

## **Submission by the Adult and Community Education Task Group to GENE, June 2015.**

### **Background and Summary**

The Adult and Community Education<sup>1</sup> Task Group of the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) welcomes Irish Aid's invitation to present a written proposal about the future of Development Education (DE) in Ireland. The Adult and Community Education Task Group (ACETG) was established in January 2015 for the express purpose of responding to the Global Education Network Europe (GENE) peer review of DE in Ireland and also as a way of bringing stakeholders together to feed into the new Irish Aid DE strategy covering the period 2017-2020. Membership of the ACETG was drawn primarily, but not exclusively, from IDEA's Community Sector Working Group (CSWG) which has been active since 2011 and has produced a number of documents, including a *Draft Strategy for the Integration of Development Education into the Adult and Community Sector* and *Good Practice Guidelines for Development Education in Adult and Community Settings*. Members of the ACETG included community group leaders, adult education tutors, community development activists, and staff members of civil society organisations. Representatives of 19 organisations participated in the task group (see Appendix 1 for ACETG membership).

This proposal begins with a rationale for the integration of DE into adult and community education (ACE) and then notes some of key successes (Section 2). Section 3 outlines the main challenges to the integration of DE across adult and community settings. The final section (Section 4) includes a set of four strategic priorities for the year 2020, agreed by ACETG members, and relevant to Irish Aid in terms of their forthcoming strategic plan. Each of these strategic priorities is underpinned by an overarching aim:

***Development Education will be more fully integrated into policies and practices of adult and community education in Ireland.***

The four strategic priorities proposed by the ACETG build on the existing successes and strengths of the DE sector. Actions in relation to these strategic priorities would, we believe, lead to a stronger and more effective DE sector in Ireland by the year 2020. The document concludes with a list of critical factors for success (Section 5).

### **1. Rationale for the integration of DE into Adult and Community Education**

There are enormous potential synergies between DE and ACE. DE has historic links and much in common with approaches widely adopted in the adult and community education sectors. A number of common and complementary core principles are shared, such as social cohesion, inclusiveness, equality, justice, empowerment, participation and active citizenship. There are many similarities in ethos, in pedagogy and in practice.

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<sup>1</sup> In this document, the ACETG defines 'Adult and Community Education' as any education which occurs after second level schooling, but outside the third level system. In taking on this very broad definition of adult and community education, the ACETG does not seek to blur the distinctions between the different types of adult and community education, and is mindful that definitions can be important in deciding the parameters of policy, practice and priorities.

The emphasis on participatory learning, learner-led education and active citizenship, and an increasing interest in notions of sustainability and interdependency, make the adult and community sectors fertile ground for DE. DE reinforces the goals of adult and community education for individual learners by presenting perspectives, methodologies, and topics through a fresh lens. This lens allows adult learners to critically explore the global dimension of local challenges. Furthermore, DE holds that solutions to global problems can begin at the local community level, creating active and informed citizens working in solidarity at local and global levels.

DE adds value to ACE through:

- Bringing a global dimension to existing ACE programmes;
- Developing skills for making sense of today's rapidly changing and unequal world;
- Strengthening the values base of adult and community education programmes;
- Encouraging active citizenship and empowering learners to take action for a more just and sustainable world;
- Building a sense of solidarity, inclusiveness and resilience in local communities.

In turn, ACE can strengthen the DE sector through:

- Increasing significantly the number and range of people in Ireland who have access to quality DE, thereby filling one of the last major gaps in DE provision;
- Broadening the scope of the constituency of DE participants, and creating wider support for Irish Aid and its work overseas;
- Providing legitimacy for governments and NGOs to take well informed, wise and decisive political action on poverty and global justice;
- Supplementing and supporting the excellent DE work which is currently taking place in formal education, thus ensuring a life-long spectrum of DE learning.

## **2. Successes to build upon**

Thanks to the dedication of many organisations and individuals, with the support of Irish Aid funding, there are a number of significant achievements to date in DE in ACE:

- *DE is taking place across wide range of ACE settings, such as community development projects, community education centres, further education centres, NGOs, women's groups, family resource centres, community gardens.*
- *DE is reaching many target groups, including second chance learners, unemployed people, disadvantaged young people, adult basic education learners, older people, migrants, Travellers, trade unionists.*
- *DE is being integrated into existing ACE programmes, including literacy, horticulture, cookery, IT, social studies, creative arts, youth and community work training, Back to Education and work-related learning.*
- *DE is providing practical support for the adult and community sector, including accredited (QQI) training, resources, good practice guidelines and on-request workshops.*

### 3. Challenges to overcome

Despite the successes outlined above, there are clear challenges that must be surmounted if DE is to be fully integrated into ACE. These include:

- *Lack of cohesion and coordination across the adult and community sector.* The adult and community sector is extremely diverse, covering an enormous breadth of activity. It is subject to a wide range of policies that are formulated by diverse actors and are implemented by multiple bodies who do not always act in coordination. Integrating DE into this type of environment poses far more challenges than working within the more clearly defined and streamlined formal education system.
- *Low level, short-term funding.* The DE sector and the ACE sector have both been debilitated by funding cuts in recent years. Much good work, and the very capacity needed to grow this work, is being lost. Furthermore, nearly all DE in the ACE sector is funded via short-term (12 month) grants, which severely inhibits long-term planning, implementation and impact measurement.
- *Limited understanding of the term 'Development Education'.* Many educators, learners and policy makers in the adult and community sector are unclear about what 'DE' means and why it is relevant to their work. It is difficult to build commitment to a term that is not readily understood.
- *Low levels of DE capacity amongst the adult and community educators.* While some ACE tutors have eagerly availed of DE training, many more have not yet had opportunities to access it. With the increasing orientation of adult and community education to the labour market, training in DE is currently not being prioritised by Education Training Boards (ETBs) and other providers.

