

THE LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND CONVERSATIONS



WALKING THE TALK OF THE LEAVE
NO ONE BEHIND PROMISE



WORKING PAPER - OCTOBER 2018

A PROJECT BY ALL TOGETHER IN DIGNITY
SUPPORTED BY CONCERN WORLDWIDE



1 PROMISE

17 GLOBAL GOALS

12 YEARS LEFT

193 COUNTRIES

7,700,000,000 PEOPLE

15 CONVERSATIONS

10 ORGANISATIONS

1 PROJECT PATRON

6 MONTHS

3 QUESTIONS

4 COUNTIES

110 PARTICIPANTS

6 THEMES

10 RECOMMENDATIONS





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FOREWORD

THE 'LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND' AGENDA SPEAKS TO THE VERY CORE OF HUMANITY

I am proud of the role played by my country in brokering the global agreement in 2015 on the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The clarion call for this new Agenda is the pledge made by world leaders that, as they set out on the road towards the achievement of all seventeen SDGs by 2030, they would 'Leave No One Behind'. Furthermore, they would endeavour to 'reach the furthest behind first'. What did they mean by this? They meant that, as the world moved to implement this vast new agenda of unprecedented ambition, the needs of the poorest, the most disadvantaged and the most vulnerable in all our societies would be front and centre. These needs would receive top priority - and a clear hint was given that they would also receive immediate priority.



This was a solemn pledge made by the Heads of State or Government of all 193 member States of the United Nations. Never before had the needs of the most marginalised people across the world attracted such explicit and powerful support. At the beginning of the Declaration which launched the new Goals and targets, world leaders spelled out their intentions. They said that they wished to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples 'and for all segments of society'. They made clear that they would not consider the Goals and targets met unless these were met for everyone. And they also indicated some of the groups - by no means an exhaustive list - whom they considered particularly vulnerable.

None of this was predictable before the new Agenda was negotiated. Indeed, while the merits of a focus on the poorest and most vulnerable might be obvious from a moral standpoint, it was uncertain whether my Kenyan colleague and I would secure the necessary support for it in the negotiations. Some developing countries feared that they would not get the resources needed to implement the commitment. Other groups of countries, negotiating a universal Agenda which would span all three dimensions of sustainable development, preferred to give priority to other challenges. Some had reservations about singling out any aspect, however deserving. But in the end, under Irish and Kenyan leadership, the commitments relating to Leaving No One Behind were included - and, indeed, given primacy.

The 'Leaving No One Behind' agenda is more than just an anti-poverty agenda. It speaks to the very core of humanity. If we are truly serious about bringing about a just and equal world, we must

transform the circumstances in which our most vulnerable and disadvantaged fellow human beings live. It is no use making progress on other parts of the Agenda if those with the greatest needs remain on the sidelines.

Three years into the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, one would like to see clearer recognition of this as a priority. Governments should be analysing systematically the effect of their policies, whether in their own countries or elsewhere, on those who have been 'left behind'. Which groups are at greatest risk of being left behind? What are the key contributory factors? What proactive measures may need to be taken to achieve social inclusion for these groups and individuals? Those 'left behind' are on the lowest rung of society and are often the hardest to reach. **Governments should be considering carefully the interconnections between different policy sectors, how actions taken under one heading can have an effect (sometimes positive but frequently negative) on the lives and livelihoods of these who are worst off and most excluded.** The 2030 Agenda sets out integrated Goals and targets. Only if these are considered holistically have we a chance of achieving the deep transformations which are needed. And nowhere does this apply more than in the work required to reach, and rescue, those who have been left furthest behind.

There are many challenges. We need to develop high-quality disaggregated data which will help to pinpoint where the greatest effort is needed. We need to mobilise financial and other resources to target and assist those in greatest need. We need to build greater political momentum behind the Leaving No One Behind Agenda. While there may be hostility in some quarters towards UN agreements and multilateral diplomacy, most countries continue to see international cooperation as the only sensible way to tackle global challenges. There will be an opportunity to lend fresh impetus to the Leaving No One commitment at a meeting of the UN's High Level Political Forum at summit level, scheduled for New York in September 2019, which will give overall strategic direction on the implementation of the SDGs.

The commitments made by world leaders three years ago to 'Leave No One Behind' and to try to 'reach the furthest behind first' were a crucial part of the general ambition set out in the 2030 Agenda to end extreme poverty and ensure equality of treatment within and between countries. The gaps between the haves and the have-nots are enormous. Early action is essential if there is to be any hope of reducing, let alone, eliminating these gaps. The first few years of the SDGs were always recognised as the critical period; deferring these challenges to later in the implementation period could allow the gaps to widen to a point where catch-up becomes impossible. While recognising the constraints of a voluntary agenda, Governments should still be encouraged to indicate how they see the commitment to leaving no one behind being met, both domestically and internationally. If tangible results are not demonstrated for this agenda within the next couple of years, the credibility of the entire Sustainable Development Goals will be at stake.

That is why I welcome the wonderful initiative taken by ATD in Ireland to raise public awareness and promote greater understanding of the Leaving No One Behind commitment. It is a great honour for me to be the patron of ATD's Leaving No One Behind Conversations series, which has helped to ensure that this central imperative of the 2030 Agenda gets the support which it so richly deserves.

David Donoghue

Former Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations (2013-17) and co-facilitator of the UN negotiations which delivered the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

CONVERSATIONS NEEDED FOR A TRANSFORMATION



“As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognizing the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.”

Preamble of the Agenda 2030 Resolution A/RES/70/1 of the General Assembly, UN 2015

“Leave No One Behind” is a central principle of the Agenda 2030 Goals and we are, above all else, called upon to re-forge a commitment to the inherent and universal dignity of every member of the human family.

President Michael D. Higgins, UN End Poverty Day, 17th October 2015

Can we walk the talk of the “Leave No One Behind” Promise? How can this transformative promise guide and be translated into concrete policy and systemic transformation?

Will the courageous “Leave No One Behind” principle gained by negotiators and civil society at the beginning of 2015 and subsequently proclaimed on 25th September 2015 at the United Nations, be more than a rallying call for a few informed stakeholders?

Can the collective promise generate a real empowered grass root movement for those left behind today or at risk of being left behind tomorrow?

The “Leave No One Behind Conversations” emerged out of this desire to both raise awareness, and involve people from a variety of backgrounds, in the drive to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and The Promise it contains.

2015 was a historic year for the global community, and for Ireland especially, as it saw the Irish government play a leading role in the process which created and delivered these international commitments. This United Nations’ document, Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which all 193 countries have signed up to, pledges to achieve the agreed Seventeen SDGs by 2030. These cross-cutting goals cover issues such as poverty, gender equality, climate action, sustainable cities and communities, economic growth, health and education and much more. The Agenda is undoubtedly ambitious, aiming to eradicate poverty and guarantee a sustainable future for people and the planet within a limited period of time.

The contention has been made, however, that the most important and transformative feature of the Agenda is the Promise to “Leave No One Behind”, and “Reach the Furthest Behind First”. The

inclusion of this pledge within the Agenda means that no Goal will be considered to have been achieved unless it has been met by everyone. This requires putting the needs and interests of the furthest behind members of society first. In order to truly “Leave No One Behind”, governments will need to make definitive policy changes which tackle inequality and exclusion.

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, All Together in Dignity (ATD) Ireland has been involved in a number of actions to promote the SDGs and the Leave No One Behind Promise.

This involvement was not new. A key identifying feature of the International Movement ATD Fourth World is to involve “hard to reach” and marginalised citizens in sustainable development projects. The central focus of ATD’s 2013-2018 plan of work was: ‘Reaching Out to Those Whose Contribution Is Missing’ (see inside back cover page). It was a new way to adhere to ATD’s long lasting commitment.

In the 1970s, ATD International was already coining the concept of “creaming the poor”—where social programmes fail to reach those in deepest poverty, but rather skim the easiest to reach off the top, to then claim success. Later in the 1980s, ATD collaborated with UNICEF to produce the “Reaching the Poorest” report. This work served to bring this issue to the fore of UNICEF’s thinking, and ultimately convinced it to abandon its goal of reaching 80% of children globally, and instead to reach out to the 20% hardest to reach.

ATD’s advocacy work at the United Nations during the preparation of the 2030 Agenda had the same focus. Participatory action research carried out from early 2011 to late 2013 gathered over 2,000 people in 22 northern and southern countries. Together they evaluated the impact of the Millennium Development Goals on the poorest communities. With the support of the Social Watch network and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the learnings of this research were discussed at the United Nations in June 2013 and the report “Towards a Sustainable Development that Leaves No One Behind: Challenge 2015” was published in April 2014. With ITUC and Social Watch, ATD believes that this input into the Agenda 2030 preparation contributed to securing the introduction of the promise in the 2015 UN agreement.

ATD Ireland is one of the smallest community groups of the larger ATD family. Yet we decided to take our share of the “walk the talk” challenge. In 2018 ATD teamed up with Concern Worldwide to launch the “Leave No One Behind Conversations” Series. Work began with the construction of the website, leavenoonebehind.ie and the design of the project leaflet, which is also available online.

The project was officially launched by Project Patron David Donoghue, who, alongside Kenyan Ambassador Machiara Kamau, was one of the co-facilitators of the negotiations which led to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. The launch took place during the Sustainable Ireland Conference in Croke Park on the 17th April 2018. The first Conversation was held in ATD office’s in Mountjoy Square in early May. It was a great success and from there ATD embarked on a Conversation journey that took us across the country, from Dublin to Kildare, to Longford and Donegal, and back again. Groups were visited in family resource centres, community groups, universities, and community training and development programmes, among others.

Each Conversation began with an introduction to the SDGs and the Leave No One Behind Promise. The discussions then centred around three main questions:

?

1. **“WHAT COMES INTO YOUR MIND WHEN YOU HEAR THE PHRASE ‘LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND’?”;**
2. **“DO YOU THINK IT’S POSSIBLE TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND AND WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES INVOLVED IN THIS?”;**
3. **AND FINALLY, “WHAT STEPS CAN WE TAKE IN OUR OWN LIVES AND COMMUNITIES TO ENSURE THAT THE PROMISE IS FULFILLED?”**

Different groups focussed on issues related to goals that they felt were important. Topics covered spanned everything from the rural urban divide and mental health, to homelessness and education, and everything in between. As ATD visited different groups throughout the country, it became clear that, while the 2030 Agenda was something which people found engaging, there was a sense of frustration concerning the lack of public awareness surrounding such a momentous agreement. People were eager to learn about the SDGs and the accompanying Promise, but there was a definite feeling that they wanted to explore the arising issues further.

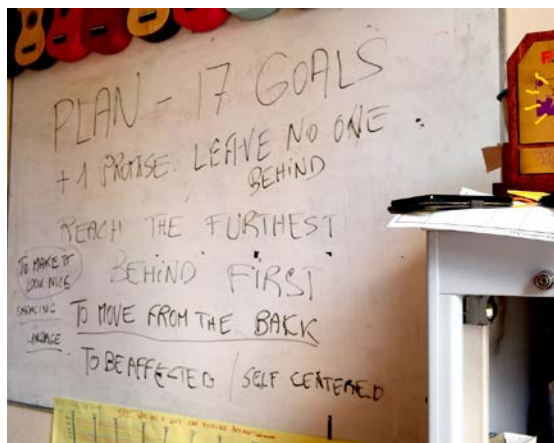
Each of the conversations were recorded and later transcribed by ATD team members. The transcripts were analysed and compared according to the questions posed and the themes which had emerged in response to them. The findings have been compiled in this booklet to be launched during the inaugural Leave No One Behind Summit on the 16th October 2018, UN Zero Hunger Day.

