



Written Proposal  
From IDEA'S Youth Task Group  
To inform the

**GENE REVIEW**

&

**IRISH AID'S DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION STRATEGY**

June 2015

*Young people will be the torchbearers of the next world development agenda through 2030.  
We must ensure that, while protecting the planet, we leave no one behind.*  
– UN Synthesis Report for the SDGS, December 2014

## **Summary**

The Youth Task Group of the Irish Development Education Association welcomes the opportunity to provide a written submission to Irish Aid for consideration in the development of the next Development Education Strategy.

The Youth Taskgroup was established in February 2015 for the purpose of feeding into the Global Education Network Europe (GENE) Peer Review process for the Irish Aid Development Education Programme in Ireland together with the proposed new Irish Aid Development Education strategy to be published in 2016. The Youth Taskgroup and its subgroup met on four occasions from February to April 2015, working on and offline to deliver its work. Those involved in the Youth Taskgroup and its subgroup included youth workers, youth organisations, youth facilitators/trainers, development and development education NGOs, higher education lecturers and policy makers. The work of the Taskgroup was also informed by an NYCI Roundtable on Development Education involving young people, youth workers, youth organisations, youth work students, academics, and policy makers which took place in October 2014.

\*There are a number of different terminologies used to describe the work undertaken by the youth sector in this area including Development Education, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), Human Rights Education, and Human Development.

This written submission outlines the benefits of quality Development Education in the youth sector. It goes on to identify some of the key successes of Development Education in the youth sector. It contains a summary of the main challenges experienced by the youth sector and finally, offers key ideas and strategic priorities which if achieved by 2020, would have a transformative effect for development education in the youth sector, engaging and educating the public on the work undertaken by Irish Aid and its partners throughout the world.

The overarching vision that the youth sector has for Development Education is that:  
*Young people are socially included, environmentally aware, their equality and rights upheld, their diversity celebrated and are empowered to be active global citizens*

*Young people's autonomy is supported, their active citizenship fostered, and have a strong voice through political, social and civic engagement*

**(National Youth Strategy – forthcoming 2015)**

**The youth sector has developed a number of strategic priorities which are explored further in the document. In brief, these are:**

- **Young People** - Young people recognise themselves as agents for change nationally and internationally
- **Policy** – Policy makers recognise the value of youth work practice and are well informed about development education in youth work
- **Practice** – Best practice in development education in youth work is mainstreamed, standardised and sustained
- **Youth sector workforce** – Staff & volunteers have improved competence and confidence to act

**The supporting themes for this submission are:**

1. Quality
2. Co-ordination and collaboration
3. Support and development of the workforce- staff and volunteers
4. Access to information and informal supports

**Amongst the key actions and enablers necessary to support these priorities will be:**

- ***Root DE youth sector practices in quality research***  
A dedicated research agenda will drive quality in the youth sector and inform results-based frameworks, developing baseline data, learning and project design;
- Establish a baseline of Education for Sustainable Development and Development Education programmes that are currently available in the youth sector;
- Implement and promote the Development Education Programme and Education for Sustainable Development programmes in the youth sector through cross-sectoral collaboration;
- Create a forum of interests to support the implementation in the youth sector of the new *Sustainable Development Goals (2015)*, the *National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (2014)*, *National Youth Strategy* (forthcoming) and the *Irish Aid Development Education Strategy* (forthcoming);
- ***Invest in a flexible, strategic and innovative funding model***  
There is sufficient resourcing and flexible funding arrangements to ensure the delivery of quality DE programmes across the youth sector.

## **Introduction**

Development education has been making significant contributions to Irish society for more than thirty years and the youth sector has had a central role to play in this. The youth sector has welcomed the working relationships with Irish Aid and with development NGOs who have recognised their responsibility and duty to engage the public (beyond fundraising) in working for long lasting and sustainable change through policy, practice and behaviour, at home and abroad. Through our Development Education engagement, the youth sector has had the opportunity to hear the voices from the South through stories, writings, drama, analysis, reciprocal visits, as well as sharing knowledge, values, and expertise, on and offline, and through various media.

Young people have been supported to see themselves as agents of change, empowered to be active global citizens with Development Education delivering on the seven key competences recognised in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) Value for Money Review (2014) - Communication skills; Confidence and agency; Planning and problem-solving; Relationships; Creativity and imagination; Resilience and determination; and Emotional intelligence. For young people involved in Development Education, their enhanced attitudes, knowledge and skills contribute towards building a world of justice, equity and dignity.