#### 4. Strategic Priorities

The table below outlines 4 strategic priorities for and attendant actions required to capitalize on the potential, enhance the impact of, and ensure greater integration of DE into the ACE sector by 2020.

The 4 strategic priorities are

1. To **Integrate** development education within adult and community education institutions and policies:
2. To develop more **coherent** delivery/provision of development education in the adult and community sector:
3. To **enhance** the impact and innovation of development education in adult & community education
4. To **multiply** the opportunities for participation in development education

Strategic Priorities	Objectives	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<b>1 To integrate DE within adult and community education institutions and policies</b>	Build institutional commitment to development education across the adult and community education sector, and corresponding support structures within institutions	Strategic networking	Strategic networking	Strategic networking
			Establish a national DE liaison group including ETB representatives	Maintain and develop national DE liaison group including ETB representatives
	Ensure a coherent policy framework for DE in the adult and community sector across national and local government and coordinating	Ongoing policy submissions as appropriate.	Ongoing policy submissions as appropriate.	Ongoing policy submissions as appropriate.

	structures		Establish interdepartmental, institutional and local liaison groups on global citizenship education / development education in the adult and community sector.	Develop interdepartmental, institutional and local liaison groups on development education in the adult and community sector.
	Articulate and promote development education, its added value and impact in the sector to adult and community educators and institutions.	Targeted communications and 'making the case' programme	Targeted communications and 'making the case' programme	Targeted communications and 'making the case' programme
		Establish online resource on IDEA website, linked a to good practice hub.	Ongoing collection and promotion of resources and examples of good practice	Ongoing collection and promotion of resources and examples of good practice
			Commissioning and dissemination of studies of DE in ACE practice	Commissioning and dissemination of studies of DE in ACE practice
<b>2. To develop more coherent delivery/provision of DE in the Adult and Community Education Sector</b>	Enhance DE networking structures	Networking/collaboration space for DE in ACE practitioners	Networking/collaboration space for DE in ACE practitioners	Networking/collaboration space for DE in ACE practitioners
	Identify gaps in coverage and establish pilot projects for selected 'gap' areas		Research and mapping of DE in ACE	Delivery of pilot projects

<b>3.</b> <b>To enhance the impact and innovation of DE in the Adult and Community Education Sector</b>	Create a shared good practice framework	Establish Good practice hub and collect and disseminate examples of good practice and Development Education resources	Continued development of good practice hub	Continued development of good practice hub
		Develop and publish Good Practice guidelines	Promote and disseminate Good Practice guidelines .	Promote and disseminate Good Practice guidelines
		Identify curriculum opportunities and cross curricular opportunities for development education in the adult and community education	Identify curriculum opportunities and cross curricular opportunities for development education in the adult and community education	Identify curriculum opportunities and cross curricular opportunities for development education in the adult and community education
	Support quality and impact work	Capacity Development in Monitoring and Evaluation for development education in the adult and community education	Capacity Development in Monitoring and Evaluation for development education in the adult and community education	Capacity Development in Monitoring and Evaluation for development education in the adult and community education
<b>4</b> <b>To multiply the opportunities for participation in DE</b>	Ensure high quality and appropriate DE training and resources	Audit training resources and activities (including Continuing Professional Development (CPD) interventions) identifying best practice, any gaps in provision and any duplication.	Develop CPD interventions to fill any gaps, including experiential learning and multiplying opportunities for participation in Development Education programmes	Roll out CPD programme to the adult and community sector and accreditation scheme put in place for DE training courses for adult and community educators.

	Support the inclusion of a DE element in Third Level Community Development and Adult Education courses	Promote existing programmes that integrate development education in Third Level and Adult Education courses	Promote existing programmes that integrate development education in Third Level and Adult Education courses	Promote existing programmes that integrate development education in Third Level and Adult Education courses
				Communicate with course providers and support development of pilot programme

The existing expertise in Development Education in the ACE sector is largely (though not entirely) located in grassroots community organisations and solidarity and campaigning NGO s. The diverse and vibrant work carried out by these organisations provide a strong foundation on which further integration can be built and the expertise and commitment will be crucial of these actors will be crucial to the successful delivery of any strategy which has further integration as its goal

The following table sets actions for different settings in the ACE sector arising from the strategic priorities described above. The four settings incorporate most, though not all, adult education, further education, community education and community development currently taking place in Ireland. As such, they are potential sites for advancing and promoting Development Education. Development Education practitioners with appropriate expertise should be encouraged to carry out priority actions in all four settings.