“

“WHY IS IT NOT MAINSTREAM MEDIA AT THIS STAGE? BECAUSE YOU’RE SAYING IT’S [THE SDGS] THREE YEARS IN? IS IT BECAUSE THEY DON’T WANT TO INFORM US AS A WHOLE COMMUNITY, AS AN IRELAND COMMUNITY? BECAUSE I DIDN’T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT IT UNTIL RECENTLY, AND I LOOKED AT THESE AND I WAS LIKE, THEY’RE VERY INTERESTING YOU KNOW BUT I HADN’T SEEN IT BEFORE.”

To inform and enrich the dialogue, ATD Ireland invited key civil society Agenda 2030 stakeholders to have their say in the conversations. As such, this working paper includes contributions prepared by Dr. Sean Healy (Social Justice Ireland) and by a Dochas working group. It further presents an account prepared by ATD of the 'Leave No One Behind Conversations' which took place during the 2018 United Nations' annual Summit, reviewing progress of the global implementation of Agenda 2030. A final paper on the role of volunteering in the implementation of the promise has also been prepared by ATD Ireland as an invitation to discuss the subject in depth and in an on-going conversation.

ATD believe that much can be learned from the analysis and accounts within this working paper, however, much remains to be discussed, and Conversations such as these must continue if we are to be successful in achieving the Goals and keeping the promise by 2030.



LISTENING TO THE CONVERSATIONS

WHAT THE PARTICIPANTS TOLD US



Addressing Question One: “What comes into your mind when you hear the phrase ‘Leave No One Behind’?”



WORDS THAT COME TO MIND



Addressing Question One: “What comes into your mind when you hear the phrase ‘Leave No One Behind’?” All the words and sentences from the participants

MILITARY	Help them along	Close the holes in society	Human rights are respected
Not letting people trail away	STARTING FROM THE BOTTOM	It's words with power and action	Everyone should have an equal chance
Make hope for people	Pick them up	INVOLVEMENT	You don't leave your mate behind you
Get involved. Make sure you vote.	A song by Bruce Springsteen, Wait for Me	If they're lagging behind, wait for them	Treat everyone as equal
Get everybody involved	The gap between rich and poor is too much	Going at the same pace	A warm feeling
TOGETHERNESS	Education on the values of life	ALTOGETHER	Everybody should be involved together
It's the easiest option	People have to want to be helped	Why have we normalised this?	Everybody should get chances to get help
Make sure no one is pushed aside	Homelessness in Ireland	We're all in this together	INCLUSIVE
Can it be delivered?	INSPIRATIONAL	Aspirational	Recognise the intersectional nature of issues

Know your population and find ways to communicate	EDUCATION	We're all equal	All stand together
Don't leave anybody	HELPING SOMEONE	Look after the poor and homeless	Always be there to help
SHARE THE BOUNTY	Leave No One Behind, no matter who it is	Walk together as one united	Money doesn't bring happiness
Everyone is equal	I think of a disabled person who can't make it up steps because there is no ramp	CARING FOR OTHERS	If you see someone struggling, help them
A brotherhood or sisterhood that leaves nobody behind	PUT FACES TO THE VOICES	Speak to those furthest behind first to understand them	Leaving kids behind in school destroys their confidence
Respect for people regardless of where they are at	MISSING GENERATION	People who have mental health issues	State benefit isn't sufficient to buy all the things they are told they should have
Transport	Infrastructure	JOBS	Industry
Emigration	Health	Education	YOUTH FACILITIES
Nothing new	Labels we've seen in the media, nothing ever comes of it	Inclusion	Reducing isolation
Challenges in Keeping the Promise	Breakdown of what was the family support system	Need for compassionate and non-judgemental supports	Entitled to live a life well
Transport	Jobs	HEALTH	Education

CHALLENGES IN KEEPING THE PROMISE



Addressing Question Two: “Do you think it’s possible to Leave No One Behind and what are the challenges involved in this?”

In total, six key themes were identified from the conversations which took place. The following sections provide a brief analysis of these issues, whilst also incorporating the voices of participants into the presentation.

The six themes are:

- 1) Political Life and Engagement;
- 2) Supports and Services Needed;
- 3) Inequalities and Divisions within Society;
- 4) Poverty and Homelessness;
- 5) Education;
- 6) Mental Health and Addiction.



1. POLITICAL LIFE AND ENGAGEMENT

Within the groups visited during the Leave No One Behind Conversations, possibly the issue most frequently raised when asked, “What Challenges do you Envision in Keeping the Promise?”, was the matter of politics.

Policies

Participants in Dublin spoke of how they felt that there existed a concerted policy in relation to certain communities regarding how they may be policed, or prevented from improving their situation. It was highlighted how, oftentimes, people living within marginalised communities may have worthwhile ideas about how to make life better in these areas, but that these suggestions are deemed insignificant in comparison to predetermined government policy; policies which were designed to secure votes, but not necessarily to make long-term improvements in people’s lives.

“I SAT IN MEETINGS YEARS AGO IN RELATION TO DRUG SERVICES AND POVERTY AND IT WAS ABOUT HOW DO WE WORK TOGETHER, WHAT’S THE BEST PRACTICE, HOW DO WE INCLUDE PEOPLE?... NOW TODAY WE TALK ABOUT EMPLOYMENT AND HOW DO WE BRING MONEY IN. IN SOME WAYS WE HAVE LOST SIGHT OF THE BIGGER PICTURE.”

“I know communities that are policed and nothing else, just like “contain what’s going on”, which tells me that policy is being directed that way.”

While it was acknowledged that policies, red tape, and generating statistics can be useful for organisations, there is a risk that the human reality behind the facts and figures may be lost. This linked to a discussion regarding the professionalisation of sectors, and how this can lead to a loss of human experience and interaction between individuals who are distracted trying to ascertain who the ideal professional is to deal with a certain situation.

“I sat in meetings years ago in relation to drug services and poverty and it was about how do we work together, what’s the best practice, how do we include people?... Now today we talk about employment and how do we bring money in. In some ways we have lost sight of the bigger picture.”

Poverty

Poverty was discussed as an absence of political decision-making. Some groups discussed how successive governments have failed to encourage and protect people, and that this has contributed to maintaining the status quo in relation to deprivation. The example was given of government subsidising private accommodation, despite the fact that the property may be sub-standard. In such a situation, people may be fearful of speaking out and demanding adequate conditions owing to concern of being ‘punished’.

“I had a man in here... He was looking for accommodation, and he came back in and he said “I wouldn’t put a dog in that accommodation”. Because what they showed him was terrible, and yet this landlord is getting money from the state for this sub-standard place... I don’t think that they should be giving any money out to any landlord without checking out where it’s going. It’s a misuse of public funds.”

Governments have created a situation where people have become dependent upon services, to the detriment of their independence and ability to progress within society. Apart from the fact that this could be viewed as a continuous misuse of public funds, this failure to assist people in reaching their full potential offers glaring proof of government’s inability to protect and nurture citizens.

Further to this, it was acknowledged that many politicians perhaps have little or no understanding of the reality of life for people with an experience of poverty, and as such should not be in a position to dictate the course of their lives.

"Not understanding, and not having any experience of poverty and what it's like to live there, and what it's like to live in despair..... They just look down with sheer arrogance."

Short-term planning

The fact that politicians frequently only speak about their short-term plans was also stressed. The homeless crisis was often referenced, with participants surmising that an injection of focused funding in order to get people off the street and establish stable living arrangements, was of vital importance. The validity of this approach was stressed, as opposed to the current frivolous allocation of funds which reinforce short-term solutions, such as emergency accommodation, which only serves to perpetuate the current cycles of homelessness, poverty, addiction, and other manifestations of disadvantage. In one of the workshops, the reality of the present situation was summed up well:

"At this moment in time this is a dream, until even one of them starts becoming a reality."

In areas such as Donegal, participants expressed concerns regarding Brexit and the threat of violence if there was to be a hard-border reinstated. In addition to this, there is a fear that cross-border funding for different initiatives will be discontinued, leaving well-established projects in precarious positions where they may be unable to secure their main funding.

"If everything goes belly-up after Brexit, we're going to be in bother when that sort of money stops coming. And that's my fear, that into the future they will cut the money for things that they're supporting at the minute."

Good leadership

The quality of leadership offered by politicians was raised. Some felt that nowadays good leadership cannot be found anywhere in the world. Participants of different nationalities also supported this in reference to their home countries, describing how more affluent members of society are neither prepared personally, nor motivated by the authorities, to try and improve the lives of those less advantaged. A general mistrust of politicians was voiced, with people expressing a feeling that they were only told as much as politicians were willing to let them know in order to keep them happy. There was also a reluctance to expect politicians to follow through on any commitments given. Some suggested that this disillusionment with the political system may lead to apathy, which in turn moves people further away from acting to change the reality of the situation.

"There needs to be more accountability... I wonder if a politician came in here today and made a promise and you took a video of him and played it back to him in two years' time... I wonder how many of them would have come true?"

“AS A CITIZEN LIVING IN A RURAL COMMUNITY I DON'T THINK THE GOVERNMENT IS SUPPORTING US ENOUGH. WITH TRANSPORT, WITH FACILITIES, WITH SERVICES, WHERE OUR YOUTH, OUR ELDERLY ARE CONCERNED AS WELL.”

It was emphasized that politicians need to be accountable for their shortcomings, but that there are significant challenges attached to achieving this. Politicians themselves have to be encouraged to be more accessible to the people they are representing, rather than ignoring their difficulties or pushing them down their list of priorities. People seemed to agree that this situation is not going to change by itself, but that public pressure will be required in order to see any progression.

“As a citizen living in a rural community I don't think the government is supporting us enough. With transport, with facilities, with services, where our youth, our elderly are concerned as well.”

Start moving towards Leaving No One Behind

Some expressed skepticism about the government taking definitive steps towards reaching the promise to Leave No One Behind, particularly given that three years have passed since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. However, participants in Donegal believed that in order to ensure no one is left behind, partnerships between different institutions within the state are key.

“The people who are being left behind are falling through the cracks because there isn't enough of a network.”

A selection of participants believed that the 2030 Agenda and its accompanying Promise served merely as a PR stunt, and an opportunity for the government to appear at the UN to be invested in its realisation. Furthermore, there were a number of participants who mused over the possibility that Leave No One Behind is not a genuine aspiration of governments and other relevant institutions, but that there exist certain industries which are dependent for their survival upon certain people being left behind by society.

“Imagine if no one was left behind, and everyone was equal like, what way the place would be. Because I can tell you straight off the bat that treatment centres would be shut down, prisons, there wouldn't be any prisons, the guards, half of them we wouldn't need them, GPs, mental health, the whole lot. If everyone was the same and treated the same, you wouldn't need half of them. And look at what, in particular, what sort of personnel in society are in those positions, and I'd say 90% of them are selected like, upper class areas, so like I think it makes more sense in people's eyes, in government and that, to keep it the way it is”.



2. SUPPORTS AND SERVICES NEEDED

A key issue arising throughout the course of the Conversations referred to the lack of services across various communities, identifying the different services and supports which people believed would have a positive effect, if introduced, on moving towards achieving The Promise by 2030.