We welcome this opportunity to engage with GENE and Irish Aid on planning for the future. We are ambitious for the future – for our collective future.

## **The Youth Sector in Ireland**

There are almost 400,000 young people involved in a variety of different ways in youth work and half of these come from disadvantaged backgrounds. 2 in 5 young people are involved in a club or society.

Supporting the youth work sector are 40,000 adult volunteers with 1,400 professional youth workers. The level of participation from young people and the volunteering of adults is part of our culture in Ireland. It is a real strength of the youth sector. This in turn, creates a different DE/youth work context to our European neighbours.

There are a broad range of actors working/partnering on DE/ESD/human rights education in the youth sector, including youth, development, development education and formal education organisations – nationally and internationally.



The graphic above highlights the diversity of the youth sector, the diversity of provision with diverse groups of young people. Each actor has their own valuable role to play.

Young people may be involved in Development Education through uniform organisations, faith-based, environmental, outdoor education, international volunteering, welfare and health, travelling community, equality, Irish language, rural youth, independent/local/regional youth services, civic organisations, and multi-service organisations. Non-formal/youth sector Development Education also takes place at university level and formal education courses support youth workers at third level and community level. Through their engagement with the youth sector, young people develop the confidence, resilience, capacity and critical thinking skills they need to be involved in society, to reach their potential and to become change makers – locally and globally.

The youth sector is different from the formal sector in that that young people participate on a voluntary basis, largely outside of school, and are active partners in making decisions, planning programmes, and setting priorities for action through interactive methodologies and particularly experiential learning. Much of the work undertaken is influenced by Freirean ideas of consciousness-raising and John Dewey's idea of education being a search for meaning and about the making sense of things.

The methods and approaches allow young people and particularly marginalised young people to access Development Education and to have their voices heard.

Organisations within the sector are experts worldwide both DE and Youth work and who work together in Ireland and with European/global partners to support equality, social inclusion and solidarity.

## **The benefits of quality Development Education in the Youth Sector**

A new Development Education Strategy has the potential to bring about great success by 2020. It must be recognised that underlying any new strategy must be the demand and support for quality - quality DE experiences, policy, practice, educational materials and information, educational delivery at all levels of society (primary, secondary, and tertiary levels) as well as sustained opportunities for young people and those who work with young people to be actively engaged and empowered. Quality DE for the youth sector in a new Irish Aid DE Strategy will set about:

- Creating opportunities where the knowledge, values, attitudes and skills related to DE are explored in a holistic and engaging process
- Providing educational opportunities to empower young people to take action on DE issues by building self-confidence and developing skills such as critical thinking, systems analysis, futures thinking
- Building young people's capacity to consider risks and consequences and make informed decisions and take responsibility, globally and locally
- Supporting young people to develop social, environmental and global awareness and a sense of solidarity
- Giving young people a voice in decision-making which affect their lives
- Enhancing young people's role as active global citizens
- Working collaboratively within the youth sector and across sectors to achieve better outcomes for young people
- Building capacity of educators to deliver DE and to become active global citizens aware of their roles and responsibilities as educators
- Building competency of educators and those working with young people through research, educational materials, training, and opportunities
- Building on key DE activities, innovation, programmes, and events in the youth sector including NYCI's One World Week, ECO-UNESCO Youth for Sustainable Development Programme, Film/arts-based work, Partnerships, etc

Through the DE work of the youth sector currently, the youth sector/young people are empowered and supported to:

- Take action locally on DE issues
- Understand the global context of their local lives and present different viewpoints
- Make personal, local, national, and global links between their lives and the different dimensions of their lives - Food they eat, clothes they wear, air they breathe, gadgets they use, political systems in which they live, and people's interconnectedness to the world
- Appreciate the similarities and differences between people – locally, nationally, globally
- Critically examine values and attitudes
- Accept and value diversity
- Learn about the work of Irish Aid and NGOs working in the development, environment and other fields

- Develop the skills and methodologies that will enable them to take action to combat injustice, prejudice and discrimination
- Challenge key development issues and promote and support social justice, consciousness, action, questions and education

By 2020, the youth sector would hope that to have built on these and past successes to reach a greater number of young people and those who work with and for young people, where DE is centrally recognised in youth and development policy as having a key role to play in the development of their own and global communities/societies.

