

**CWI Submission to the Sustainable  
Development Goals: Irish National  
Implement Plan**





Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

*CWI work is supported by the Scheme to Support National  
Organisations funded by the government of Ireland through the  
Department of Rural and Community Development*



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# Community Work Ireland

Established in 1981<sup>i</sup> Community Work Ireland is the national organisation that promotes and supports community work/community development as a means of addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality. CWI is a membership organisation comprising over 800 individuals and organisations that support community work/community development and work with the most disadvantaged communities throughout Ireland. For over 35 years, Community Work Ireland has played an important role in working to advance policy and programmes that meet the real and pressing needs of disadvantaged communities seeking to ensure the meaningful participation of communities in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Members provide the CWI mandate, and it is through them that CWI strategies and priorities are identified.

Specifically, the work of Community Work Ireland involves:

- Information provision to members on relevant policy and programme development.
- Organisation of seminars, conferences and other opportunities for learning and networking.
- Supporting government policy-making through submissions on relevant policy and programmes and engagement in fora and consultative processes on behalf of our members.
- Research on issues of relevance to community work.
- Development of professional standards for community work practice.
- Training and capacity building.
- Production of tools and resources to support community development organisations and those charged with responsibility for community development in their work.
- Community Work Ireland acts as the Secretariat and convenor of the All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training.

Nationally, CWI participates as an active member of the Community Platform<sup>ii</sup> and through the Platform in the Community and Voluntary Pillar<sup>iii</sup> and represents the Community Platform on the Department of Justice and Equality oversight group for the National Strategy for Women and Girls. CWI participates on the Department of Rural and Community Developments Cross Sectoral Group which produced and supports the implementation of ***Sustainable Inclusive and Empowered Communities: a 5-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland.***

Nationally CWI is a member of Coalition 2030: the SDG Coalition, the European Network against Racism Ireland<sup>iv</sup>, , the Far-Right Observatory, and the National Women’s Council of Ireland<sup>v</sup>. Internationally, CWI is the Irish representative on the European Community Development Network<sup>vi</sup> and the International Association for Community Development<sup>vii</sup>.

**In addition to our own brief submission, Community Work Ireland supports the submission from Coalition 2030**

# CWI Submission to the Sustainable Development Goals: Irish National Implement Plan

It is our intention to keep this phase of our interaction with the consultation phase for the development of the Sustainable Development Goals: Irish National Implement Plan brief, with a view to deepening engagement as the consultation process progresses.

The key points that we would like to make are contextualised by Objective 8 in *Sustainable Inclusive and Empowered Communities: a 5-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland* that aims to:

**Strengthen and build understanding and capacity to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals**

The points are informed by CWI members and by our work with the SDG NGO Coalition.

## Key Points

### Review

CWI believes that a root and branch review of the impact of the current NIP is imperative. We believe that the NIP has had little impact, focusing as it does on awareness raising.

### Consultation Process

The current phase of the consultation process is questionable. The stated focus on ‘citizens’ excludes those living in Ireland but do not have citizenship status., This is particularly important given that the SDGs are global and equally apply to migrants and those that are displaced and is contrary to the Leave No One Behind principle. For that reason, CWI has informed but not encouraged our members to complete the survey.

### Progress Urgency

There is an urgent need for Ireland to make progress on the SDGs. We are aware that for reasons associated with the pandemic, little has been done over the past 18 months and we welcome the fact that the section within the Department now has new personnel, and we believe that it is imperative that this be accompanied by a reinvigorated focus on the goals.

### Engagement and Accountability

It is with regret that we note that the National Stakeholder Forum has not met for two years. While the pandemic might be used as a reason for this, our collective experience using online platforms suggests there is no excuse for this. There must be a renewed focus on opportunities for civil society to engage with, and critique where necessary, the ongoing SDG work.

## Interconnectedness

The strength of the SDGs is in their coherence and their interconnectedness. Questions contained in the online survey such as *Which would you rate as the top five most important goals to you, with one being the highest priority?* are extremely unhelpful and may be misleading. While concerns in relation to climate are likely to feature near the top of the priority list, it is critical that the goals are viewed as a collective so that climate action is tempered with the goals focused on socioeconomic disadvantage and lead to a more comprehensive view on action for climate justice.

## Using the Goals

There is an equally urgent need to move from a focus on awareness raising to utility. We are aware from consulting with our members that there are few resources or capacity building opportunities that go beyond building awareness of the goals. The new plan should facilitate the SDGs to have a tangible impact and support social, economic and environmental justice. The SDGs should be a framework for planning and drive visionary action rather than retroactively labelling existing work. There needs to be a concerted effort to produce resource to support members of the public and civil service and members of the community sector to use the goals as a planning framework and associated training opportunities.

## Policy Coherence

The ambitions in relation to policy coherence have been largely unmet, with many policies published since the NIP mentioning the SDGs at best, with few examples of any coherence or alignment. This is the case at national as well as local level, where many CWI members are struggling with advocating for the SDGs to be embedded into local plans – City/County Development Plans, Local Economic and Community Plans.

## SMART

The NIP must be SMART and include tangible, time bound targets, with a named senior person associated with each, as is the case for the *Pathways to Social Inclusion* strategy.

## Leave No One Behind

The *Leave No One Behind* principle should underpin all the actions in the new NIP. The priority should be on the groups protected by the Public Sector Duty, that includes the nine grounds of the Equality Legislation and a socioeconomic disadvantage ground. The plan should establish a framework to hold Duty Bearers to account for not delivering on the goals. The actions within the plan should relate to the targets and indicators of the goals and move beyond awareness raising to implementation.

## Funding

Government funding should be contingent on applicants' ability to make progress on the SDGs as appropriate for their area of work. An example of how this might be used can be found in the application

process for the new Pilot Community Development Programme, where applicants were asked to demonstrate how their project aligned with the SDGs and were scored accordingly.

In relation to implementation and accountability, CWI believes that a cross sectoral group, similar to that that developed and is now charged with the implementation of *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities*, should be established with membership from across a range of government departments, local government and civil society. The meetings of the National Stakeholder Forum must act as a mechanism for accountability to civil society and ultimately the state on progress.

## 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' and Traveller Community Development Projects, Public Participation Networks, Local Community Development Committees and other community development organisations.

**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.**

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## 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.

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<sup>i</sup> As the Community Worker’s Co-operative

<sup>ii</sup> The Community Platform is a network of 28 of the main national organisations working to address poverty, social exclusion, and inequality. Our objectives are to facilitate solidarity amongst the organisations involved, organise community sector participation in partnership arrangements with the State, and establish a critical voice for equality, rights and anti-poverty interests at a national level.

<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.esr.ie/ESR\\_papers/vol37\\_3/03%20Larragy.pdf](http://www.esr.ie/ESR_papers/vol37_3/03%20Larragy.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> <http://enarireland.org/>

<sup>v</sup> [www.nwci.ie](http://www.nwci.ie)

<sup>vi</sup> <http://eucdn.net/>

<sup>vii</sup> <http://www.iacdglobal.org/>