# ECO-UNESCO
# Submission to Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid

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## Submitted by:

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## Introduction to ECO-UNESCO:

ECO-UNESCO is Irelands environmental education and youth organisation affiliated to the World Federation of UNESCO Clubs, Centres and Associations. The organisation focuses on raising awareness, knowledge and understanding of the environment and sustainable development; it promotes youth empowerment, education and practical environmental action projects and promotes the ideals of UNESCO in Ireland.

ECO-UNESCO was established in 1986 and presently works with over 10,000 young people annually ECO-UNESCO operates throughout Ireland and runs a range of environmental and youth programmes aimed at young people, leaders and teachers. Highlights include the Youth for Sustainable Development programme (funding by Irish Aid); ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards, National Youth ECO-Forum, ECO-UNESCO Clubs, Training & Education Programmes including FETAC accredited trainings, Peer Education Programme *(youth empowerment, leadership and action)*, ECO-Choices Programme *(youth drugs prevention)*, Environmental Workshops and ECO-Explorer Kids Holiday Camps. Each area is inter-related and works to build long-term knowledge and personal development of young people.

## ECO-UNESCO's approach to this submission:

In this consultation submission ECO-UNESCO will refer to the submissions made by both NYCI, IDEA as we are members of both organisations and have fed into these joint submissions.

In this submission we will focus in particular on the areas of Sustainable development, education for sustainable development, environmental concerns in development and climate change.

## ECO-UNESCO

- o welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation on Irish Aids White Paper.

- o welcomes the recognition by Irish Aid that *'economic and social progress is dependent on the health of the environment'* (5.11 p.13)

- o welcomes the recognition in the White Paper that *'only with a balance between the social, economic and environmental aspects of development can long-term solutions to poverty be achieved.'*

- o agrees with Irish Aids White Paper that *'environmental hazards (e.g. pollution, environmental damage and climate change) all threaten livelihoods and development.'*

- o highlights that there is often a lack of understanding between the importance of a healthy environment and its relationship with development and the need to understand the interconnectedness of development and environment, and the dependence of human survival on ecological integrity. Irish Aid identified this important relationship in its Environmental Policy for Sustainable Development, 2007 *'Caring for the environment is an integral component of development; it is not an add-on, another layer or another sector. Rather it must be addressed in balance with people's social and economic needs in a way that ensures environmental sustainability (i.e. that the environment continues to play its role in maintaining human life into the future.'*

- o welcomes Irish Aids focus on Climate change and agrees with the IDEA submission which points out that *'…that as climate change is still very much framed as a development issue for developing countries, while most international research points to the fact that climate change has become a key context that needs to be addressed not just through programmes and projects in developing countries but as a context in which we live. This includes making it a key issue for work here in Ireland, including a coherent approach to climate change*

*policies across Government departments and educating the Irish public about global interdependencies.'* (IDEA submission p 4)

o highlights the importance of young people as a key demographic group for change with over 36% of the population under 24 years of age (1,478,961) (Source: CSO).

o agrees with the NYCI submission which highlights the important role of youth work in development education and states that youth work is '*a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations." (Youth Work Act, 2001).*

o agrees with IDEA and Dochas in their submissions to this review process that a key success factor in achieving these ambitious goals is to ensure "*a comprehensive, all-government approach which involves not just aid but all policies with international impact." (Dóchas Submission, pg. 3)*

o agrees with the NYCI and IDEA submission which states that '*there have been key successes in the area of development education arising out of the commitment to the White Paper and that 'every person in Ireland will have access to educational opportunities to understand their rights and responsibilities as global citizens as well as their potential to affect change for a more just and equal world' (IDEA and NYCI submissions)*

o agrees with the IDEA submission that '*International development needs an engaged and informed public…'* and that '*…public ownership is not gained through simple public information campaigns but through a deeper engagement of people with global justice issues showing how such issues are connected to them'* and that …'*engaged individuals make a difference through their daily actions as consumers, campaigners, volunteers, educators, etc.'* and '*an engaged public opens a space for dialogue on the root causes of poverty, necessary for implementing systemic changes to tackle global poverty and to create a sense of real ownership for the Irish Aid programme amongst the people of Ireland. (IDEA Submission p5-6.)* ECO-UNESCO also urges Irish Aid to use this White Paper review process to introduce public engagement, development education and education for sustainable development as one of the key issues of their programme.

o Agrees with both NYCI and IDEA submissions highlighting that in the importance of the *youth sector through the strategic partnership with National Youth Council of Ireland, there has been an increase in the number of key youth organisations that value development education within their structures and programmes of activity. (IDEA and NYCI submissions and Irish Aid Synthesis paper p6)*

o believes there should be greater reference to 'Sustainable Development' in the White Paper, which involves economic growth, social equity and environmental protection. There are basic principles that underpin the concept. Sustainable Development is development that is viable for the economy, equitable between people, peoples and generations and bearable for the environment. The latter refers to people living within the carrying capacity of the environment and all people having basic understanding on how human (Socio-economic) and natural systems (environment) are interconnected and acting to ensure that none are adversely affected or all are enhanced.

o believes there should be greater reference to the role that education plays in tacking poverty and justice on a global scale and the need to highlighted the importance of education for sustainable development which captures the complexity of development and sustainable development and that as a methodology ESD is holistic and interdisciplinary, values driven, encourages critical thinking, locally relevant, interactive and multi-method as well as grounded in participatory decision making.