Some of the issues explored within the DE and youth sector vary from Fairtrade Coffee right through to climate justice, education, gender, aid, human rights, and the sustainable development goals and many of these issues are pictured below. The diversity of themes and issues reflect the world in which we live and the diversity of actors with whom we work.



### The successes of quality Development Education in the Youth Sector

Amongst the key successes achieved by the youth sector with the support of funders and partners within and across sectors at national and international levels are:

- The youth sector empowers young people to be agents of change locally and globally
- Over 30 years of sustained quality DE work supporting public knowledge, education, diverse range of activity, provision and engagement by organisations including the National Youth Council of Ireland, ECO-UNESCO, Voluntary Service Ireland, YMCA, Scouting Ireland, Girl Guides, Youth Work Ireland, Suas, IDEA, Universities/Colleges, local youth projects and organisations, etc

- Continued commitment of and demand by organisations in the youth sector to provide quality DE in a sector that has experienced many challenges as a result of the challenging economic context in which it works
- International recognition of good practice DE programmes being delivered within Ireland and by Irish youth organisations abroad where there is an emphasis on building awareness of interconnectedness of the world and global/local issues
- Key activities have supported public knowledge, participation and engagement – NYCI’s One World Week, ECO-UNESCO Youth for Sustainable Development Programme and other youth sector programmes
- Linkages at European and global level with other youth sector actors have supported greater and deeper engagement by and for young people including membership of the European Youth Forum (99 national youth councils and international youth organisations), the NYCI/Irish Aid UN Youth Delegate Programme and ECO-UNESCO partnership with UNESCO for delivery of the Global Action Programme
- The opportunities that the new Youth Strategy (Department of Children and Youth Affairs) will provide in terms of supporting the work of DE providers and practitioners across all government departments and the publication of a new National Strategy on ESD (Department of Education and Skills)
- Complimentary approach to what is happening in other sectors
- Quality resources and materials for specific target groups
- In-service training and Continuous Professional Development opportunities
- High level of Volunteering and quality volunteering opportunities
- Research – Standpoints (NYCI), Dochas, Suas
- Dedicated funding which has supported the work undertaken by the youth sector – specifically that provided by Irish Aid

As a result, we in Ireland are a strong leader/example for our European neighbours and global partners of how effective DE can be in the youth sector.

### **Youth Sector challenges**

A number of challenges have been identified by the youth sector despite the successes and achievements over many years.

One of the key challenges is that there are new young people, youth workers, volunteers, organisations and methodologies coming on stream all of the time. So our work is never done.

The economic crisis, which has brought about youth unemployment and high levels of emigration, has hugely challenged the youth sector in terms of staff allocation, child protection, time, resources, ability to travel and participate, collaboration, etc.

There is no strategic partnership between Irish Aid and the youth sector and this is a major gap identified by the youth sector which has inhibited the potential for success for DE in the youth sector. It would be of key importance to the youth sector that this issue be addressed in consultation with the youth sector to ensure successful outcomes for the youth sector in 2020.

There is a need to be mindful that we continue to include, support and encourage the involvement of smaller youth groups around the country to be part of DE in the youth sector. This would enhance the geographical spread and reach of DE throughout Ireland. This can be done via the national youth organisations and in collaboration with other structures at local and regional levels including the Education and Training Boards (ETBs), arts officers, county councils and other youth structures.

The availability of annual funding only to the youth sector by Irish Aid is problematic in terms of long term planning and delivery of quality DE and this has led to many challenges for the youth sector. There is a great opportunity now to relook and revisit this issue and provide a variety of funding opportunities for the youth sector as well as the re-introduction of multi-annual funding to support the work of the youth sector and to deliver on the Irish Aid strategy.

Enhanced Continuous Professional Development opportunities as well as courses and DE trainings will support the successful delivery of the Irish Aid DE Strategy in 2020. There have been major challenges to date to meet the needs and requests of the public to deliver on this aspect, to skills educators and volunteers up so they can ensure DE becomes more embedded in the youth work sector.

The youth sector has also been challenged through the mandatory segregation of the non-formal and formal sectors. As young people can be found in both, and that learning by educators could mutually support work undertaken, it would be important that any new strategy would take cognisance of this issue.

