

Irish Forum for Global Education

Strategic Plan 2023 – 2025

Foreground

Education is a fundamental human right and a common good of humanity. It is the catalyst for the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and is prioritised in Irish development cooperation because it enables people to take greater control of their lives and help them escape poverty. Education is equally critical in contributing to collective wellbeing and a more equal and just society and in sustaining democratic and inclusive political cultures.

Yet, in far too many parts of the world, education is in crisis. Some thirty years after global commitments to ensure Education for All, nearly half of all children in the world are not enrolled in pre-primary education. Up to 70% of children in poorest countries are not able to read a basic text by age 10. In a world moving into a fourth industrial revolution, driven by AI and digital technologies, nearly half of all students do not complete secondary education and over 700 million adults are illiterate. In developed countries, educational outcomes mirror wider societal inequalities related to income, race and ethnicity, gender, disability and, increasingly, citizenship status.

Unfortunately, the global crisis in education cannot be reduced to questions of access and outcomes. This crisis is characterised by multiple intersecting dimensions including an increase in the number of out-of-school children and child labourers; 36.5 million displaced children due to conflict and the climate crisis; an increase in attacks on education; a global crisis in teacher supply; and – to compound these regressive trends – a decrease in funding for education in development aid programmes.

Poverty and conflict are the chief drivers of inequalities in access to education. The latter have been dramatically exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the global shut down of schools. The pandemic has led to an acceleration of discrimination against girls, a resurgence of child labour, as well as widespread profound deterioration in children's health, wellbeing and physical safety. Negative gender and social norms also undermining children's wellbeing and life opportunities. There is now an imperative for supporting education in LMICs and LICs which supersedes current approaches, in particular in relation to financing education.

The global crisis in education can be addressed. The 2022 UNESCO Transforming Education Summit makes a powerful case for the need for a new social contract for education. Such a contract must be

based on the foundational principles of assuring the right to quality education throughout life and strengthening education as a public endeavour and a common good.¹

Multi-lateral structures and institutions exist which can provide the leadership, innovation and financing necessary to drive change and realise this new social contract for education. Ireland can and must assume a lead role in this global process. Education underpins the core priorities in our development cooperation policy, namely, ending poverty, achieving gender equality, reducing humanitarian need, accelerating climate action and strengthening governance. Ireland is a committed supporter of education in its bilateral and multi-lateral aid programmes, as is evidenced in our consistent support for the Global Partnership for Education and the Education Cannot Wait fund is demonstrative of our commitment to leaving no children behind. We want to translate that ambition into reality.

Who we are

The Irish Forum for Global education (IFGE) is a network of civil society actors, development and humanitarian NGOs, education agencies, teacher unions, faith-based and missionary organisations, professional associations, not-for-profit private organisations, academics and individuals concerned with global education issues, in particular education in development and emergencies and the SDG 4 Education 2030 Education Agenda. The Forum is the Irish national affiliate to the Global Campaign for Education. The list of the Forum's membership is contained in Appendix 1.

What do we do?

The IFGE constitutes a unique community of practice committed to promoting and protecting education in development and emergencies and the achievement of SDG 4 – ensure inclusive equitable and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The Forum works to promote and protect education in Irish development cooperation policy. It represents a strong civil society voice for education, essential in the democratic polity. It provides information; engages in

¹ <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/transforming-education-summit>

advocacy; promotes public awareness and a sense of ownership of our development cooperation programme.

Vision, mission and values

The vision of the Forum is to promote Ireland's contribution to education in development and emergencies and to promote the achievement of the SDG 4 – to ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education and lifelong learning for all.

The mission of the Forum is to provide serve as a network and national platform which provides an open and participatory space for dialogue between civil society, academics, policy-makers and practitioners, who have an interest in, or are working in education in development and emergencies.

The values of the Forum are:

Human rights: Education is a human right within the broader framework of universal and indivisible human rights.

Leaving no one behind: Equity, non-discrimination and inclusion in education and through education is central to this ambition.

Strong public education systems: The state is the primary duty-bearer to ensure equitable, inclusive and quality lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Quality education: Quality education is central to realising the right to inclusive and equitable education for all.

Supporting the teaching profession: Qualified, remuneration and supported teachers are central to quality education.

Financing for public education: The Forum supports the position of the Global Campaign for Education for increased domestic financing for education to at least 20% of national budget and 6% of GDP, and to expand the domestic revenue base through tax justice.

Strategic Priorities for 2023 to 2025

Strategic priority 1: Promote and influence policy on education in development and in emergencies and on SDG 4 at national, regional and international level

Actions:

Organise events to highlight International Days focused on education, children and youth

Engage in national, regional and international policy processes, consultations and events

Engage with other networks and communities to underpin an inter-sectional approach to policy dialogue

Build relationships with members of the Oireachtas and other public representatives, including MEPs

Develop relationships with academics and relevant academic communities, institutions and researchers with a view research and policy development activities

Host an annual conference and members AGM

Promotion of Forum's mission across multiple media platforms

Strategic priority 2: Advance knowledge of, and effective responses to, the global education crisis at national, regional and international level

Actions:

Develop Forum policy and research capacity by publishing policy reports, position papers, research reports, etc, with particular focus on alignment with members' policy priorities

Create Forum Study Groups on specific themes with a focus on current issues and challenges

Engage with academics in dialogue and events in support of policy and research activities

Promote learning among members of Ireland's progress towards its own SDG 4 targets in context of global progress

Draw on the knowledge base of members who are service providers to inform Forum policy response and advocacy activities

Strategic priority 3: Strengthen the Forum's capacity to have a sustainable impact and deliver on its mission

Actions:

Prioritise member engagement to create a diverse dynamic community concerned with global education issues

Organise events to strengthen and promote the work of member organisations

Strengthen and develop governance structures, including review of Forum's Mission Statement and Governing Document, ways of working with the focus on facilitating sustained member engagement and benefit

Deliver a communications strategy to identify the messages which the Forum want to deliver, to whom and why, and the optimum modalities for effectively delivery of messages