Stepping stones

Groups in different areas around the country reported an absence of industry, infrastructure (public transports for instance), and employment in their areas, and emphasised how, if local initiatives such as these were to receive support from the government and local authorities, the positive impacts on the community would be significant. Additionally, people described how they felt, through their own experience, that there was a lack of adequate supports rooted directly within communities. Supports such as these would offer the possibility of disadvantaged people being able to develop stronger links with local supports and services.

“To have something, an actual springboard, in the community. So you can run up and jump on that, and bounce into where you want to go... You'd need supports, you'd need partnerships, and networks, but I believe it could be done.”

In conjunction with this, certain groups voiced the opinion that marginalised people must be motivated and incentivised to come and avail of the services on offer within their communities. Some participants spoke about elderly people and the importance of encouraging them to be active for as long as possible, as well as the importance of ensuring that there are links through which they can be connected with their community to avoid isolation, an issue which is increasingly prevalent amongst older generations. Others described how anyone, irrespective of age, can feel isolated and disillusioned to a point where they cannot see any benefit to using certain services.

“There was an out of pocket expense paid to people coming to do a course... We had the recession... And the out of pocket expenses was no more. You should be privileged to come out and do a course. The people who are marginalised don't see that privilege. They saw the carrot... But they stayed because they built what we're talking about here... I want it returned for marginalised communities.”

“TO HAVE SOMETHING, AN ACTUAL SPRINGBOARD, IN THE COMMUNITY. SO YOU CAN RUN UP AND JUMP ON THAT, AND BOUNCE INTO WHERE YOU WANT TO GO... YOU'D NEED SUPPORTS, YOU'D NEED PARTNERSHIPS, AND NETWORKS, BUT I BELIEVE IT COULD BE DONE.”

Targeting the root of the problem

Some participants commented that what was required of all services was an approach which is not focused solely on treating a problem, but also on combatting its root causes, in order to precipitate meaningful change in the long-term. Groups talked about how the existence of worthwhile supports can provide people with peace of mind and have a beneficial influence on their self-worth; and how these can possibly have positive knock-on impacts in terms of suicide prevention, for example. Supporting people throughout the course of their life, and not only during times of crisis is imperative in terms of minimising the development of extreme situations.

“We attack the tooth. My brother was being attacked when it's the gum that's infected. The problem was the one who had the money, my mother. My contention is that poverty shouldn't be here, attack the source of it.”

Others spoke of the absence of hope which has developed over time as people's expectations have dwindled in the face of declining supports. It was described how those who have perhaps committed suicide, or are homeless, or are living in direct provision, have all lost hope, and that there is a responsibility now to try and restore this, particularly through the provision of a wide-ranging variety of interconnected supports and services. The development of networks and partnerships between different services is crucial to ensuring that no one is left behind or allowed fall through the cracks.

Equality

The matter of inequality between individuals in terms of the different types of supports which they have access to, was also highlighted. Some spoke about the wealthiest 10% of people globally, and their unwillingness to redistribute their significant amounts of disposable income for the betterment of other members of society. Increasing taxes on individuals such as these would generate considerable funds which the government could then invest in both new and existing supports to benefit society at large. Similarly, the matter of the urban-rural divide was highlighted, particularly in Donegal, with participants describing the different shortcomings which exist in their areas in terms of youth facilities, transport, elderly supports, employment and infrastructure. The lack of transport was raised in particular as an obstacle for all members of the community in terms of accessing services and engaging with other people.

"It's really the young ones I think that are left behind, you know? Because unless the parents can collect them and drop them up, they can't really go anywhere."

Participants spoke about the lack of solidarity within society nowadays, and how this will need to change in order to collectively address issues, such as the gender wage gap or disability allowance for instance, and thereby improve the standards of reliefs available to people. It appeared evident throughout the course of the conversations that people felt they themselves should take responsibility to play an active role within society and demand the installation of particular supports, rather than simply waiting for the authorities to do so. One recommendation which arose in a number of groups was the creation of community forums where people could gather to discuss collectively what supports could help improve life within their area.

"It is possible... If we choose to love each other. Choose to help each other."

Human beings behind the services

A discussion also took place concerning fears people may have about the over-emphasis on 'ticking-boxes', in terms of the preoccupation on administration and determining who is entitled to certain services or supports. In many cases, even existing services find that they are insufficiently supported financially by the State, and that a huge amount of community fundraising is required in order to keep everything afloat. The policies which exist governing these supports leave little or no room for consideration of the human impact of certain rules and regulations.

"One of the people, who is non-verbal, but highly talented... He is in receipt of a disability allowance... He had started making photo frames and little pieces of art and going around to the markets to sell them, and immediately they were told, 'If he's out doing that, then he can't be in your service'. This is a man with huge disadvantage, who has ability but needs nurture, needs shelter. The little bit extra was not about the money he was taking in; it was about how he felt, his motivation, his inner-peace... The policies cannot see that."

Developing upon this, the shortcomings of professional support frameworks as they are currently structured were also analysed. In many cases there can be a high turnover of case workers each year. People can find themselves in a position where they are constantly retelling their story to new case workers, which may have a significant amount of trauma attached to it, thereby essentially re-traumatising the person each time. Continuity in all forms of support lends stability to those availing of said services, which in turn was considered critical in terms of their progression.

“IT SOMETIMES HAPPENS AS WELL THAT “OH, YOU’RE A GREAT HELP, YOU HELPED HERE”, BUT YOU ACTUALLY DIDN’T, AND THE PERSON REALISES, “NO I DIDN’T”, BUT I’M TOLD THAT I HELPED SO... IT’S MORE ABOUT CREATING JOBS FOR PEOPLE, CREATING PLACES TO BE USEFUL FOR PEOPLE, NOT ONLY TELLING THEM THEY ARE...”

Making people feel valued

Participants discussed how in some instances people who find themselves separated from their community have to pay a higher price if they wish to be included. The importance of finding ways of authentically incorporating people into society was stressed, as well as providing services and supports through which this can be achieved so that service users feel genuinely valued. The requirement in this instance is for outlets through which people can feel influential, and that they do not find themselves in a position where others are trying to convince them of their worth, when they themselves do not truly believe it.

“It sometimes happens as well that “oh, you’re a great help, you helped here”, but you actually didn’t, and the person realises, “no I didn’t”, but I’m told that I helped so... It’s more about creating jobs for people, creating places to be useful for people, not only telling them they are...”

It was recognised that there are some people within society who, for many different reasons, are unable to work in any full or part-time job without support. Some people, if they are to work, must do so within an environment which is prepared to offer them the necessary supports. It was concluded that there will always be people with needs such as these, and it is critical that society progresses and develops means by which to fully incorporate these individuals into society.





3. INEQUALITIES AND DIVISIONS WITHIN SOCIETY

A number of challenges regarding inequalities and divisions present within society were highlighted by participants, as well as the tension between individualism and the need for community and sense of belonging.

Increasing imbalances at a global level

A number of participants highlighted the fact that the divide between rich and poor in society is growing. Although people mainly agree that leaving no one behind is the way forward, many expressed scepticism at the achievability of the promise by the year 2030.

"It's a challenge, and I think the conversations are good because this is what we need because it's a warm feeling you get when you hear "Leave No One Behind", and that's only right. But, when you look around the world, you don't see any right, do you? I don't see a right. [...] Because that gap is ever stretching in society. Between people that have and people that have not has grown massively".

A number of participants took the example of the current two-tier health system to highlight the disparities within Irish society.

"You have to have a certain wealth if you want to have quick access to health...Unless they break down some of those barriers and say hang on, everyone should have access to the Swift clinic but they don't. You walk in there; you're just told to go away"

It was further noted how difficult it can be to break down barriers and how inequalities of treatment can go unreported because people can be scared to go forward when they are experiencing discrimination since it could represent a potential risk for their personal situation.

Participants from Donegal stressed the divide between rural and urban areas in terms of access to services, and resources but also information. As one participant said, the national media coverage regarding the existence of the SDGs has not been consistent especially in more isolated areas.



"IT'S A CHALLENGE, AND I THINK THE CONVERSATIONS ARE GOOD BECAUSE THIS IS WHAT WE NEED BECAUSE IT'S A WARM FEELING YOU GET WHEN YOU HEAR "LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND" ...

“LIKE YOU DON'T WANT YOUR CHILD TO BE DIFFERENT SO YOU WILL PAY THE HUNDRED EUROS SO YOUR CHILD DOESN'T COME HOME CRYING TO YOU THAT THEY DON'T HAVE THE RUNNERS THAT ALL THE OTHER KIDS HAVE. YOU WANT YOUR CHILD TO BE NORMAL, YOU WANT YOUR CHILD TO BE LIKE THE REST OF THE KIDS, BECAUSE THEY'RE COMING HOME AND THEY'RE SAYING 'MAMMY THEY HAVE THIS AND I DON'T HAVE IT' ”.

The experience of marginalisation at a local level

People who “don't fit in” or are perceived as different, often don't get included in communities and are not considered when it comes to policies, and having their concerns heard.

Participants commented on the pressure that is put on people, and especially on parents, to provide their children and their families with the same as everybody else. This takes a toll especially in families where resources are scarce, but parents often go the extra mile, sometimes putting their household into debt so that their children can fit in. It can also be experienced as an embarrassment for a parent to admit they can't afford these things for their children.

“Like you don't want your child to be different so you will pay the hundred euros so your child doesn't come home crying to you that they don't have the runners that all the other kids have. You want your child to be normal, you want your child to be like the rest of the kids, because they're coming home and they're saying 'mammy they have this and I don't have it' ”.

Another participant highlighted the fact that people who don't feel like they are part of the community, feel like they have to do or buy certain things to be accepted fully within the community, while people who have this security can have a bit more freedom regarding how they present themselves and their families.

This can be systemic, for instance in Direct Provision centres people are often not allowed to work, or very few hours a week, and it is especially hard when they come out of the centre to go back to a “normal” life and be integrated within a new community.

“There's a massive void, and they [people coming out of Direct Provision] cannot fit in, because they've been hampered, they haven't been allowed in. They haven't been upskilled, haven't been allowed get education, get employment, acquire a little bit of savings, anything. So you could be coming out of an added trauma”.

Individualism and competition

Participants stressed the fact that although there is a drive to be integrated within a community, society is also putting more emphasis on the individual. People are pressured to succeed and are often competing against each other. One participant took the example of Emile Durkheim's theory on organic and mechanical solidarity to exemplify this shift within society.

"Years ago they used mechanical solidarity, they depended on each other, so just say rural Ireland, they depended on each other to work, to get the crops to eat. Nowadays we stand alone and I have to push others down so I can get a better job than them ... I need to be faster, I need to be quicker. And it's that pressure"

Individualism was also identified by participants as one of the challenges for collective action.

"We're conditioned into individuality. I think it's so many different elements in the equation, that makes us believe we should be totally self-sufficient, alone, and not needing any help, you know what I mean? When actually, we're all connected, by so many degrees of separation, but we're all connected. And I think governments, to push certain legislation through that does affect the poor, that does take money out of the community, you know, they're happy to pedal the myth that we don't all need each other, and that you can 'make it on your own'."

This pressure to fit in but at the same time to be self-sufficient, and to present yourself in a positive way all the time, especially on social media, can have a negative impact on mental health, and takes a particular toll on young people.



4. POVERTY AND HOMELESSNESS

Many participants identified 'Goal 1 - No Poverty' as one of the main challenges to the 'Leave No One Behind' promise. A number of those who participated in the workshops have first-hand experience of poverty and social exclusion.

Stigmatisation

One participant highlighted that not only do people living in poverty face discrimination in their everyday lives, they are also blamed or branded as "lazy" for the failure of the system to provide its population with adequate standards of living and amenities.

