

# Consultation Process for Development of new Irish Aid Development and Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021- 2024

## Submission from the Centre for Global Education



### 1. Cover Page

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

On behalf of the Centre for Global Education

- **Organisation (if applicable):**

Centre for Global Education

- **Role in organisation (if applicable):**

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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.**

Centre for Global Education is happy to have the submission published in its entirety.

- **Date of posting response:** 12 March 2021

## 2. Centre for Global Education

The Centre for Global Education (CGE) was established in 1986 to provide education services that enhance awareness of international development issues both locally and globally. Our central remit is to provide learning that enables individuals and organisations to address the causes of poverty, inequality and injustice at local and global levels. The Centre's vision is for a just and equitable world where people recognise their interdependence and work with others across the globe for positive social change. The Centre's current services include: delivering Continuing Professional Development training to teachers; supporting international schools' partnerships; publishing development education (DE) resources for formal and informal sector audiences; and editing a bi-annual, peer reviewed and open access journal funded by Irish Aid titled *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*. The Centre is based in Belfast and a member of Dóchas, the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA), and the Coalition of Aid and Development Agencies (CADA).

### 3. The response should address some or all of the following questions:

- **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?**

#### Formal Education

For over a decade, CGE has engaged primary and post-primary teachers in CPD focusing on improving teaching practice in global learning and supporting delivery of core areas of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. The content and pedagogy used in the trainings are designed to equip teachers and school leaders with the skills and practices to incorporate global learning into the school development plan, and integrate global learning themes into the existing timetable, cascading the learning across the whole school. Since 2015, 1,100 teachers across 552 primary, post-primary and special schools have participated in CPD delivered by the Centre.

CGE would like Irish Aid to consider introducing a more integrated, cross-border approach to its formal sector work as part of the new Development and Global Citizenship Education Strategy. While, Irish Aid's development education annual grants are made available on an all-island basis, this is not mirrored in the remit of WorldWise Global Schools (WWGS) which provides grant funding only to schools and organisations that work in the post-primary sector in the south of Ireland. This means that schools and NGOs in both the north and south of Ireland are denied the opportunity to collaborate on development education programmes that support teacher training, student capacity and engagement on global issues, and building curricular skills. The Centre has experienced first-hand the benefits of collaborating with colleagues on a cross-border basis through Dóchas and IDEA, and in the publication of *Policy and Practice*. The capacity of the development education sector in the north has been greatly reduced from lack of investment from Westminster and the withdrawal of all DE grant schemes. If Irish Aid were to extend the remit of WWGS to the whole island it could rejuvenate the DE sector and strengthen cross-border links between DE providers, including IDEA. The Northern Ireland Assembly has no official remit for international development and does not resource DE work. Irish Aid could extend WWGS to the north on a pilot basis to determine the level of interest from schools and NGOs placing strategic limits on spend to ensure the scheme is not unduly stretched. This could have immeasurable and positive outcomes in terms of DE capacity development and formal sector links across the island.

#### Higher Education

Research is the backbone of educational practice and provides the evidence base in determining the impact of DE policy and practice on learners in all sectors. Research helps to break new ground in DE in higher education and strengthens the relationship between DE and other sectors that share our

values and aspirations for a more just and sustainable world. The current Irish Aid DE Strategy (2017: 26) states that “We will introduce support for strategic research to inform the delivery, quality and impact of development education in Ireland and to enhance good practice”. This important objective has not been realised and should be central to the 2021-24 strategy if DE is to strengthen its credibility as an academic discipline in higher education and provide evidence of impact in other formal and informal education sectors. The regular output of DE papers and seminars in the Development Education Research Centre ([DERC](#), 2021) in the University of London suggests the potential benefits from a concerted investment in research. However, as an NGO, CGE believes that research opportunities should be available for practitioners too, including in collaboration in higher education institutions.

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

#### Community and Voluntary Sector

CGE is currently scoping opportunities for strengthening partnerships with organisations in the voluntary and community sector including: retired members of the community; the trade union movement; women’s organisations; and environmental groups. The opportunity for collaboration with these sectors on DE practice is enormous given their capacity and power to mobilise grassroots actors. Irish Aid has already established excellent levels of practice with the youth sector but this is not replicated across the community / voluntary sector. CGE proposes a civil society fund that could support community practice in DE in partnership with more established DE organisations. It could be rolled out on a pilot basis initially with criteria focused on localised delivery led by community organisations. This kind of intervention could strengthen public awareness of global issues at a grassroots level and sustain a platform for activism on the root causes of inequality.

#### Environment Sector

The urgency of the climate emergency demands that it holds a central position in the new Irish Aid strategy. The Paris Climate Change Agreement (UNFCCC, 2015) has the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels if we are to prevent a mass extinction event endangering roughly half of all plants and insect species. The World Health Organisation (2018) estimates that between 2030 and 2050, climate change will cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress. The new strategy should encourage inter-sectoral collaboration between DE and environmental networks and organisations to elevate educational practice on the issue of climate change at community level. This is needed to communicate the urgency of the climate crisis but also engage communities in actions toward sustainability that can help mitigate the causes of global warming.