**Please note the following acronyms that you will find in the table:**

- DE Development Education
- FET Further Education and Training
- ESD Education for Sustainable Development
- ICE Intercultural Education
- ETB Education and Training Boards
- ICE Intercultural Education
- ESOL English as a Second or Other Language
- LDC Local Development Company

ACE Settings	Priority Actions and Relevant Aim	ACE Settings	Priority Actions and Relevant Aim
Grassroots Community Organisations / NGOs (including DE and other civil society organisations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness-raising / hosting public events to promote understanding of DE issues (2)</li> <li>• Development of unaccredited / informal curriculum (2) and (3)</li> <li>• Development of adult appropriate resources (4)</li> <li>• Development of learning pathways: informal to formal(3)</li> <li>• Delivery of accredited and non accredited courses and workshops to publics engaged with community organisations (2)</li> <li>• Work with community organisations on DE-related actions (2)</li> <li>• Delivery of Professional Development for community workers and educators wishing to practice DE (2) and (4)</li> <li>• Incorporation of DE into training for community workers and community educators (degree and diploma courses) (4)</li> <li>• Support Good Practice through guidelines and case studies (3)</li> </ul>	ETB Adult Education Services (Formal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking of DE outcomes to key policies and strategies (e.g FET Strategy, ESD Strategy, Labour Market Activation Agenda, etc (1)</li> <li>• Submission to ETB Educational Strategies and Policies(1)</li> <li>• Awareness raising with ETB senior management and tutors(1)</li> <li>• Development and promotion of DE/ESD/ICE policy for Adult Education Services (1)</li> <li>• Audit of QQI modules with DE content (i.e. which ETBs have DE-related modules validated for delivery) (3)</li> <li>• Validation and sharing of QQI modules with DE-related content (1)</li> <li>• Development of DE resources linked to QQI Learning Outcomes in compulsory modules (e.g. Communications, Numeracy, I.T.) (4)</li> </ul>
Local Development Companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submission to Local and Economic Community Plan (1)</li> <li>• Representation on LCDC Boards (1)</li> <li>• Representation on Public Participation Networks (1)</li> <li>• Representation on tutor panels (1)</li> <li>• Delivery of courses/workshops to staff (2)</li> <li>• Delivery of courses/workshops to local groups/publics (2)</li> </ul>	ETB Adult Education Services (Informal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising with Community Education Facilitators, Adult Literacy Officers and ESOL Programme Managers; (1)</li> <li>• Professional Development for tutors on integrating/teaching DE content (4)</li> <li>• Delivery of non accredited and accredited DE courses to community education settings via ETB tutors (2)</li> </ul>

## 5. Critical Success Factors

**Leadership:** The achievement of genuine integration of DE in the ACE Sector will require a leadership drawn from stakeholders in both sectors – particularly those with experience and expertise and those with a commitment and the capacity to ‘champion’ DE, as well as Irish Aid.

**Partnership and representation:** An atmosphere of genuine partnership and a commitment to representation for the two sectors involved will enable this leadership to succeed.

**Collaboration:** Collaboration is already at the heart of much practice in the ACE sector, but to be meaningful and sustainable over time it must be resourced.

**Supporting what’s working and encouraging further growth:** Understanding the existing work as the foundation on which future work can be built.

**The development of cohesion at policy and practitioner level:** Including policies, learning pathways, accreditation and continuing professional development opportunities.

**Supporting Innovation:** Innovation is at the heart of much of this work. The ACE sector works directly with adults attempting to respond to and thrive in a constantly changing world. DE in ACE must be responsive to their changing needs if it is to be relevant.

**Ensuring that marginalised groups are reached:** Reflecting the value base of both DE and Adult and Community Education and Irish Aid’s commitment to provide DE opportunities to all adults in Ireland.

**Ensuring multiple spaces for people to engage in DE:** The great diversity of DE in Ireland is a great strength. The CSWG has taken an inclusive approach to what constitutes ACE in Ireland. However there may be other learning opportunities for adults |(such as online learning communities) which cannot be so defined and which nonetheless require a place in any overall strategy.

**Preserving critical practice:** DE is education for change – towards a more just, equitable and sustainable world. A critical practice is required for the development of a critically engaged populace who have the capacity to create change

**Resourcing that supports the work and facilitates growth and development:** The aim of integration cannot be achieved without sufficient resources. Funding in both sectors is at crisis levels and that there is so much innovative, collaborative and effective practice continuing is largely down to the level of expertise and commitment in these sectors. Considerable expertise has already been lost and the sustainability of DE is a real issue for many organizations at this time. Realistic, longer term and consistent funding is required.

## **Appendix One: Adult and Community Education Task Group members**

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Ger Doherty (Lourdes Youth & Community Services)

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Bobby McCormack (Development Perspectives)

Mary McGillicuddy (Kerry One World Centre)

Helena McNeill (Lourdes Youth & Community Services)

Lianne Murphy (Age Action)

Gráinne O'Neill (Comhlámh)

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