



CIVIL SOCIETY STUDY GROUP

Linking the local with the  
global: Ireland-based CSOs  
address development issues

19.02.20 | Trinity College Dublin

# SUMMARY DOCUMENT

## EVENT DETAILS

The Civil Society Study Group workshop was held at Trinity College Dublin between 2-5pm on February 19th, 2020. The purpose of the workshop was:

- to consider examples and evidence of good practice from Ireland-based civil society organisation sector which can be used globally to showcase types of local community-led engagement in climate action, poverty and migration issues;
- to bring the One World One Future vision of Irish Aid into conversation with CSOs in Ireland.

Speakers were from Dundrum Climate Vigil, Welcome Café, Basic Income Ireland, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), AkiDwa and moderators were Dr Laurence Cox, Associate Professor of Sociology at Maynooth, and Dr Galia Chiamak, Associate Professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences.

## OVERVIEW

The workshop began with a welcome and introductions to the discussion towards opening pathways for better understanding of 'what development really means'. The workshop takes its cues from the Irish Aid vision of 'A Better World' (Ireland's policy for international development) with an aim to link the global vision of the new Irish International Development Policy with the Irish context.

*"Building on our national experience, we will work better to harness the collective experience of our public sector to deliver a more effective international development programme, building deeper links between policies at home and abroad"* (2019: iv).

*"A Better World builds on what we have learned and done well, with public support, for more than four decades, confident that the people of our global island take seriously their responsibilities as citizens of the world we all share"* (2019: iv).

The participants had been circulated an outline of what to expect of the workshop. In their presentations the speakers were requested to cover-

- the journey this far,
- showcase good practice,
- difficulties and how these were overcome or in process of overcoming,
- strategies, planning processes,
- advice to others and learnings,
- what works and what does not work.



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## CASE STUDIES SHARED

Welcome Café presented its journey this far (five years) with anecdotes, photographs, and a power point presentation with an aim is to promote interculturalism and social inclusion of people from minority ethnic / migrant / refugee backgrounds within Irish society through café style events which facilitate informal social contact, learning about and celebrating the diverse cultures including Irish which now inhabit Ireland and the complex issues related to migration and finding a home in a new country. In terms of what worked, WC identified the following:

- Good funding which allowed to reimburse performers and presenters and help with travel expenses, helpful when particular ethnic groups are presenting if they can publicise the event within their community,
- Listening to diverse voices including those from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds
- Publicising through Soc Media
- Good quality visuals: posters etc
- Filming

Dr Wendy Cox of Dundrum Climate Vigil (DCV) highlighted how an individual's will and commitment to change can create a movement from simple beginnings to now, a year later where DCV still stands every Friday between 10.15am-11.15am on the Dundrum Main Road, has a weekly newsletter, and participates in all youth-led climate strikes and vigils. The membership has expanded. It is voluntary. The local church has been very supportive.

Prof John Baker traced the history of Basic Income Ireland (BII) to early philosophers such as Thomas Moore, Paine and Mill. Features of basic income are: everyone gets it, no means test, no work requirement, always tax-free, and a guaranteed decent standard of living. In 1986m the European Basic Income Network (BIEN) was established and in 1995 BIEN Ireland begun. An important landmark was in 2008 when the latter hosted the BIEN Congress. Strategies included monthly meetings, annual Forums with CSOs, speakers at conferences, writing articles on the subject in social media, radio talks, and roadshows. In 2011 a new name, a common definition, strategic plan, and core texts were discussed.



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In terms of what worked, Basic Income Ireland identified:

- open participatory practices
- broad church approach but progressive
- accept what people will do
- central set of texts, a formal constitution
- low basic membership fee.

Chief concerns were- reliance on small core group, need for more diversity, how to creatively engage members/supporters, and more effective tools for communications.

Dr Munyi focused on AkidWa as a CSO, the successes and challenges and the future of this migrant association which is also spearheading the issue of female-genital-mutilation nationally and internationally. The role of AkidWa in giving a point of reference and hope to the many migrant women from the African continent initially was discussed as well.

The Migrant Artist Community (MAC), a relatively newer organisation has membership across all the groups present at the workshop. Syrian architect Mohamoud Achour is a leading figure in the MAC which is a point of contact to open up a debate about the inclusion in Irish arts of artists from migrant, refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds including those living in the Direct Provision system.

Community Supported Agriculture is a partnership between a group of people and a farmer. The members receive a share in the CSA when they commit to pay an agreed fee to the farmer for the duration of a season, and in return they get healthy, local food produced using agro-ecological principles. This partnership allows everyone to share both the rewards and also the challenges that our independent farmers face every year.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

This workshop aimed to share evidence-based development practices of local Irish community-based groups with the academia and Irish policy makers to showcase best practice, possible difficulties and how these were overcome as and when they arose.

- **Main challenges** CSOs faced was fluctuating interests and membership. This was not perceived as negative because people are engaged in multiple activities. Quality of time spent with the CSO was deemed more important than number of hours.
- **Participants found value in connecting with each other** through their work and interests. We plan to have the same groups for a second workshop towards the end of the year to see what progress has been made in terms of linking, learning, and working with each other.
- **Raising awareness through dialogue** and reaching out to other CSOs is key to going forward.
- **The role of a single individual's political will and commitment** is at the core of the success of development initiatives.
- **Interesting to note that civil society groups have a good mix of academics and development practitioners**, as well as academics who are development practitioners themselves and have taken initiatives to challenge different forms of inequalities- income, climate, migration, food insecurity etc.
- **The CSA model is a way to self-organise food distribution systems**. This is more than a model to feed you with healthy, local and organic food; it is a commitment, and encourages learning and community engagement. Although CSAs are a relatively new concept in Ireland, they have been thriving in other parts of the world for many years.

## RESOURCES

<https://www.irishaid.ie/media/irishaid/aboutus/abetterworldirelandspolicyforinternationaldevelopment/A-Better-World-Irelands-Policy-for-International-Development.pdf>

<https://www.communitysupportedagriculture.ie>

<https://www.foodture.ie>

<https://www.facebook.com/Migrant-Artist-Community-103278031215598/>

<https://basicincome.ie/>

<https://akidwa.ie/news/>

<https://www.facebook.com/welcomecafedublin/>