



Submission being made on behalf of the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA)

IDEA welcomes the announcement that the Department of Rural and Community Development is preparing a new Statement of Strategy. This process offers a timely opportunity for our sector to play an expanded role in supporting delivery of your mission “To promote rural and community development and to support vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland”.

This process to develop a new Statement of Strategy comes at a time where we are facing multiple global challenges, including climate and biodiversity breakdown. Though these challenges are great, they highlight that Development Education in the Community sector is essential to Ireland’s future as a safe, strong, prosperous, sustainable, socially cohesive and just society.

We have a crucial role to play to support your ability to

- deliver Development Education programmes and policy interventions efficiently and effectively for rural Ireland and communities.
- explore ways in which your existing supports and funding can be directed to best support communities, particularly in respect of Development Education in the areas of climate action, anti-racism initiatives, Covid-19, and other areas.
- develop new Development Education policy and/or programme opportunities for the Department to consider as part of the 2021-2023 Strategy.

About IDEA

We are the national network for Development Education in Ireland and a leading voice for the sector. We represent members involved in the practice, promotion and advancement of Development Education in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Together we work to strengthen Development Education in Ireland and to raise awareness of the crucial role of Development Education in achieving an equal, just and sustainable future. IDEA's 2019-2023 Strategy promotes the essential role of Development Education in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Development Education

Development Education is an educational process which enables people to understand the world around them and to act to transform it. It works to tackle the root causes of injustice and inequality, globally and locally to create a more just and sustainable future for everyone.

It is made up of the following:

- *Values*: It aims to bring about positive change, informed by values of equality, diversity, sustainability and human rights and responsibilities.
- *Knowledge*: It explores cultural, environmental, economic, political and social relationships and challenges local and global power inequalities caused by patterns of production, distribution and consumption.
- *Skills*: It equips people to explore multiple perspectives and critically engage with local and global issues, using participative and creative approaches.
- *Actions*: It enables people to make connections between their own lives and global justice issues and empowers them to make a positive difference in the world.

Investment from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (through Irish Aid) supports the integration of Development Education in the Community Education sector. In addition, various partnerships have been established in relation to the

National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2014- 2020, of which IDEA is on the advisory committee, the Irish Aid Development Strategy 2017-2023, and the Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018 -2020). In the context of this submission, Development Education is used as an umbrella term which includes Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development, and related fields, and encompasses the work of various civil society organisations and other actors in education in advancing active global citizenship among the Irish public.

Development Education in the Community Sector

Development Education takes place across a wide range of community settings, such as community development projects, community education centres, further education centres, NGOs, women's groups, men's groups, trade unionists, family resource centres, community gardens. Via the community sector, Development Education reaches many hard-to-reach groups, including second chance learners, unemployed people, disadvantaged young people, adult basic education learners, older people, migrants and Travellers.

Development Education and community education share common and complementary core principles, such as social cohesion, inclusiveness, equality, justice, empowerment, participation and active citizenship. The many similarities in ethos, in pedagogy and practice, and the emphasis on participatory learning, learner-led education and active citizenship, and an increasing interest in sustainability and interdependency, make community settings ideal for Development Education.

Solutions to global problems can begin at the local community level, creating active and informed citizens working in solidarity at local and global levels. Development Education adds value through; bringing a global dimension and strengthening the values base of community education programmes; developing skills for a rapidly changing and unequal world; encouraging active citizenship and empowering learners to take action for a more just and sustainable world; and building a sense of solidarity, inclusiveness and resilience in local communities. The community sector

reaches community groups on a large scale and in a values and practice context and learning settings that are an excellent fit for Development Education.

The sector covers an enormous breadth of activity and it is subject to a wide range of policies formulated by diverse actors and implemented by multiple bodies. The Development Education sector would welcome the opportunity to work closely with the Department of Rural and Community Development to integrate Development Education within communities nationwide and to play an important part in fulfilling your mission: To promote rural and community development, and support vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland.

Community Education, the Programme for Government and the SDGs

The Programme for Government includes commitments that provide a supportive political context for expansion of Development Education in the Community sector. Notable commitments include the following:

- Initiate a new Anti-poverty, Social Inclusion and Community Development Action Plan framed around the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, underpinning sound community development practices, and reflecting a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on poverty and social inclusion
- Recognise the role of community education and its vital role in our communities by supporting its schemes and initiatives post COVID-19.
- Ensure local authorities have regard to the National Planning Framework and alignment to the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) when drafting development plans.

The Development Education sector has the expertise in the SDGs and in life-long Community education to deliver coherent responses and solutions to contribute to fulfilment of these important new policy commitments and play a central role in delivering on SDG Target 4.7,

“by 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”.

We believe that these new commitments to Community education and to the SDG agenda provide an ideal opportunity for delivery of an ambitious programme of Development Education in the Community sector. Delivering Development Education through the Community sector can play a pivotal role in increasing the number and range of people in Ireland who have access to quality Development Education, by providing life-long Development Education learning opportunities and thereby play a crucial role in accelerating progress to achieve the SDG agenda.

Working with the Department of Rural and Community Development

We propose to work with you to embed Development Education and fulfilment of SDG Target 4.7 in Community Development policy infrastructure and operations. Amongst the specific areas we would like to explore with you are the following;

- embed Development Education in Public Participation Networks/Community Well-being statements and the Social Inclusion Programme.
- meet the identified Development Education needs of new and hard to reach communities
- promote solidarity and counter racist and discriminatory behaviour and attitudes by expanding awareness programmes and development education engagements to build more cohesive, inclusive, solidarity-based communities.
- develop and deliver high quality resources and toolkits for community education groups

- develop and deliver Development Education resources on-line to enable more IT participation; get to counties/rural areas not normally reached, older cohorts, and disadvantaged communities, new Irish communities, Travellers.
- carry out a long-term research agenda to establish a strong evidence base for development education in the community sector to drive quality and inform results-based frameworks, developing baseline data, learning and project design.
- support development education networks and actors to connect and provide support to the many small community entities operating throughout Ireland and ensure that our community development education capabilities achieve national reach.
- engage with the Department of Education and Skills to seek filling of the existing but unfilled Community Education Facilitator positions within ETBs.

Next Steps

We seek a commitment from the Department of Community and Rural Development;

- to ensure that Development Education and the achievement of SDG 4.7 are integrated into departmental strategy during the period of the Statement of Strategy
- to work with IDEA and the Development Education sector to ensure that the department contributes to the delivery of SDG 4.7 under this strategy.

We would welcome the opportunity to develop a dialogue with The Department of Rural and Community Development to explore these outline proposals and agree an approach to development of plans and implementation.

19th October 2020