- **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?**

#### Inequality is ‘out of control’

‘Economic inequality is out of control’, argued Oxfam in 2020, when it found that 2,153 billionaires have more wealth than the 4.6 billion people who make up 60 per cent of the world’s population (2020: 2). ‘This inequality is the product of a flawed and exploitative economic system’, suggests Oxfam, ‘which has its roots in neoliberal economics and the capture of politics by elites’ (2021: 11). The neoliberal economic system, Oxfam found, ‘has exploited and exacerbated entrenched systems of inequality and oppression, namely patriarchy and structural racism, ingrained in white supremacy’ (ibid). For example, women put in 12.5 billion hours of unpaid care work every day which represents a contribution to the global economy of at least \$10.8 trillion per annum. This work is essential to our

communities but goes unacknowledged in the neoliberal economy because it doesn't generate a profit. Oxfam has also found that the neoliberal economic system is 'deeply racist' resulting in more entrenched levels of discrimination and poverty being experienced by black people, Afro-descendants, indigenous peoples, and historically marginalized and oppressed communities (Oxfam, 2021: 20). The discrimination experienced by women and 'racialised groups' has been deepened and magnified as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic as they are overrepresented in the sectors of the economy that are hardest hit by the pandemic and more likely to be working in public facing occupations that expose them to greater risk of catching the virus.

If the new Irish Aid strategy is to tackle inequality and injustice at source then it needs to namecheck the neoliberal economic system as the main driver of poverty and support development educators to debate how the economic system can be re-balanced to ensure a life of dignity consistent with human rights for those on low wages in precarious occupations.

- **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?**

Output Two of the existing strategy to enhance the 'capacity, collaboration, partnership and coherence of development education partners' has been a significant area of progress through Irish Aid's support of IDEA. IDEA has enhanced communications in the sector, provided opportunities for professional development, and strengthened capacity through the Code of Good Practice for Development Education. The Code has enabled IDEA to harvest examples of good practice from across the DE sector that will serve to inspire and support other organisations to build their capacity in DE.

- **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. An enabling and coherent policy environment for development education

It is critical that development education funding does not contract in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic as it did following the 2008 global financial crisis. The DE sector has not yet fully recovered from the decade of austerity that followed the crisis and the total DE budget in 2019 was €4.3 million from a total ODA budget of €869.87 (Irish Aid, 2020: 46; 74). The ODA budget, itself, as a percentage of Gross National Income was 0.32% in 2019, the same total as 2015. Cutting the ODA and DE budgets from such a low base could be disastrous for development education practice in Ireland just as we have seen the reintroduction of multi annual funding for DE grants.

2. Maximised capacity, collaboration, partnership and coherence of development education partners  
CGE advocates enhanced research capacity in the DE sector in Ireland (see higher education above).

3. Further integration and mainstreaming of quality development education in formal education

CGE believes that delivering WWGS on a cross-border basis would strengthen the integration of DE into formal education programmes in the north and south of Ireland (see formal sector above).

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

See 'community, voluntary and environment sectors' above.

5. Increased awareness within the education sector of Ireland's Development Co-operation Programme and the UN's SDGs

CGE strongly advocates a critical interrogation of the SDGs in the context of the first five years of delivery and concerns raised by the UN Secretary-General (Guterres, 2019) that the Goals are 'seriously offtrack' (UN News, 2019). These concerns warrant closer monitoring of the impact of the Goals, particularly in the light of a report from UN Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Philip Alston (2020), which found that the Goals are most unlikely to be met in 2030.

- **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?**

DE is an education of social and political change, rooted in the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1973). It is concerned with anti-didactic education methods to enable people to take an active role against injustice to bring about socio-political transformation. GCE has been positioned by development educators as compatible to the philosophy and thinking underpinning DE. However, there have been criticisms that GCE has become increasingly topic-based in accordance with a neoliberal curriculum, promoting a participatory citizenship which is 're-active' and in accordance with the already existing power structures. In short, although promoting participation, it fails to challenge the status quo and underlying structures which maintain injustice and inequality.

If Irish Aid changes the name of the programme to GCE, it is important to clearly define the underpinning philosophy and thinking behind the label. Together with the DE sector, it will be important to define all the concepts and elements which drive GCE ensuring a clear positioning of transformative pedagogy as means to address any global learning topic, theme or issue. Essentially DE is a transformative pedagogy that drives GCE, so this should be made explicit within a GCE definition.

- **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 brought a high demand for DE interventions which focus on building resilience and wellbeing. CGE has been delivering such interventions, positioning wellbeing and resilience as key competencies for participating in the world as global citizens. The new GCE strategy should ensure curricular alignment with wellbeing and resilience, and also include these as key components and competencies of GCE. Such alignment should extend DE across wider curriculum areas and target groups in formal and non-formal sectors.

- **How can technology and digital outreach help us?**

For CGE, technology and digital outreach have increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have delivered online trainings and webinars, and developed tools for sharing practice and learning through online platforms such as Padlet. Integrating technology and digital outreach across DE interventions is a great way to enhance communication between target groups and service providers. It also enhances coordination, providing the means to work on documents and projects collaboratively in real time.

## References

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