Over the next 15 years, the new Sustainable Development Goals will, when agreed in September 2015, potentially transform the delivery and demand for development education in Ireland. The universality of the goals and the potential for new synergies at local, national, European and global levels are already becoming obvious and placing increased demands on organisations in the youth sector. Amongst these demands are the involvement of young people in terms of monitoring and accountability of the new goals (so Irish young people don't get left behind in the process), communication and partnerships at global level, policy making, and innovative methods to ensure greater public awareness of the goals and the role and responsibility of us all to leave no one behind. Greater cooperation will be required and the youth sector wants to be part of this process. The youth sector envisage a greater role for the youth sector to work across government departments supporting government

(national and global) to ensure the SDGs are successfully implemented – locally, nationally, and globally.

## Strategic Priorities

The youth sector has identified **four** key areas for attention in any new Irish Aid Strategy. These areas are young people, policy, practice, and youth sector work force (staff and volunteers).

### 1. Young People

By 2020...

Young people recognise themselves as agents of change and are empowered to be global actors for sustainable development and active global citizens

Young people recognise Ireland's role and responsibilities as part of the global community

Young people have enhanced attitudes, knowledge and skills that contribute to building a world of justice, equity, and dignity

#### To achieve these outcomes we will need to:

- Strengthen and deepen delivery of development education with a quality and impact agenda at the heart of delivery
- Prioritise direct engagement with young people that enables them to be multipliers and agents of change
- Prioritise and enable capacity development through peer learning
- Facilitate young people interested in DE to come together and identify ways to extend the reach and quality of DE in the youth sector
- Conduct research on young people's attitudes to development and the impact of development education programmes

### 2. Policy

By 2020...

Policy makers are well informed about development education in youth work and recognise the value of non-formal education/youth work in enabling and empowering young people to be connected, respected and contributing to the world (Youth Strategy, 2015 & BOBF, 2014)

#### To achieve these outcomes we will need to:

- Ensure DE remains an integral part of the Irish Aid programme supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Create a forum of interests to support the implementation in the youth sector of the new *Sustainable Development Goals (2015)*, the *National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (2014)*, the National Youth Strategy (forthcoming) and the *Irish Aid Development Education Strategy* (forthcoming);
- Ensure policy decisions reflect a coherent approach to DE and provide opportunities for policy support and funding for delivery of DE in the youth sector with Irish Aid playing an active role
- Ensure National Quality Standards Framework for youth organisations/volunteer-led groups includes principle/guidance on DE
- Support more strategic partnership opportunities for organisations/consortia to improve coordination and reach of DE in the youth sector

### 3. Practice

By 2020...

Youth organisations are aware of the value of development education as a way of developing young people's competences (*as per the 7 key competences (Value for Money Review)* - Communication skills; Confidence and agency; Planning and problem-solving; Relationships; Creativity and imagination; Resilience and determination; and Emotional intelligence)

Collaboration and partnerships are created between organisations nationally and internationally to share best innovative practice and maximise the impact of development education for young people and for the youth sector

Practice is based on supporting high quality research that shares examples of good practice, critically reflecting on DE youth programmes and builds a strong evidence-based DE community

#### **To achieve these outcomes we will need to:**

- Target and support a diverse range of actors and organisations in the delivery of development education in the youth sector
- Actively support collaboration and partnerships between youth, development education, development and education organisations (e.g. strategic partnership opportunities for consortia)
- Strengthen and deepen delivery of development education with a quality and impact agenda

- Develop a voluntary Code of Conduct for DE Practitioners (similar to Dochas and Comhlámh Codes of Conduct) and best practice supports for the youth sector (NYCI Good Practice Guidelines and IDEA Good Practice Guidelines)
- Prioritise capacity development for organisations and the youth sector to ensure quality DE with an effective and sustainable programme of delivery
- Prioritise and enable capacity development through peer learning
- Encourage partnership programmes between the Youth Sector, development and DE sectors focussing on delivery of high quality, innovative, and sustainable DE
- Enable networking, collaboration, cohesion, and partnership approaches
- Prioritise North/South approaches to DE using the North/South ETS – professional youth work
- Ensure the National Quality Standards Framework for youth organisations/volunteer-led groups includes principle/guidance on DE
- Ensure development cooperation and international cooperation debates, ideas and practices are subject to public debate and are rooted in a diverse range of development education programmes including the youth sector
- Recognise the diversity of actors and diversity of approaches as a strength to support this

#### **4. Youth Sector Work Force**

By 2020...