Public campaigns such as the recent welfare fraud campaign, 'Welfare Cheats Cheat Us All', led by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection contributed to the stigmatisation of people living in poverty by blaming them for their situation.

"So they were giving out the idea that the poor weren't really poor, they were chancers, and if you were poor, then therefore there was blame."

This is not new. As pointed out by participants, this kind of rhetoric has been used by governments for many years.

"That was part of the stigmatisation. People were blamed for poverty. Poverty didn't happen; it was your fault, because you didn't work hard enough".

The imbalance in power dynamics and the necessity to "empower the poor" was emphasised, to empower people that are struggling so that they know their rights, learn to be assertive and pass that onto their children in the hope of breaking the 'cycle of poverty' that is often generational. People who experience poverty often have to prove themselves as they face so many obstacles to access services and employment. Several participants talked about the difficulties in accessing employment because of their address.

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“SO THEY WERE GIVING OUT THE IDEA THAT THE POOR WEREN'T REALLY POOR, THEY WERE CHANCERS, AND IF YOU WERE POOR, THEN THEREFORE THERE WAS BLAME.”

“I THINK IT’S JUST LIKE EXPECTATIONS, WHEN YOU’RE OF A SOCIAL CLASS THAT YOU CAN ACHIEVE WHAT YOU WANT IF YOU’RE OF A CERTAIN SOCIAL CLASS, BUT IF YOU’RE NOT OF THAT CLASS YOUR FAMILY DON’T WORK MAYBE, YOU’RE LEFT BEHIND BECAUSE IT’S JUST NOT EXPECTED FOR YOU, AND YOU DON’T FEEL, WELL, MAYBE, THAT YOU’RE BEING GIVEN THE CHANCE TO DO WHAT OTHERS CAN DO. BECAUSE THE SUPPORTS AREN’T THERE”

Poverty of hope

For people who experience it, poverty leads to low self-esteem and low self-worth. Participants spoke of expectations and how different they can be between people coming from deprived areas and people who grew up in more affluent ones.

“I think it’s just like expectations, when you’re of a social class that you can achieve what you want if you’re of a certain social class, but if you’re not of that class your family don’t work maybe, you’re left behind because it’s just not expected for you, and you don’t feel, well, maybe, that you’re being given the chance to do what others can do. Because the supports aren’t there”

Poverty is not only lack of financial means. Lack of opportunities within deprived communities as well as lack of support, in terms of services but also access to activities such as football clubs or community centres, also has a negative impact on people’s self-esteem. One participant stressed this by describing it as a “poverty of hope”, adding that “poverty of hope” doesn’t only occur in deprived communities, but can affect everyone.

“So that’s the hole, at the end of the day we can all fall into that hole. Just because someone’s in it now and we step over it, tomorrow we could be in it with them”.

Housing crisis

A clear concern raised was that the homeless crisis has only intensified in recent months. Many participants expressed their anger at the boarded-up houses in Dublin, when many people and families are sleeping rough, packed into hostels or have to content themselves with very poor and unsafe housing. Many talked about the necessity to renovate empty flats and to open them for families and others.

One of the issues identified by participants is the fact that homelessness can be hidden, especially in cases where parents have to accommodate their adult children because they cannot secure accommodation for themselves. As a result, several generations can be forced to live under the same roof, for lack of adequate alternatives, in unsuitable and overcrowded

“THERE’S THIS HAP SCHEME, IT’S NOT VERY GOOD. I’LL TELL YOU WHO ARE COMPLETELY DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN THAT, AND THAT’S THE TRAVELLING COMMUNITY. BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO HAVE A REFERENCE, AND THE [LANDLORDS] LOOK AT THE NAME, AND HALF OF THE TIME THEY CAN TELL JUST BY THE NAME. AND THEN THEY SAY “NO, NO ROOM”, AND THEY KNOW SOMEBODY ELSE IS GOING TO GO AND GET THE PLACE”

housing. People can be afraid to officially declare themselves as being homeless because of the stigma attached to it but also due to the inadequacy of the waiting list system.

Another issue highlighted by participants was the lack of places for people in emergency shelter to go during the day. The lack of beds results in people having to queue, sometimes for hours, without assurance of getting a bed for the night.

“The people who have young kids, they’re just walking the streets until the doors open. And like there’s one in the Four Courts, it’s called the Four Courts Hostel, and it’s a first come first served basis, so I don’t know how many beds they have now, but once the beds are full there could still be 20/30 people in the line who don’t get a bed. During the day when they are kicked out, what are you going to do? So there should be a day centre, like during the day for people who want to go in and learn computers...”

People also highlighted the appalling living conditions that some people live in, in the public sector and in publicly subsidised housing. Some participants, while praising the existence of support projects that are essential in mitigating the effects of the crisis, also feel like there is a growing “poverty industry” in the sense that there is money to be made out of poverty.

“We have now become even more ghettoised. People are living in the most horrific, horrific accommodation. We are left behind. And we are going to be even more left behind because I believe people are treated more appallingly than they ever were before. The service provision alone has become very corporate and it’s all about jobs and employment.”

Participants talked about discriminations they experienced when trying to find accommodation through the HAP scheme, especially among the Traveller community, with landlords sometimes refusing to rent their place because of a person’s last name, and other landlords refusing people benefiting from HAP altogether. Participants further stressed the potentially appalling conditions and standards of flats rented under the HAP scheme.

“There’s this HAP scheme, it’s not very good. I’ll tell you who are completely discriminated against in that, and that’s the Travelling Community. Because they have to have a reference, and the [landlords] look at the name, and half of the time they can tell just by the name. And then they say “no, no room”, and they know somebody else is going to go and get the place”



5. EDUCATION

Among the many themes that emerged during the conversations was that of Education. There was a belief that people are left behind at a very young age by the education system, with some children “falling through the net”. The lack of trust in the education system was highlighted, that many felt is without adequate teaching and support for children.

Participants were keen to stress that our education system should be designed fundamentally to empower children and young people and should not create an environment where people don't believe in themselves. In a situation where a child does not believe in themselves within an education setting, it was argued that every support and resource should be offered to give them the self-belief and confidence to reach their potential.

A number of participants reported a negative experience while in school. Many talked about experiences that left them feeling insecure and left behind. These experiences are now having a negative effect on their own children's relationship to education, “we learn from our parents”. If parents have a negative experience and relationship to education it becomes very difficult for them to support their children to have a positive experience. As a result, generationally the education system lets vulnerable children fall through the cracks at an early age. Significant about this emergent theme, is the deep impact that it has had on people, with the negative experience tending to stay with them and make them feel permanently left behind.

By talking about their experience and sharing it with others, people are starting to find strength, wanting to break the cycle.

“I feel that I have a responsibility to myself, to put myself first. I had a negative experience in school. I was left behind”.

A common theme among those interviewed was how they felt they did not have the confidence as a child to put themselves first, to address the issues they had in school and even to ask for help. They felt their only option was to gradually move to the back of class and eventually slip away. But now participants believe things have to change, “we have to move from the back”. One participant recognised that while we cannot change the past, we can change the future for our children, encouraging them in the right direction, and giving them the confidence to put themselves and their education first and change that stigma.

One way to begin to change the stigma and heal the wounds of negative experiences with education was outlined by a participant, who highlighted the impact of adult education. Although people can feel permanently left behind by their negative experience with education, it is possible to go back and reach those people.

"Remember when someone starts adult education it has a huge impact on their children. Seeing their parents involved in education, promoting reading, encouraging children to go out, that's huge, that's absolutely huge. It starts right there."

Concerns about the ways in which the education system leaves children and young people behind, were not limited to primary and secondary school systems. Participants felt that secondary school fails to encourage all students to explore third level options.

"They should encourage them all to go into third level, no matter how, let them all feel how it is to be in the top level of education before they can stop school."

One participant felt that third level education should be mandatory, or for a person to have to decide not to go.. For many students, the end of secondary school marks the end of their education, they want to start working and earning. Participants however believed that without a third level education, the employment options for young people are very limited. They should therefore be encouraged to continue their education even if they are not strong students or show a huge interest in third level education themselves.

"I'll be happy with 50 points, like I'm still going to go to college with 50 points, like no matter what points, it's just a piece of paper and a piece of paper can't define you at the end of the day. Whether you're doing foundation level, ordinary level, or higher level. Like I'm still going to get somewhere in my life, I'm not going to sit around."

For those who do make the jump to third level education, there are still many ways in which they can be left behind. The question was raised as to whether we are doing enough to make everyone feel welcome at third level. Are there enough supports in place to ensure that young people are not left behind, who are more than capable of success at third level but lack the self-belief and confidence.

"I know a young girl who got a place in college, and was actually on the bus into the college and didn't go in, phoned her mum crying, because of her accent. And she didn't want to be in college because she felt that she would be standing out a mile."

Having learned about the promise of the 2030 Agenda, many believed that the Leave No One Behind promise should be discussed and outlined to children in schools from a young age. If children are aware of the promise from a young age, it was felt they would be able to recognise situations where someone is being left behind or even recognise in themselves if they feel they are being left behind in school.

"I'LL BE HAPPY WITH 50 POINTS, LIKE I'M STILL GOING TO GO TO COLLEGE WITH 50 POINTS, LIKE NO MATTER WHAT POINTS, IT'S JUST A PIECE OF PAPER AND A PIECE OF PAPER CAN'T DEFINE YOU AT THE END OF THE DAY. WHETHER YOU'RE DOING FOUNDATION LEVEL, ORDINARY LEVEL, OR HIGHER LEVEL..."



6. MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION

During the course of this project the theme of mental health was raised and discussed on numerous occasions. One aspect of these discussions was the fact that many mental health issues in today's society stem from an increased sense of competition, in particular within the younger generation. People feel that they are under pressure to compete with others, due to the increased exposure social media platforms have provided.

"I think it's just the way society has developed that it leaves people behind. Like we're taught to be competitive, and we have to get the best grades and we need to be smart, we need to be quick, we need to always look presentable. And even on Facebook, we're portraying this life that we don't even have, it's so fake."

Many young people highlighted the connection between the relationship the younger generation have with social media, and increasing concerns over mental health, and in particular suicide rates.

"Last week there was someone that committed suicide. He walked out in front of a train because he felt like it wasn't OK to not be OK. It is OK not to be OK. Last week I said to my best friend, 'are you OK?' and she was like 'yeah, why? What's up?' and I said 'I'm just checking up on you to make sure you actually are OK'. She was like 'Jesus, no one has ever asked me am I OK really'. It's good to check on people because not many people get checked on."

The conversations also highlighted a stigma that surrounds mental health issues.

A participant addressed the concerns about the stigma by calling for more safe places for people to openly talk about how they are really feeling without worrying about possible backlash.

"What happens in the room, stays in the room" helps, because you can talk free and make sure nobody is talking about it outside, just to have a safe space to talk about things."



"I THINK IT'S JUST THE WAY SOCIETY HAS DEVELOPED THAT IT LEAVES PEOPLE BEHIND. LIKE WE'RE TAUGHT TO BE COMPETITIVE, AND WE HAVE TO GET THE BEST GRADES AND WE NEED TO BE SMART, WE NEED TO BE QUICK, WE NEED TO ALWAYS LOOK PRESENTABLE. AND EVEN ON FACEBOOK, WE'RE PORTRAYING THIS LIFE THAT WE DON'T EVEN HAVE, IT'S SO FAKE."

