



Community Work Ireland working collectively to support and promote community work as a means of addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality

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Community Work Ireland

Comments on the SDG National Implementation Plan

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About Community Work Ireland

Established in 1981, Community Work Ireland is the leading national organisation that promotes and supports community work as a means of addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality and ultimately as a means of achieving social change that will contribute to the creation of a more just, sustainable and equal society.

CWI has in excess of 800 individual and organisational members working in and with the most disadvantaged communities throughout Ireland (urban, rural and issue based). Since its establishment, Community Work Ireland has been concerned to promote best practice and a commitment to social justice and inclusion in policies, programmes and measures with the remit and/or potential to address poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

About community development

Community Work Ireland is a community development organisation. Community development is widely recognised nationally and internationally as *“a developmental activity comprised of both a task and a process. The task is social change to achieve equality, social justice and human rights, and the process is the application of principles of participation, empowerment and collective decision making in a structured and co-ordinated way.”*

CWI recognises that community development is based on several core values including:

- **Collectivity** – Involving approaches to planning and decision making which focus on the potential benefits for communities from actions and policies rather than focusing only on benefits to individuals.
- **Community Empowerment** - Involving approaches to planning and decision making which lead people and communities to be resilient, organised, included and influential.
- **Social Justice and Sustainable Development** – Involving approaches to planning and decision making which involve; promoting policies and practices that challenge injustice, poverty, inequality, discrimination and social exclusion, valuing diversity of identities and promoting environmentally, economically and socially sustainable policies and practices based on environmental justice principles.
- **Human Rights, Equality and Anti-discrimination** - Involving rights based approaches to planning and decision making and working towards a society where human rights and equality are recognised and realised and discrimination is addressed.
- **Participation** - Ensuring meaningful participation involves the self- identification of needs and interests by communities and the formulation of responses by those communities to ensure the realisation of their rights.

CWI is particularly concerned with the promotion of meaningful and effective participation of communities in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. CWI is deeply committed to the principles of participation, representation and consultation as we believe that:

- it is the right of people to participate in decisions and policies that affect them and their communities;
- the participation of a people and communities benefit and improve decision-making and policy development.

CWI Submission

A welcome plan to realise the SDGs in Ireland

CWI welcomes this first draft of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) National Implementation Plan and the opportunity to provide comments on its content.

We support the Government in its initiative to undertake voluntary review at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2018. Ireland has shown innovation, commitment and leadership at a global level by negotiating and championing the SDGs at the United Nations.

We believe that the challenge now is to continue to drive innovation in the implementation of the SDGs domestically. While Ireland can be justifiably proud of its commitment to international development, our “SDG legacy” will ultimately stem from our ability to use the SDGs to realise a just, equitable and sustainable society at home on the island of Ireland.

With this in mind, we note our concern at the short timeframe and limited circulation for this consultative process. We acknowledge that timing is tight as Ireland prepares for review at the HLPF in July 2018, but we wish to highlight the fact that this limited opportunity to engage means that many key stakeholders at a local and regional level have been excluded from the consultation.

NIP Strategic priorities

CWI supports the plan’s top-line strategic priorities of awareness, participation, support and of policy alignment. We suggest that these goals can be strengthened by:

- **Participation:**
Naming a commitment to support the participation of those most at risk from inequality, exclusion and discrimination, including through community development, as a key approach to ensuring that “no one is left behind.”
- **Support:**
Including a commitment to support and encourage communities and organisations to engage with the State and hold it to account for its implementation of the SDGs as part of an ongoing and robust democratic process. Again, this commitment must recognise the importance of addressing barriers to participation in community life and policy making such as inequality, exclusion and discrimination.

Mainstreaming the SDGs – the role of local authorities

CWI supports the draft plan’s commitment to mainstreaming the SDGs across Government departments, state agencies and local authorities. **We believe that the plan could be strengthened by giving greater clarity on the role of local authorities in SDG implementation.** Globally, it is recognised that sub-national government has a substantial role in the localisation of the SDG agenda. Initiatives and resources such as

the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments' *Localising the SDGs* website¹ and *Roadmap for Localising the SDGs*², as well as the United Cities and Local Governments' *The SDGs: What Local Governments Need to Know*³

Aligning Rural & Community Development to the SDGs

Rural and community development structures and programmes will be vital in the successful local implementation of the SDGs. **The plan should note this and give a clear commitment to the aligning of rural and community development to the SDGs.** Local structures include Local Development Companies, Family Resource Centres, the network of Womens' & Traveller Community Development Projects, Public Participation Networks, Local Community Development Committees and other community development organisations.