Youth sector work force (staff and volunteers) have enhanced knowledge and skills and improved competence and confidence to act

Youth sector work force has access to best practice materials

##### **To achieve these outcomes we will need to:**

- Facilitate a range of approaches including capacity building for the youth sector to support and promote development education (pre-service and in-service and for practitioners)
- Develop a voluntary Code of Conduct for DE Practitioners (similar to Dochas and Comhlámh Codes of Conduct) and best practice supports for the youth sector (NYCI Good Practice Guidelines and IDEA Good Practice Guidelines)
- Increase initial training and CPD opportunities for people engaging in delivery of DE in the youth sector. CPD targeted and accredited training should be available to all youth workers, educators, leaders, students and volunteers in the youth sector to ensure young people and those working with young people have the opportunity to up-skill and enhance their DE knowledge and understanding, to maximise impact and the multiplier effect

- Prioritise and enable capacity development through peer learning
- Support for enabling collaboration and coherence in the youth sector

## **Enablers to support the strategic priorities of the youth sector to ensure success by 2020**

### ***Invest in a flexible, strategic and innovative funding model***

There is sufficient resourcing and flexible funding arrangements to ensure the delivery of quality DE programmes across the youth sector

### ***Root DE youth sector practices in quality research***

A dedicated research agenda will drive quality in the youth sector and inform results-based frameworks, developing baseline data, learning and project design

### **To achieve these outcomes we will need to:**

- Increase investment in the delivery of quality DE in the youth sector in youth work and non-formal education contexts supported by national youth structures, building on existing champions/successful programmes, ensuring quality opportunities for young people and other sectoral actors
- Restore multi-annual funding for DE in the Youth sector enabling strategic programme planning and medium-long term sustainable impact
- Provide 'Seed funding' for pioneering new DE work in the youth sector and piloting new methodologies, new audiences and new contexts for DE enabling innovation and strategic development of DE programmes
- Incentivise collaboration, co-ordination and shared learning through a mixed funding model for civil society organisations, third level and youth sector partnerships to collaborate with one another on multi-annual programmes (similar to EC-funded programmes), as well as running own programmes
- Increase support to organisations to develop systems, processes and procedures to engage in the delivery of quality DE programmes on a sustainable basis
- Conduct peer-supported research on young people attitudes to development and the impact of development education programmes
- Map DE and youth work training/education provision in 5 colleges at third level, linking this research with NSET
- Build on the commitment in the National Strategy on ESD and previous Irish Aid DE strategies and Irish Aid policies (One World, Our Future 2013) and the White Paper on Development 2006, and undertake mapping exercises of DE in the youth sector to build a broader picture and to enable targeted, coordinated strategic work
- Prioritise civil society space as a place for innovation and international linking
- Support international and cross-sectoral collaboration and exchange

- Ensure policy decisions reflect a coherent approach to DE and provide opportunities for policy support and funding for delivery of DE in the youth sector

## **In conclusion**

This is an exciting time in history and the youth sector through the new Sustainable Development Goals and other global, national and local opportunities believe that they are rightly positioned to make a difference and potentially transform how development education can be used and seen to engage young people and those who work with young people in Ireland and globally.

The youth sector has no doubt that young people want to be involved, they want their voices heard, they want to take action and are passionate about issues they have an interest in. It is up to all of us, educators, funders, organisations, researchers and policy makers to work together to develop pathways through which young people, those who work with young people, those who educate the educators, and others can engage.

It is also necessary to remember that there are different groups of young people newly engaging with DE all the time and, youth organisations provide various innovative opportunities for them to engage especially in terms of technology. Policy developments at national (Youth Strategy; ESD); European (EU Youth Policy); and Global levels (UNESCO GAP, UN World Programme for Youth, SDGs, etc) provide for exciting possibilities to work with others to achieve our goals.

In making this submission to Irish Aid, we are setting out to write the next chapter for development education in Ireland. We want young people and the youth sector to be at the heart of the plot. We hope that when we all look back in 5, 10, 15 years' time, that we will be able to say that it was a job well done.

In a special address to young people, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon made three calls to action to the world's young people:

- Help us drive sustainable development that is people-centred and planet-sensitive
- Fight injustice and inequality with solidarity so no one is left behind
- Be an active global citizen

This is what DE in the Youth sector is about.  
And this is what we want to do.

## Members of IDEA's Youth Task Group

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This written submission was also informed by a Roundtable on Development Education and Young People held by the National Youth Council of Ireland (member organisations/partners) in October 2014. More information here: <http://www.youthdeved.ie/roundtable14> and a Roundtable on Young People, 2015 & Beyond in February 2015. More information here: <http://www.youthdeved.ie/roundtable15>