“THE WAY I SEE IT, YOU ONLY POST WHAT YOU WANT PEOPLE TO SEE. IF I’M AT HOME AND I’M HAVING A REALLY BAD DAY AND I LOOK SHIT AND I FEEL SHIT, I’M NOT GOING TO POST A PICTURE. IT’S SNIPPETS OF YOUR LIFE, BUT OTHER PEOPLE ARE SCROLLING THROUGH AND YOU’RE JUST SEEING CONSTANTLY GOOD BITS FROM OTHER PEOPLE’S LIVES, AND IF YOU’RE HAVING A BAD DAY AND YOU’RE GOING ON AND LOOKING AT ALL THIS, IT CAN REALLY MAKE YOU FEEL REALLY LOW, YOU’RE COMPARING YOURSELF ALL THE TIME.”

Young participants further highlighted the fact that people feel as if they are competing against others who always seem happy, based on their social media post, however in reality that is not a true representation of someone.

“The way I see it, you only post what you want people to see. If I’m at home and I’m having a really bad day and I look shit and I feel shit, I’m not going to post a picture. It’s snippets of your life, but other people are scrolling through and you’re just seeing constantly good bits from other people’s lives, and if you’re having a bad day and you’re going on and looking at all this, it can really make you feel really low, you’re comparing yourself all the time.”

Others spoke of the difficulty of breaking away from using social media because there are many aspects of it that are positive. Facebook for example was mentioned as an easy way of keeping in touch with family that do not live nearby. Concern was however raised over how easy it can be to get wrapped up in it. In the same conversation a participant who used to be an educator at a third level university offered a different perspective.

“I was really wondering in the past 10 years, why were there so many people unwell, mentally unwell. I’d never seen so many people being so unwell, and real, and talking to you, and if you take the time to listen, and take the time to hear what they have to say, you can help them academically, but also direct them to other places to get counselling and help, because it’s really hard. All the counsellors in other universities I’ve met, say ‘social media’ has a big impact on the mental health.”

Although social media has made communication easier, there was common agreement that in many ways it has begun to replace real communication, a worrying trend that can have a significant effect on mental health.

“Actually go to your friends, and not just say on Facebook, ‘oh, how are you?’, ‘oh great pictures’ and whatever, but to actually go to your friends and say ‘how are you?’, and actually meaning ‘how are you?’, ‘Are you OK?’ and some people if you ask them... it will come out.”

A simple example about how this change in communication has manifested itself in day to day life was highlighted:

"Life was so simple, if you saw someone you'd say 'come on in have a cup of tea and a biscuit'. Now, you're on your Facebook trying to compete with your friends, and your friends are competing with you, so everyone's just competing, competing, competing, competing."

The above point was expanded on in another conversation, with a participant alluding to the same concern over people increasingly writing on social media. This results in them not phoning to find out how others are, "we aren't a real community anymore".

Addiction

The issue of addiction was often mentioned in relation to issues of mental health. Competition within society, in relation to mental health and social media, was a theme that appeared in conjunction with issues relating to addiction. People compare themselves in addiction sometimes to make themselves feel better about their own situation, or even sometimes to make themselves feel worse. People can easily be left behind by comparing their own recovery to others.

"There is snobbery even in addiction. We have to stop comparing ourselves to each other. If you have an addictive personality you could be addicted to anything it really doesn't matter."

Other participants raised concerns about the language used to describe those dealing with addiction issues. The need to change the terms used was highlighted.

"Why have we just normalized it all of a sudden? 'Oh, a person that uses drugs is a scumbag', like no, they're not a scumbag, they've just had a hard life and they need to be seen in a different light."

"Teaching children a lot younger not to use degrading language because what ends up happening is they are turning on the very people who are putting runners on their feet. We see it in this area and it is disgusting how some people are treated."

The above comment raised concerns over how families and communities can become divided by addiction issues and the language and negative connotations that generalise all those suffering from addiction issues. As children grow up they are exposed to attitudes and language to describe their own family and this can ultimately shape their own perspective and cause friction within families.

WORK IN PROGRESS



Addressing Question Three: “What steps can we take in our own lives and communities to ensure that the promise is fulfilled?”

The workshops were planned to address three questions with participants, the third focused on solutions and what we can do to make sure we Leave No One Behind. However, because the second question tackling the challenges is a vast and complex subject, the majority of the time in the workshops was allocated to addressing this question. As a result, the third question was not broached with all of the groups that took part in the project, and those that did touch on the third question, did not have time to explore the subject in detail due to its complexity. Below are some initial suggestions identified during the conversations:

On an individual level:

- The importance of making people feel useful, of giving them a role as a way to help build self-esteem and to feel valued in the community “I saw a lot of young people who say, ‘oh, I want to do that to be useful’, in a way that is something real - when we speak about hope - I think it’s really linked”.
- Having good role models in the community to encourage people, especially the youth, to actively Leave No One Behind.
- The idea of providing support to people throughout the course of their life, and not only during times of crisis is imperative in terms of minimising the development of extreme situations. All healthy communities develop a natural duty of care to other members and it is important to maintain a vigilance to the well-being of all members but especially vulnerable individuals on a permanent basis. One participant took the example of people volunteering in the local community to support isolated elderly people in their everyday life.

Collective action:

- Participants talked about the importance of coming together as a group or a community to advocate for change. Some explained that organized collective action is sometimes needed to help people become assertive about their situation, because some people would fear to lose the little security they have if they stepped forward individually to voice their concerns (cf. regarding poor housing conditions).
- The creation of community forums was one recommendation raised by a number of groups, where people could gather to discuss collectively what supports could help improve life within their area. Similarly, the need for safe places for people to be heard without being judged was highlighted as an important element.

- Many participants expressed a lack of faith in the government and politics in general. This is an important relationship to repair as participation in politics is vital to having all of society's interests represented. The need for longer term, strategic and cross-departmental planning was highlighted as was the need for politicians themselves to be more accessible to the people they are representing.
- Mechanisms for participation in decision making emerged as a key recommendation from conversations. Mechanisms should be clear, open to all, and have the requisite support in terms of capacity building and resourcing. There is an opportunity in this regard for politicians to commit to formally partner and regularly meet with those that they represent, especially the most vulnerable members of these communities. This would serve to encourage a more diverse participation in politics and allow politicians an opportunity to understand their constituents and gain their trust.
- Tying in with the previous recommendation is the idea of the promotion and development of partnership and networks among state institutions and different services. Continuity in all forms of support lends stability to those availing of the assistance, which in turn was considered critical in terms of their progression. This was seen as crucial to ensuring that no one is left behind or allowed fall through the cracks.
- Some participants talked about stepping stones and how important it is to put in place mechanisms to help people transition “trying to make the transition from, whatever – early school leaving, unemployment, CE Schemes, into higher education... Like, you'd need supports, you'd need partnerships, and networks, but I believe it could be done.”

Current plans of ATD are to prepare a new series of conversations and to identify ‘early steps for action’ to be discussed with groups.

CONVERSATIONS FROM THE 2018 HLPF

About the HLPF

Those involved in the debates and work on the United Nations' 2030 Agenda are getting used to a new strange acronym: HLPF.

HLPF stands for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. With the first Forum held in 2016, it is the name given to the major annual summit that takes place in July each year and which is responsible for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the global level.

The annual HLPF meets for around two weeks at the United Nations' Headquarter in New York and features inputs from national governments, intergovernmental bodies, relevant UN agencies, civil society (NGOs) and other stakeholders representing business, farmers, local authorities, churches and many other organised and lobbying groups.

Countries (Governments of the Member States of the UN) are encouraged to review implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) regularly and present Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) at the HLPF.

The Irish Government presented its first VNR at the HLPF in July 2018. This provided a momentum for all Irish Stakeholders involved in the promotion and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by Ireland.

The Irish Government supports stakeholder involvement in the 2030 Agenda process at both a national and global level. One initiative of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment to ensure civil society voices were heard in the implementation of the 17 SDGs, was to invite a dozen delegates to represent the Irish Coalition 2030 (1) at the 2018 HLPF.

ATD Ireland was part of this delegation, representing the Irish domestic anti-poverty and equality sector. The below article presents the discussions and key learnings from New York regarding the "Leave No

One Behind Promise" (LNOBP): How the promise was discussed? What questions were raised? And what further questions should we be raising after listening to the conversations at the HLPF?

The Formal Leave No One Behind Conversation

The HLPF opened on the 9th July 2018 with a recognition that progress has been made, but not fast enough to achieve the goals by 2030. UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed highlighted progress in some areas, including maternal and child mortality; tackling childhood marriage; expanding access to electricity; and addressing global unemployment. She stressed, however, that in other areas, "we are either moving too slowly, or losing momentum". She observed that for the first time in a decade, the overall number of people who are undernourished has increased – from 777 million in 2015, to 815 million in 2016 – "fundamentally undermining our commitment to Leaving No One Behind".

On 13th July 2018 the HLPF dedicated an entire official plenary session to the challenge of fulfilling the promise of leaving no one behind. During this session, the lead discussant from the UN Committee for Development Policy (2) reported it has become apparent that despite the majority of countries mentioning the LNOBP, few have developed strategies towards its implementation. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Andrew Gilmour underlined that in many different contexts, people are being pushed further behind by a variety of forces; and stressed it is not enough to look at those "left behind" at the bottom, but it is necessary to also look at the concentration of wealth and power that resides at the top. Other stakeholders recognised the need to transform deeply-rooted systems based on unequal distribution of wealth and decision-making power.

The Leave No One Behind Promise in the 2018 Member States Reports

On Monday 16th July 2018, the UN Committee for

Development Policy (CDP) presented the results of its analysis of 43 VNRs during a 'VNR Lab' on the LNOBP. While almost all reports (39) acknowledged this principle, only 19 of the 43 countries included explicit discussions on strategies towards its implementation. Among those groups at risk of being left behind, women and persons with disabilities were most commonly mentioned, followed by children, migrants, elderly people and ethnic minorities. Less attention was given to exclusion for 'status' such as indigenous, the LGBT community or people affected by Mental Health issues. The CDP also underlined the fact that the "VNRs examined do not address the priority to reach the furthest behind".

From Large Social Groups to Reaching the Furthest Behind First

The results of the CDP analysis of Member State VNRs were also evident in the formal and informal discussion in plenaries and side events. An LNOBP lens was often applied when debating issues regarding large social groups such as women and girls, children and young people, elderly people, migrants and refugees and populations geographically located in areas at risk because of global warming and extreme weather events. There was however, little or no conversation around addressing the loss of marginalised groups such as women or men in custody or facing addiction, young offenders and early-school leavers, sex workers or parents undergoing child protection intervention.

If You are Not Counted, You don't Exist: the Focus on the Data Collection Challenge

In order to fulfil the LNOBP, many research institutes, NGOs, States and international agencies agree on the need for more granular data to help better identify and understand the experiences of the most marginalised in society, and monitor resources being allocated to maximize outcomes for the poorest. That too little data is routinely disaggregated was a clear message arising from many HLPF conversations, with a growing focus on ensuring that "Everybody counts" and everybody is counted.

One of the main HLPF activities regarding the data collection challenge was the launch of the Inclusive Data Charter (3) by the "Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data", inviting stakeholders to commit to improve and strengthen data disaggregation and to make all people "visible in the data to understand their lives, and include them in the development process".

The Human Rights Approach: a Response to the Leave No One Behind Challenge

Human Rights campaigners at the HLPF promoted an important message: a Human Rights and Equality approach is a LNOBP approach. To Leave No One Behind reflects fundamental human rights principles of non discrimination and equality. The provision of human rights secures in principle access to fundamental basic securities for all. The Danish Institute for Human Rights has taken a leading role in connecting Agenda 2030 with Human Rights International frameworks and monitoring tools such as the Universal Periodic Review.