o believes there is a need for a strong educational system grounded in Education for Sustainable Development which is endorsed by the current UN decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005 to 2014) of which UNESCO is the lead agency. Education for Sustainable Development develops and strengthens the capacity of individuals, groups, communities and organisations to make judgements and choices in favour of sustainable development. Education for Sustainable Development to be successful must give people practical skills that will enable them to have sustainable livelihoods and to live sustainable lives. These skills will differ according to community conditions and include the following:

— The ability to communicate effectively (both orally and in writing)
— The ability to think about systems (both natural and social sciences)
— The ability to think in time - to forecast, to think ahead, and to plan
— The capacity to move from awareness to knowledge to action

ESD requires perspectives that understands global issues as well as local issues in a global context. This entails understanding the root cause of a socio-economic and/or environmental issue and being able to forecast possible outcome. Moreover understanding values is an essential part Education for Sustainable Development. This relates to understanding one's own view of the world in order to understand other people's viewpoints and value systems. Education for Sustainable Development focuses largely on the major social, economic and the environmental issues that threaten the sustainability of the planet. Many of these key issues/risks were identified at the Rio summit and are found in Agenda 21. Local Agenda 21 has a focus on the long term goals of Sustainable Development. The focus rests on working towards a greater degree of social inclusion, equality, local governance & meaningful citizen and community consultation and participation.

o Highlights the importance of the implementation of the Irish National Strategy in Education for Sustainable Development and the recommendations made in the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland: Discussion Paper (2007) *(see Appendix 1)*

**Appendix 1** - **National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland: Discussion Paper (2007**

National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland: Discussion Paper (2007). outlined the following main recommendations for the future of ESD in Ireland: Available at: http://www.ecounesco.ie/pdf/ESDDiscussionPaper.pdf. pp. 70-71. Many of the possible actions are also taken from this Discussion Paper in addition to ones from ECO-UNESCO.

***Objective 1*** *Embed Education for Sustainable Development at every level of the education system*[1]
***Possible actions:***
- o Integrate ESD into all areas of the curriculum in schools and encourage cross curricular learning to the maxim extent feasible
- o Promote active learning approaches and ESD methods which empower learners to be action oriented to help ensure a better world, care for the environment, and a more just society
- o Encourage whole school/whole institution approaches to implementation of ESD, developing a climate, ethos and values in which ESD can thrive
- o Provide training for teachers in pre-service and in-service contexts in ESD
- o Promote the development of curriculum resources and materials on ESD themes
- o Provide for the development of programmes at senior cycle including Social Personal and Health Education and social and political education
- o Promote the inclusion of ESD Modules in the Transition Year Programme
- o Provide for ESD programmes and awards in Further and Higher Education.
- o Promote ESD in the youth, adult and community settings
- o Strengthen the links between schools, NGOs and businesses in the field of ESD

***Objective 2*** *Promote public awareness of Education for Sustainable Development designed to provide the knowledge skills and values to encourage individuals, businesses and organisations to take action in support of a sustainable and just society, care for the environment, and responsible global citizenship*[2]
**Possible actions**
- o Provide funding measures to promote engagement by NGOs and community interests in ESD action projects
- o Encourage national and local media to promote ESD as part of their ongoing work
- o Develop an ESD website
- o Support the national media and awareness campaigns on Sustainable Development
- o Encourage the development of incentive and awards schemes, and sustainable living festivals.
- o Promote the development of whole-organisation, whole-Town and whole-business approaches, and the integration of ESD into farming approaches.

***Objective 3*** *Promote Capacity Building in support of ESD*[3]
**Possible actions**
- o Support the work of ESD NGOs and community interests in ESD.
- o Support the development of networks in ESD, promoting linkages at local, national and international level
- o Encourage professional bodies to provide continuing professional development for their members in ESD
- o Promote the work of the Regional Centre of Expertise in ESD.

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[1] Ireland (2007) National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland: Discussion Paper. Available at: http://www.ecounesco.ie/pdf/ESDDiscussionPaper.pdf. pp. 70-71.

[2] Ireland (2007) National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland: Discussion Paper. Available at: http://www.ecounesco.ie/pdf/ESDDiscussionPaper.pdf. p. 71.

[3] Ireland (2007) National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland: Discussion Paper. Available at: http://www.ecounesco.ie/pdf/ESDDiscussionPaper.pdf. p. 72.

***Objective 4*** *Promote high standards of environmental management in education institutions[4]*

Possible actions
- o Provide guidelines to schools to encourage reduced water consumption, reduced energy consumption, waste reduction and recycling
- o Further enhance the work of the Department's Building Unit, through its Generic Repeat Design Schools, to promote low energy sustainable buildings as an ongoing part of the Capital Programme.
- o Encourage whole schools approaches to ESD.

**References:**

NYCI Submission to White Paper 2012

IDEA Submission to White Paper 2012

Dochas Submission to White Paper 2012

Ireland (2007) Developing a National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development Discussion Paper. Available at: http://www.ecounesco.ie/pdf/ESDDiscussionPaper.pdf. pp. 70-72.

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[4] Ireland (2007) National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland: Discussion Paper. Available at: http://www.ecounesco.ie/pdf/ESDDiscussionPaper.pdf. p. 72.