Furthermore, **the role of Pobal in the successful domestic implementation of the SDGs should be acknowledged.** Pobal administers a large range of community development, rural development and community services programmes on behalf of the Irish Government. This makes it a key agency to be engaged in the domestic implementation of the SDGs.

Programmes such as the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) should be aligned with the SDGs in order to drive SDG implementation locally. Community development workers at the staff of the above listed structures should be **supported with resources and training to engage local communities in SDGs implementation, monitoring and reporting.**

SDG vision and priorities

CWI is broadly supportive of the SDG vision and priorities outline in the plan. We look forward to greater realisation of a just, equitable and socially inclusive society in Ireland, and to playing our role in this through our engagement with the State and through supporting the work of our members, who work with the most vulnerable and excluded groups and communities in our society.

We propose the following additions to these priorities:

- Include a priority on the **participation in decision making**, with a particular focus on supporting the participation of those most at risk from inequality, exclusion and discrimination.
- *Bullet point 8:* Include a commitment to a **"just transition"** that protects the livelihoods of workers in the carbon intensive industries which we need to transition away from, e.g. the Bord na Mona Peat burning power stations.
- *Bullet point 10:* Include a commitment to **"food sovereignty"**, including through resourcing Community Supported Agriculture and community gardens, local and regional food production and addressing food waste.

¹ Localising the SDGs website: <http://localizingthesdgs.org/>

² *Roadmap for Localising the SDGs:* https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/roadmap_for_localizing_the_sdgs_0.pdf

³ *The SDGs: What Local Governments need to know:* <https://www.uclg.org/en/media/news/sustainable-development-goals-what-local-governments-need-know>

Key pillars strategies of domestic implementation- include the Framework Policy on Rural and Community Development and National Planning Framework 2040

The Framework Policy on Rural and Community Development, along with existing community development structures and programmes, such as SICAP, are crucial elements for the strategic local implementation of the SDG agenda. **This framework policy should be named in the NIP as a key pillar of domestic implementation.**

The National Planning Framework provides an opportunity to deliver tangible results for the current and future generations who rely on shared public services and social infrastructure and should be named in the NIP as a key pillar of domestic implementation.

Governance arrangements- include the Minister for Rural and Community Development

CWI is concerned that the Department of Rural and Community Development is not mentioned in the draft plan or in *Annex 1: Matrix of Lead and Stakeholder Departments*. We acknowledge that this Department is only newly established and that this could account for their lack of inclusion in the draft plan. However, **we urge the Interdepartmental Working Group to give due consideration now to the role of the Minister for, and Department of, Rural and Community Development in driving the successful domestic implementation of the SDGs.**

Stakeholder engagement

CWI is concerned that current stakeholder engagement has remained amongst civil society at a national level, with a particular focus on international development and environmental NGOs. We recommend that **the section on stakeholder engagement should include a specific commitment to engaging stakeholders at a local and regional level.** As stated above, local and regional stakeholders include the local authorities, regional assemblies, Local Development Companies, Family Resource Centres, the network of Women's & Traveller Community Development Projects, Public Participation Networks, Local Community Development Committees and other community development organisations.

CWI considers **community development as an essential approach to supporting broad-based stakeholder engagement which supports the inclusion of marginalised and disadvantaged communities.** As stated above, the NIP should reference and complement the Government's (2015) Framework Policy for Local and Community Development. Furthermore, **resources and supports should be made available for community development workers to engage excluded and marginalised groups, ensuring all voices are heard and no one is left behind in the domestic implementation of the SDGs.**

Communications and awareness raising

CWI believes that communications and awareness raising around the SDGs must seek to catalyse a societal shift in values and action. The SDGs present an important opportunity to bring about transformative action for equality, justice and sustainability which is rooted in local in communities. For this transition to be successful, it must begin (as Eleanor Roosevelt said of human rights) "in small places, close to home".

We suggest that communications and awareness raising needs to move beyond 'one size fits all' ideas of marketing campaigns and nationally developed toolkits. **The NIP should include a commitment to giving communities the knowledge, skills and resources to respond to their needs locally in the implementation of the SDGs.**

Therefore, CWI believes that all communication and awareness raising initiatives should be based on three principles:

1. **Address barriers to participation** for marginalised and disadvantaged groups to ensure an inclusive and cohesive engagement
2. **Linking awareness raising efforts with existing community development and local participation structures** including local partnerships and development companies, public participation networks and Traveller projects.
3. **Explore and test out innovative community development approaches** to move from awareness into dialogue and action. E.g.: local communities could be supported to deliberately develop "Community SDG Action Plans" which enables them to take ownership of and drive the SDG agenda domestically.