Yet, as some commentators argued, grass-root organisations know how to make rights and equality work for people from marginalised and deprived communities. Many still believe that marginalised groups don't know their rights and when they try to realise them, they continue to experience high levels of discrimination, stigma, red tape and misunderstanding.


Don't Push People Behind! Don't Keep People Behind! Are we Equipped to Leave No One Behind?

Many stakeholders at the HLPF raised their concern that communities and isolated people are being pushed behind in all parts of the world: by land enclosure, appropriation or evictions, by housing crisis in major cities, by development-induced climate change, by pollution, by trade liberalisation and loss in local community markets, as well as by poor health generated by poor employment conditions, and cuts in services due to austerity policies. A first response to these issues would be to continue to strengthen the Human Rights frameworks and obligations, and help to build coalitions between different activist groups across the world. A paper published ahead of the HLPF by Diane Elson, suggested that "all policies should be subject to the question: is this policy likely to push someone behind, and if so, will this loss be mitigated, or must it be prevented from happening in the first place?" (4).

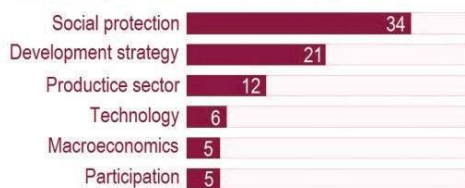
Few HLPF conversations addressed the micro human-level challenges to leaving no one behind. Are citizens around the world individually equipped with the requisite relationships and behaviour skills to Leave No One Behind? Are education systems and media prepared to discuss the individual and collective fabrics of shame, stigma and exclusion

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) Reports on Leaving No One Behind (LNOB)

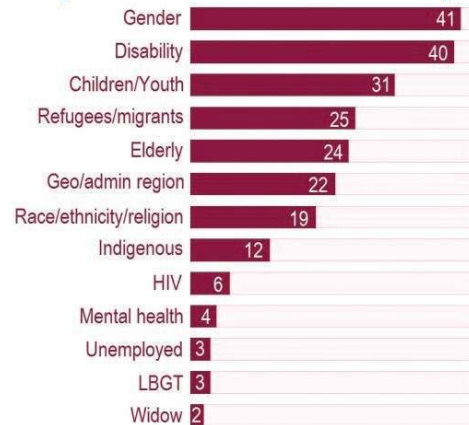
VNRs presented by  **43** COUNTRIES

LNOB mentioned by  **39** COUNTRIES

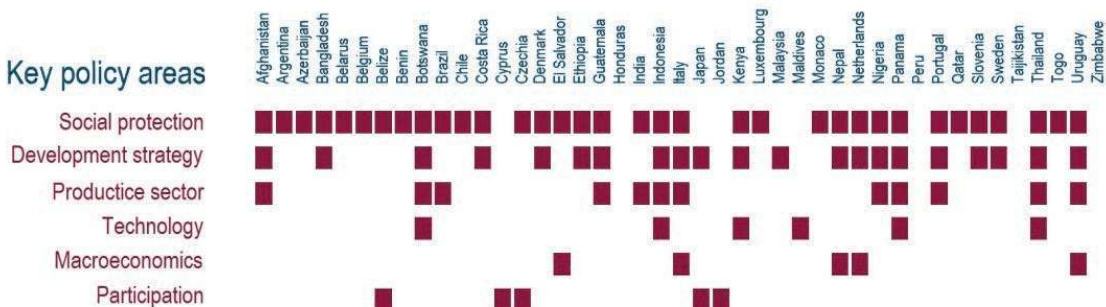
Key policy areas mentioned by countries



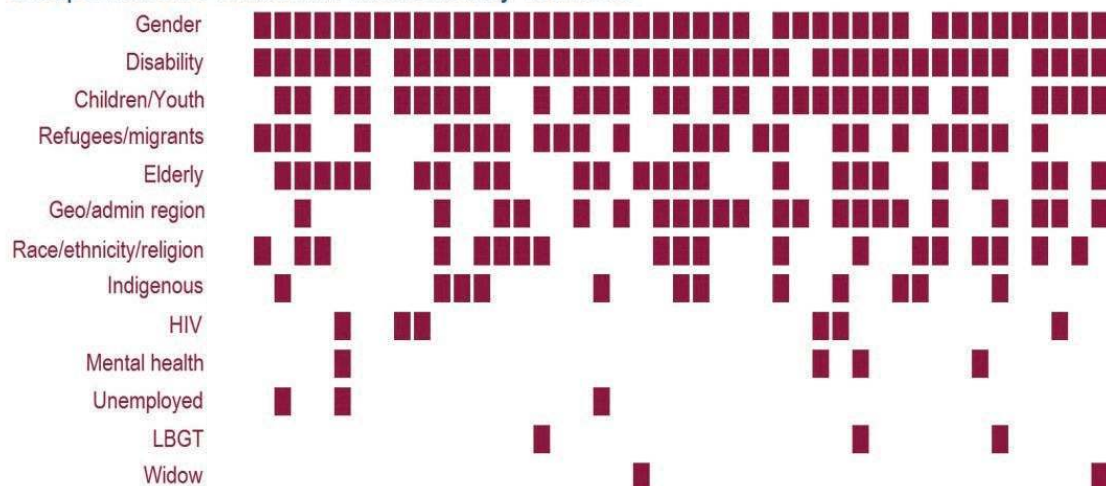
Groups not to be left behind mentioned by countries



Key policy areas



Groups not to be left behind mentioned by countries



Source: Committee for Development Policy (CDP), CDP Background Paper No. 46, *Voluntary National Reviews Reports - What do they report?*

CDP website: cdp.un.org

which are key in the process of leaving people behind?

Leave No One Behind, but Don't Forget Who is at the Front! Framing the Inequality Debate

Is the LNOBP framing the discourse on inequality in an unexpected way? Will it frame the inequality agenda mainly as a problem of inclusion to be addressed by focusing on the furthest behind and remove the damages of extreme inequalities from the front stage?

At the HLPF, some campaigners expressed their concern over structural inequalities and the widening gap in wealth and income inequalities as well as other inequalities such as in relation to health or education. There is a danger that the strong focus on "Leave No One Behind" could reduce energy and mobilisation regarding the key issue of accumulated and concentrated wealth and privilege at the top. Campaigners underlined that the Agenda does not oblige countries to address difficult issues of discrimination against excluded subaltern groups. Monitoring to date has not raised issues associated with 'extreme inequality'. "As implementation gets underway, the LNOBP can be seen as a coup against equality," write Sakiko Fukuda-Parr and Thea Smaavik Hegstad (5), "Nonetheless, for advocates of equality, it can also be a window of opportunity for reforms in an otherwise hostile or an indifferent context."

A Promise for Future Generations

Are we leaving the next generations behind? This was a question posed by Sophie Howe, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales speaking at the HLPF LNOBP debate on 13th July. Sophie Howe explained the Welsh approach following the passing of the Well-being of Future Generations Act in 2015. Along with other HLPF stakeholders, Wales endorsed the call for a UN Global Guardians for Future Generations programme, a call initiated by the "Group of Friends of Future Generations", established after a series of meetings organised by the Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice during 2017. It is envisaged that the Global Guardians (6) would give a voice for future generations across the world and place the concept of intergenerational equity at the heart of policy making and systems.

Move with People from the Back

This overview of the LNOBP conversations at the HLPF can help us to understand the context in which the Irish Leave No One Behind debate can continue. We may also feel inspired by some questions or approaches.

I would like to end this 'report from New York' with a reference to the ATD International HLPF side event which took place on Monday 9th July. The event was titled 'How to Define Poverty with Those Left Furthest Behind' and involved an ATD – Oxford University team. Frank Geary from IDEA, a member of the Irish Coalition 2030, stated: "Professor Robert Walker of Oxford University spoke passionately about a research project led by people experiencing poverty working with researchers. By working with "the experts in poverty, those experiencing poverty," together we manage to highlight aspects of the multi-dimensionality of poverty. "Poverty is felt directly as emotions." He spoke of "the anger of the child who sees their parent as the cause of the poverty they are experiencing." Poverty is relational. It is experienced as oppression, exploitation, humiliation, stigmatisation and making people voiceless. At the same time the skills and knowledge that people acquire through experiencing poverty – survival skills, resourcefulness, organisational skills, resistance and resilience – are not recognised publicly. Research and policy have only a partial understanding of poverty, and therefore our policies can be ineffective."

This ATD event is an illustration of an approach which should inform our way to face the Leave No One Behind challenge. Researchers from Oxford University decided to take the means and the time to find genuine "poverty experts" and to move together from the back.

References:

- 1 - Coalition 2030 is an alliance of over 100 civil society organisations working together to ensure Ireland keeps its promise to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both at home and abroad. www.ireland2030.org
- 2 - Link to the Committee for Development Policy Papers on the Leave No One Behind Promise www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/2018/leaving-no-one-behind/
- 3 - More at www.data4sdgs.org/initiatives/inclusive-data-charter
- 4 - In 'Push no one behind', Diane Elson, CDP Background Paper No. 43, June 2018 – Committee for Development Policy, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations.
- 5 - In 'Leaving no one behind' as a site of contestation and reinterpretation", Sakiko Fukuda-Parr and Thea Smaavik Hegstad, CDP Background Paper No. 47, July 2018 – Committee for Development Policy, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations.
- 6 - Global Guardians: A voice for future generations, Policy brief, January 2018, Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice.

THE DOMINANT NARRATIVE AND THE CHALLENGE TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

DR SEÁN HEALY, DIRECTOR, SOCIAL JUSTICE IRELAND

Ireland now has the resources to ensure the key challenges and social injustices facing people in Ireland are addressed, to ensure no one is left behind. The economy has been the fastest growing economy in Europe in recent years. Unemployment is down to 5 per cent and the number of jobs in the country is at a record level. Consumer spending is up. Export growth is expected to continue rising but at a slower rate than in recent years. This is the dominant narrative in Ireland today. Government trumpets this narrative. The media reports it as a great achievement and media commentators are often highly critical and dismissive of anyone who challenges this view.

There are two sides to this story, however. On the one hand Ireland has recovered very well from the crash of a decade ago and many of the economic fundamentals are positive. On the other hand despite this very welcome recovery in the economy - now growing at least twice as fast as our European counterparts – we still have almost 800,000 people living in poverty, the largest proportion of which are children; we still have a social housing crisis which has removed the most basic of social nets from those living on the edge; and we still haven't found the political courage to say that Ireland is a low tax economy that needs to raise new revenue to fund vital social infrastructure.

This other side of Ireland today is ignored by most of Ireland's decision-makers and most of its media commentators. Among the facts that are ignored are:

- Of the 800,000 people living in poverty, more than 100,000 have jobs, but their incomes are not high enough to take them out of poverty.
- There are over 700,000 on waiting lists for healthcare services, many of which are in urgent need of care.
- There are more than 10,000 people homeless in Ireland, a third of whom are children.
- There are more than 80,000 households (not individuals) on waiting lists for social housing.
- Much of rural Ireland doesn't have high speed broadband.
- Ireland has one of the most inadequate childcare services in Europe, which has a huge impact on the participation of women in the labour force.
- Ireland is also facing major fines for its failures on climate change.

