young people to have meaningful discussions and deepen their sense of global citizenship. By providing opportunities for cultural exchanges and connecting young people to others globally.
- Create a capital fund for technology that will support engagement at national and global levels. Would suggest all Irish Aid offices and funded programmes in partner countries have access to the most appropriate and highest quality equipment to support engagement with young people and DE programmes in Ireland so we can learn better from each other. Also extending opportunities to attend workshops to those in other countries who might not otherwise have access to these opportunities.
- Technology and digital outreach will never replicate the relationship building and learning acquired in the non-digital world and as such should be seen in many cases as supplementary and not the sole way to receive education – formally or through non-formal.
- Throughout the last year technology has helped keep connection with young people and has allowed for the continuation of Global Youth Work, however the heavy focus on technology has heightened the digital divide and digital disadvantage between young people and has left some young people behind due to their lack of access to devices, absence of private space within their home to allow full engagement online, households not having broadband or weak unreliable phone signals and broadband connections in rural (and some urban) communities, and young people reliant on phone credit. There is digital poverty and especially in disadvantaged communities, young people are less likely to engage – they are impacted by digital exclusion at home and that disadvantage is strongly related to material and social disadvantages.
- We need to support new communities or those new to the sector and those who have added challenges, particularly where space has been identified as an issue, where access

is another issue and where digital literacy may be an additional challenge. Two recent examples by youth workers have highlighted specific access problems for young people in a DP centre and young people on halting sites. For the former, the youth worker has to attend the centre to secure access to online activities while for the latter, additional in-person resource support is required to overcome digital literacy and writing/reading literacy.