



Strategic Plan 2014 - 2016

Context

Ireland has a long history of commitment to international development through conducting research, informing policy and working with vulnerable and disadvantaged communities around the world. Key to moving towards a more just and equal world, based on respect for human rights, is the use of research in a coherent and effective manner to inform and develop policy and practice, which has a real impact on improving the lives of the most vulnerable.

Development studies in Ireland is an active, but sometimes fragmented community, spread across colleges, universities, NGOs and voluntary organisations, often with little or no opportunity to connect with those working in similar areas. DSA Ireland will fill this gap, by providing a platform to bring together researchers, policy-makers and practitioners to share research findings and to facilitate evidence-based policy and practice.

Foundation

Following the 2009 DSA UK and Ireland Conference at the University of Ulster, Coleraine, a group of Irish based members came together to create a focus for development studies in Ireland. This loose network operated as a Study Group of DSA UK and Ireland and thus obtained a subsidy for annual conferences in 2010 (TCD), 2011 (NUIM) and 2012 (DCU) as well as postgraduate training events in 2011 (UL) and 2012 (UCC). A subsidy was also provided in terms of support staff by TIDI (the Trinity International Development Initiative), Trinity College Dublin and the office of Civic and Global Engagement, Dublin City University.

The network held a strategy session in 2011 and decided to formalise its structures and seek Irish Aid support for its consolidation. Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Joe Costello announced support from the Department of Foreign Affairs for the formation of Development Studies Association Ireland at the 2012 annual conference, which also saw the election of a Steering Committee with office holders and the foundation of DSA Ireland as an independent national association representing development studies in Ireland. The appointment of a half time coordinator in 2013 completed the process of formalisation, underpinned by institutional commitments by Trinity College Dublin and Dublin City University.

While still a relatively young organisation, DSA Ireland plans to further develop its capacities and work programmes, based on individual, institutional and organisational membership. It will establish a broad system of alliances across the development sector, to enhance the research capacity and capabilities of the sector. It will consolidate and expand the remit of DSA Ireland to allow it to act as a virtual one-stop-shop for Irish development studies and it will establish a set of key strategic public events including an annual conference, high level policy workshops and research training sessions that meet the needs of its members and provide a space for research dissemination and high quality debate on the key issues of the day in development studies and practice.

Organisational Structure

The Development Studies Association, Ireland is a membership based and membership driven organisation including individual and institutional members. It is an independent all Ireland association with reciprocal membership rights with the DSA (UK).

The Annual General Meeting of DSA Ireland is the sovereign body of the Association, electing the Steering Committee and agreeing to any substantial change in strategy. It elects a Steering Committee, comprising of up to 10 members, who will in turn elect the officers of the Association, namely a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer for a term of two years. These officers can be re-elected for an additional 2-year term, with the exception of the Chair who will only serve for one 2-year term.

DSAI governance will be open to all members. Members should feel they can participate in the steering of the network and structures of the Association will evolve as required. All minutes of meetings will be published on a member's area of the DSA Ireland website, as will the budget and annual financial statement of the organisation.

The management of DSA Ireland rests with the Steering Committee, which will meet on a bi-monthly basis. All members of the Steering Committee carry responsibility for specific briefs or portfolios contributing to the overall strategic development of DSA Ireland and to deliver on its commitments. The Steering Committee can co-opt two further members as required to meet the work commitments of the Association. The DSAI Steering Committee actively welcomes engagement by the membership and all ideas and initiatives that contribute to advancing the vision, mission and goals of the Association.

In between Steering Committee meetings, day to day management will rest with a Secretariat comprising of the DSA Ireland Officers (Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) and the Coordinator. If urgent decisions are required an electronic poll will involve the Steering Committee. Its work will, at all times, be guided by the strategy of the Association.

Vision

The **vision** of DSA Ireland is the creation of a vibrant and innovative development studies community, which will focus on cutting edge research, led by Irish research institutions, contributing to the reduction of poverty, inequality and vulnerability in the world.

Mission

The **mission** of DSA Ireland is to provide a national platform, which provides an open and participatory space for dialogue between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners, who have an interest in, or are working in the area of international development. We will achieve this by:

- supporting cohesion and capacity-building in the development studies sector;
- promoting strategic alliances and partnerships to grow the development studies sector;
- harnessing research which supports and promotes coherent evidence- based development policy and practice aimed at the reduction of global poverty, the enhancement of all forms of equality and respect for human rights.

Values

DSA Ireland's **values** are:

- The focus of development research on the overarching goal of human betterment and poverty reduction;
- Development research as Southern driven, particularly in terms of setting the research agenda;
- Development research to encourage the empowerment of women in setting the development agenda and in its implementation;
- Development research should always respect individuals and communities;
- Development research should seek to be as participatory as possible and be wary of unduly raising expectations;
- Development research should always seek to be as reflexive and self-critical as possible, bearing in mind the importance of positionality;
- Development research to work through partnerships with communities and agencies while fully respecting their independence and the integrity of the research ;
- As with all research, development research must guard against anything that may cause harm to respondents and make sure their rights in regards to data and confidentiality are respected;
- Development research should be translational, that is geared towards the practical needs of social transformation, providing clear and accessible guides to action

Key Objectives

In order to achieve our **mission** we will focus on the following **key objectives**:

- generate critical debate and rich, well informed perspectives on development issues;
- identify critical gaps in the knowledge of development and challenges;
- stimulate researchers to work collaboratively to gather, create and share knowledge in these spaces;
- promote high-quality interdisciplinary research on development-related issues among research partners in Ireland (specifically HEIs and NGOs),
- inform national policies on development through linking research, policy and practice,
- promote a meaningful platform for sustained dialogue across the development studies 'constituency'.