It would not be difficult to lengthen this list. The point that needs to be remembered is that most Irish people want to see an end to homelessness, social housing shortages, hospital waiting lists and child poverty. They want to see the lack of affordable childcare addressed, investment in rural broadband, and much more.

“

IRELAND NOW HAS THE RESOURCES TO ENSURE THE KEY CHALLENGES AND SOCIAL INJUSTICES FACING PEOPLE IN IRELAND ARE ADDRESSED, TO ENSURE NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND.



PRIORITY SHOULD BE GIVEN TO TACKLING THE SOCIAL HOUSING CRISIS, REFORMING THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM AND ADDRESSING RURAL AND REGIONAL CHALLENGES WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON RESOURCING COMMUNITIES.

Government's response however on any of these issues is not on the scale required to eliminate these scars from the landscape. Addressing these challenges effectively will take a decade or more. Decisions will have to be made regarding priorities and sequencing. But there is a huge reluctance at official decision-making level to make the decisions that are required. Government has signed up to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. These 17 goals are to be achieved in every country by 2030. They include commitments to end poverty, ensure healthy lives for all, reduce inequality, achieve gender equality and combat climate change and its impacts. Nothing that Government is currently doing is on the scale required to achieve any of these in the short, medium or long term.

Ireland has the resources to address all these challenges. It is possible for Ireland to provide infrastructure and services on a par with our peer countries in Western Europe – a standard to which most people in Ireland aspire. But it requires brave decisions and a response that is of sufficient scale to permanently change the current problems. If this is to succeed it is also important that all sectors of Irish society be involved in shaping and delivering these decisions. Now is the time to tackle these challenges and to do so on a big enough scale.

Priority should be given to tackling the social housing crisis, reforming the healthcare system and addressing rural and regional challenges with a special focus on resourcing communities. For the first time in quite a while Government has the resources to make a serious impact on reducing Ireland's social and economic infrastructure deficits.

It is important to realise that the choices made by Government can have dramatically different outcomes for different groups in society. Despite many welcome developments in Ireland's growing economy, the damage done through the economic and budgetary crises of the last decade is still being felt by Ireland's most vulnerable people. This damage is being ignored, for the most part, in the dominant narrative currently being accepted. It is time Ireland adopted a more comprehensive and accurate narrative to guide its decision making.

While the economy is doing well and the wider world marvels at Ireland's recovery, it is important to acknowledge that there are a series of crises in this country that must be addressed: a crisis of healthcare provision, a social housing crisis, a poverty crisis that sees children as the largest demographic living in poverty. We need to measure ourselves by how we treat the weakest in our society. By that measure we are failing. Many are being left behind.

Government decisions can change people's lives, for better and for worse. Adopting a more comprehensive and accurate narrative would move Ireland towards addressing the infrastructure gaps – economic and social – that are becoming more obvious every day. They would also move Ireland in the direction of becoming a fairer, more equal society where no one is left behind.

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND – TOWARDS A COMMON UNDERSTANDING



A SUMMARY OF A DÓCHAS BRIEFING PAPER FROM AUGUST 2018

Dóchas is the Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations. It is a meeting place and a leading voice for organisations that want Ireland to be a world leader in efforts to bring about global justice. More at www.dochas.ie.

One of the most transformational aspects of the 2030 Agenda is the pledge to 'Leave No One Behind' (LNOB); that all goals and targets will be met for all nations, peoples and segments of society, and that the furthest behind will be reached first.

'Leave No One Behind' demands that governments make policy choices, that national public policy and budgets, and international cooperation, focuses primarily on tackling exclusion and inequality both within countries and reducing inequalities between countries.

LNOB, and "Reaching the furthest behind first", will mean that Ireland has to do things differently at a policy and programming level. Urgent and specific targeting, and innovative approaches to reach these people are required in order to eradicate poverty in a sustainable way by 2030.

Who are those left behind?

Definitions of LNOB tend to focus on the marginalised, the vulnerable, the poorest of the poor, and those who are "invisible" or not reached by government or NGO services.

Identifying those most left behind is the first critical step in facilitating policies and programmes to reach them. Civil society organisations, donor agencies, research bodies, and community and indigenous groups should play a vital role in the process, in

close collaboration with governments and other stakeholders. Further work is required to adequately resource and strengthen data collection and analysis in order to determine who should be targeted.

Many vulnerabilities 'intersect' with each other, compounding inequalities and posing challenges for identification. Reframing policies and practices to focus on Leaving No one Behind requires tackling structural inequalities and barriers, and power relationships.

There is currently no common or agreed approach for identifying those left behind. A combination of approaches can be considered including disaggregated data and tools such as multidimensional poverty indices, the Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index, and bottom up definitions that includes local populations.

Pathways to leaving no-one behind

Policy recommendations for policy makers to develop a shared understanding of who is being left behind:

1. *Develop a shared understanding of Leave No-one Behind*

Government departments must work with civil society, partner countries, multilateral partners and communities to develop a shared understanding of what leaving no-one behind means for Ireland's international co-operation and domestic policy-making. This should involve developing guidelines on how to define LNOB, developing a baseline to understand 'the most marginalised in Ireland', and a shared approach to how data will be disaggregated, the definition of vulnerable groups and the principles underpinning policy and practice.

2. *Commit to putting Leave No One Behind at the heart of government policy*

Ireland is committed to achieving the SDGs and LNOB at home as well as in relation to overseas aid and foreign policy. Achieving the SDGs demands policy coherence and a 'whole of government approach' to implementation. As Ireland aims to grow its global footprint, it should ensure all its actions contribute to the realisation of the SDGs.

3. *Promote participative approaches to combat exclusion*

States should seek to actively engage vulnerable and marginalised groups when assessing the principle of LNOB and in its integration into public policy-making. The inclusion of marginalized groups and communities is essential to the achievement of sustainable and inclusive development. Robust mechanisms also need to be established to share progress in an open and transparent way.

4. *Promote the concept that a rights-based safety-net is for everyone, not just high-income countries*

Extending safety net programmes improves health and education access, reduces poverty, and strengthens resilience in the face of crises and disasters. Policy makers must work with developing countries to design and implement social safety nets which will meet the needs of those left the furthest behind and to ensure they remain sustainable in the long term.

5. *Integrate LNOB into all external policy and political dialogue*

Policy makers should embed best practice in terms of governance, antidiscrimination, inclusion and empowerment at policy and programme levels in international organisations and mechanisms with which it engages, as well as the partner countries in which it operates.

6. *Incorporate LNOB into financing frameworks*

Ireland should ensure that the financing arrangements to which it contributes (multilateral programmes and those involving the private sector) adopt the principle of LNOB. The latter is especially important in the context of blended finance programmes.

7. *Recognise that LNOB is not the easy option – but be willing to make hard choices for long-term gains*

A focus on LNOB will present difficult choices, especially as countries move towards middle-income status. Some LNOB programming may also not offer any immediate wins, but adopting a LNOB approach does offer long term benefits.

8. *#LeaveNoOneBehind – Bring the Irish public with you*

LNOB is not only the right thing to do, it is also the smart thing to do and allows human potential to be realised. The Government should embark on a major project to communicate the SDGs to the public and to build support for their achievement. It should make the public aware of their responsibilities and choices and show linkages between actions at home and implications abroad.

9. *Monitoring progress and accountability*

It is imperative that Governments sets out a clear strategy with ambitious and measurable targets as to how they will reach the 'furthest behind first'. Governments must be held accountable for the achievement of those targets.

The full text published in July 2018 is available at:
<https://dochas.ie/publications/leaving-no-one-behind-dochas-values-and-principles-july-2018>

See also the paper produced by BOND the UK network for organisations working in international development: 'Leave no one behind: How the development community is realising the pledge' (January 2018) available at www.bond.org.uk/resources/leave-no-one-behind

THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS IN THE DELIVERY OF THE LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND PROMISE



SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As soon as the 2030 Agenda was adopted, international volunteer networks underlined the fact that volunteers worldwide can and will play an important role in facilitating the active engagement of communities, in partnership with their governments, in the implementation and monitoring of the Agenda.

Participatory and citizen-led mechanisms that genuinely facilitate an inclusive approach will make the 2030 Agenda meaningful. This will make the Agenda relevant to, and owned by, people in local communities, and allow those who are most often left behind to be reached first.

The Global Volunteer Groups Alliance has been advocating since the very first HLPF Summit in 2016 for the support and recognition of volunteerism in the implementation of the SDGs and the Leave No One Behind promise.

MOBILIZING VOLUNTEERS TO ENSURE WE LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Volunteer Groups Alliance side event to the High-Level Political Forum 2016 session

"For the Volunteers are uniquely positioned to reach out to community members who are often marginalised, create a greater awareness of the SDGs, and build their capacities to engage in community action in support of activities and efforts to build resilience and participate in their government's plans for the achievement of the SDGs.

Leaving No One Behind ultimately will require sustained political will, courage and targeted financial investment. It is more expensive to work with the hardest-to-reach groups of people. However, money is not the only resource needed to reach the hardest-to-reach – human resources are also vital. Here, volunteers and grassroots community organisations can help provide a much needed link to those who are often furthest from the sight of governments and official development actors. (...) Volunteering helps move people from being passive recipients to being actively engaged in the development processes that affect their lives, and the lives of their families and communities. (...)

In the UN Secretary General's synthesis report 'The Road to Dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet' (December 2014), he states that 'as we seek to build capacities and to help the new Agenda to take root, volunteerism can be another powerful and cross-cutting means of implementation. Volunteerism can help to expand and mobilize constituencies, and to engage people in national planning and implementation for the Sustainable Development Goals. And volunteer groups can help to localize the new Agenda by providing new spaces of interaction between governments and people for concrete and scalable actions.' (...)

Volunteers can support the 'data revolution' required by the new Agenda and help measure progress on SDG implementation through collecting data, providing expertise and supporting participatory forms of planning and monitoring, and helping to disseminate results. In this regard, volunteerism is a form of civic engagement that can strengthen the accountability between governments and citizens in the next decades." (extracts from the 2016 paper 'Position paper submitted by volunteer groups on

the theme of “ensuring that no one is left behind”
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10117Volunteers.pdf>)

Across Ireland, hundreds of local organisations, from youth groups to family resource centres, serve as supports to communities, especially in rural areas where maintaining a sense of community is vital. These groups are largely run by local volunteers who value the wellbeing of every member of the community.

During one of the ATD Leave No One Behind Conversations we spoke to a representative of a family resource centre in County Donegal whose elderly population are particularly affected by loneliness and isolation. “We have about 6 volunteers on a panel that ring the elderly people in the community and they talk. They are a link to the outside world. They talk about what’s in the paper, they talk about what’s going on in the community, and how they’re doing and all of that. But those volunteers, nobody really knows that’s what they do, because volunteers don’t go out there saying “I’m a volunteer!” they do it quietly and privately because they’re giving something back to their community. They’re not looking for an accolade, they’re not looking for a pension for it, you know? They’re doing it because they know it makes a difference.”

At ATD, we believe that volunteering and activism are what make the impossible possible. Volunteer work can involve tasks that don’t fit into a 9-5 job description. Volunteers are often relied upon to provide emotional support, to stay beyond set hours to see a job done and to surpass some professional boundaries in order to reach those who are furthest behind.

ATD’s experience worldwide shows that programs are often designed for a whole population, but not with the specific perspective of reaching every individual. The most vulnerable people, those that are most in need, are often leading isolated, even invisible lives. As such, for various reasons, they miss out on opportunities to play a role in the development of their community. Oftentimes, they benefit the least from well-intentioned measures to help a community move forward; as more easily reached groups within the community participates and advances, they can find themselves more isolated than ever and left behind once again.

Local volunteers in grass roots community groups have a lot to offer the cause to Leave No One Behind. Reaching and securing the trust of those

furthest behind requires an acute knowledge of the context of their lives, their aspirations and desires, and most importantly, an investment of time. This level of understanding and expertise can take years to develop.

A Senegalese proverb “Nit, nit ay garabam” tells us that “man is man’s best remedy”. As technology advances and automation threatens jobs that have existed for centuries, we have never been so defined by our human qualities. The Leave No One Behind Promise is the best invitation to develop human qualities, to stimulate people’s capacities to connect with and support one another, to channel empathy and emotions into action. It is this empathy and the recognition of an injustice, that drives people to go beyond what they will be compensated for and reach the hardest to reach.

If we agree that volunteering, when well supported, is a powerful mechanism for promoting social inclusion throughout the world, while facilitating engagement of all community members to become drivers of sustainable development action, we need to make sure future Leave No One Behind Conversations debate on the key role volunteers can play. Are training or awareness raising campaigns needed to unleash the “Leave No One Behind” potential of volunteering? Could we imagine the development of a national “Leave No One Behind Volunteer Corps” based on the new EU initiative of the European Solidarity Corps? More questions will arise.

A final piece of food for thought: a quote from Joseph Wresinski, founder of ATD. It is a short extract from one of his last messages to members of the ATD volunteer corps before his passing 30 years ago, in February 1988: “I would like to say to you, the volunteers, that we must remain very, very close to the most disadvantaged families. (...) We cannot achieve this without an enormous effort on our part: an effort to know those most affected by poverty and exclusion, their history, background and origins, and the past and present reality of their daily lives. We must want to share in depth, not just superficially, what these families carry within their hearts. (...) Let’s consider them to be our teachers.”

On the value and importance of volunteers and their work toward successfully accomplishing the SDGs, see also: www.volunteer2030.org

YOU START BY LISTENING

You start by listening.

To women and mothers, teachers and farmers, politicians and children, you listen to the very poorest people, they know more about poverty, disease and discrimination than anyone else. You step into their shoes and see things from their point of view.

You respect local traditions and customs. You listen to local wisdom. You learn from local know how. You recognise the strengths and resources that people already have. And you work with them to develop more.

When you listen, you hear fear, anger, apathy, kindness, resilience and courage.

You hear that policies, often designed to help, don't.

"He had started making photo frames and little pieces of art and going around to the markets to sell them, and immediately they were told, 'If he's out doing that, then he can't be in your service'. This is a man with huge disadvantage, who has ability but needs nurture, needs shelter. The little bit extra was not about the money he was taking in; it was about how he felt, his motivation, his inner-peace... The policies cannot see that." (Pg. 18)

But most of all you hear hope.

"Imagine if no one was left behind, and everyone was equal like, what way the place would be. Because I can tell you straight off the bat that treatment centres would be shut down, prisons, there wouldn't be any prisons..."(pg. 15)

No one chooses to be left behind. To live on the wrong side of the barrier, to be stigmatised, to not fit in.

Zero Hunger, End Poverty, Reduced Inequalities... The Sustainable Development Goals, a worldwide agenda, for all people, everywhere, by 2030.

These are not goals. They are rights. The SDGs are not aspirations, they are obligations.

Together we have the knowledge, resources and skills to achieve them. They provide us with both hope and opportunity.

At their launch, Ban Ki Moon said 'we can be the first generation to end poverty and the last generation that can end climate change.'

Governments everywhere must ensure their delivery. But so must business leaders, political parties, NGOs, local communities

And individuals.

"It appeared evident throughout the course of the conversations that people felt they themselves should take responsibility to play an active role within society and demand the installation of particular supports, rather than simply waiting for the authorities to do so." (pg. 18)

Thank you volunteers and activists from ATD for listening, for reporting, for acting and inspiring.

Concern is delighted to partner with you, to work together to gather the 'unheard voices', those who have been left behind, with whom we both work in the Global North and South. 2030, just eleven years away. Can we do it?

"It is possible... If we choose to love each other. Choose to help each other." (pg. 18)

Michael Doorly

Head of Development Education - Concern



CONCLUSION

MOVING TOGETHER FROM THE BACK



The 2018 Leave No One Behind Conversation Series is a starting point.

It is hoped that it will be considered as a pilot project which could and should grow in Ireland over the coming 12 years. Could Ireland lead the way and develop a tradition of on-going, robust and impactful Leave No One Behind Conversations? At each of the 15 conversations organised, ATD volunteers felt similar reactions. Firstly, a difficulty to trust the 2030 Agenda commitments of our elected representatives. At the same time, once participants learned more about the 2030 plan and understood it, they were ready to become active and to support the plan. Once they discovered the Leave No One Behind Promise, they realised the challenges and immediately began looking for solutions in their community.

The 2030 Agenda is a people's agenda, the promise "speaks to the very core of humanity" as David Donoghue states, and resonates with people with long-term experience of hardships.

After this short and very limited journey, three key messages emerged by way of conclusion:

1 – The urgent need for ongoing nationwide conversations

We know the clock is ticking. Not only for the 2030 plan itself but for our world as it is organised today. There is general agreement that urgent transformation is needed if we want to address inequalities, migration, unregulated material growth, loss in plants and animal species and mitigate global warming chaos for our children's generation.

After discussing with 110 Irish citizens, the majority of whom have their own experience of being left behind, we are even more convinced that the "transformative promise" will be only "transformative" if it is widely discussed and becomes a challenge to which grass-root communities can hold policy makers to account.

We need more conversations, and for ATD it is paramount that these conversations continue to involve key community stakeholders that are most at risk of being left behind.

ATD will endeavour to run a second series of conversations in 2019-2020 with two possible areas of focus:

- Develop the conversation on question three: "What Steps Can we Take to Achieve the Promise?" with the groups already involved in round one;
- Reach mixed groups in rural Ireland in collaboration with the network of the Family Resources Centres.

We hope that other stakeholders in the Irish Coalition 2030 and beyond, in universities, in corporations and in public Departments and Services, will also join the movement.

2 – The promise as an empowering pledge for members of deprived communities

Many ATD volunteers will remember Jacqueline Fay. Jacqueline lived for many years of the street and as for many in her situation, her life in severe poverty ended too early in July 2014. Jacqueline was also an ATD activist and a few weeks before her passing we were discussing the recent ATD International publication “Towards a Sustainable Development that Leaves No One Behind: Challenge 2015”. During this conversation Jacqueline told us: “Leaving No One Behind means bringing a homeless person back to my home, like someone from my family. I could lose my supported flat for taking this risk. But I do it because they are homeless.”

Today we also cannot forget Sue who during the conversation with members of the SAOL project, told us: ‘Let’s move ourselves from the back!’ Sue was turning the promise upside down. She was making the “Leave No One Behind” agenda a bottom up agenda, as opposed to a top down one.

Both Jacqueline and Sue remind us how important it is to walk the talk of the promise with the people concerned, and not for them.

We need to be ready to discover, understand and value the “Leave No One Behind” skills developed by citizens from deprived or marginalised communities. Furthermore, we need to ensure grass-root communities know about the Promise as it can give them also confidence to start to move from the back.

3 – A positive promise for people at the front

During one of the Conversations organised in May with the network Academics Stand Against Poverty, a key focus of the discussion was on the need to fully prioritise Goal 13 – Climate Action in the implementation of Agenda 2030. The rationale was strong: if we don’t do it, the implementation of all other goals will be completely jeopardized by the changes and most probably the chaos generated by global warming, extreme weather events and pollution.

This is likely a debate to be followed up in the next series of conversations. We believe that the “Leave No One Behind” agenda could be at the heart of a “Marshall Plan for Climate”. Here too, we may have to learn from people from the most deprived communities.

For now, it is important to underline an aspect which was suggested during discussions: we have to be able to articulate how keeping the Promise will benefit those to the front. This is potentially Question Four for a new series of conversations.

On 2nd October 2018, the world celebrated the 150th year of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi. As ATD prepare for 2019-2020, let's end this working paper with Gandhi's Talisman. This talisman, we believe, tells us why it makes sense for all of us to be aware of the Leave No One Behind Promise.

**WHENEVER YOU ARE IN DOUBT
OR WHEN THE SELF BECOMES TOO MUCH WITH YOU...
RECALL THE FACE OF THE POOREST AND MOST HELPLESS MAN
YOU HAVE EVER SEEN.
AND ASK YOURSELF IF THE STEP YOU CONTEMPLATE
IS GOING TO BE OF ANY USE - TO HIM.
WILL HE BE ABLE TO GAIN ANYTHING BY IT?
WILL IT RESTORE TO HIM THE CONTROL OVER HIS OWN LIFE AND DESTINY?
IN OTHER WORDS - WILL IT LEAD TO SELF-RULE, TO FREEDOM (SWARAJ)
FOR THE HUNGRY AND STARVING MILLIONS OF OUR COUNTRYMEN?
THEN YOU'LL FIND YOUR DOUBTS - AND YOUR SELF - MELTING AWAY.**

MAHATMA GANDHI (1869-1948)





[illegible]

OUR CENTRAL FOCUS: REACHING OUT TO THOSE WHOSE CONTRIBUTION IS MISSING

(extracts from ATD International's Common Ambitions 2013-2018)

The violence of poverty locks people and families into a terrible spiral of ignorance, deprivation, contempt and silence. Despite this, they resist day by day by surviving, by joining others and by building a sense of community. Their resistance gives them a unique experience and knowledge that society overlooks or ignores. In so doing, society robs itself of a contribution that is irreplaceable for facing today's global challenges. These people and families are missing from all the places where society takes shape.

As members of ATD, we join people and families who are abandoned and stigmatised because of long lasting poverty and social exclusion. Standing all together in dignity means acting such that all people will be taken into account and counted on wherever decisions are made that affect humanity. It means creating an opportunity for the world: **when no one is left behind, projects and policies can bring people together instead of dividing them; we can stem the tide of inequality; and we can draw closer to the ideals of justice, freedom and peace.**

Our central focus "Reaching Out to Those Whose Contribution Is Missing" is a compass for everything we undertake, both on our own and with partners, and wherever else each of us may be involved, whether in our communities, places of worship, political parties, labor unions, and so on. This focus is the key criterion for evaluating our Common Ambitions for 2013-2017.

Working toward this central focus involves all of us. We have a responsibility for supporting all those who take risks in implementing this approach. No one reaching out to the most vulnerable should be alone with this challenge, and all of our teams should be creative in this endeavor.

Three questions can guide us:

1. Does our group work together and support one another to "go and seek out those who are still missing"?
2. Even when we lack the capacity for our projects to include a greater number of people, do we find ways to welcome new participants who are recognized by other participants as being in situations of great difficulty? What initiatives do we take and what means do we mobilize for this purpose?
3. Do our projects enable the expression and contribution of these people? Does their presence and participation contribute to identifiable changes for themselves, for us, for their community and for everyone?



“‘LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND’ IS A CENTRAL PRINCIPLE OF THE AGENDA 2030 GOALS AND WE ARE, ABOVE ALL ELSE, CALLED UPON TO RE-FORGE A COMMITMENT TO THE INHERENT AND UNIVERSAL DIGNITY OF EVERY MEMBER OF THE HUMAN FAMILY.”

**PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. HIGGINS,
UN END POVERTY DAY, 17TH OCTOBER 2015**

All Together in Dignity Ireland – 26 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1 – www.atdireland.ie – October 2018

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