



SAOLTA SDG ADVOCATES 2021

A look at the Cohort's contribution to the SDGs

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INTRODUCTION

Development Perspectives' mission is to contribute to lessening poverty, inequality and climate change through transformative education and active global citizenship.

The SDG Advocate Training offers citizens an opportunity to become one of Ireland's SDG Advocates through this innovative project. This training course allows the Advocates to deepen their understanding of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals, represent the project and lead transformative change in Ireland. As part of the training the Cohort were tasked with developing and delivering actions to realise this transformative change.

The purpose of this report is to identify where and how the Cohort engaged with the SDG framework through their actions.

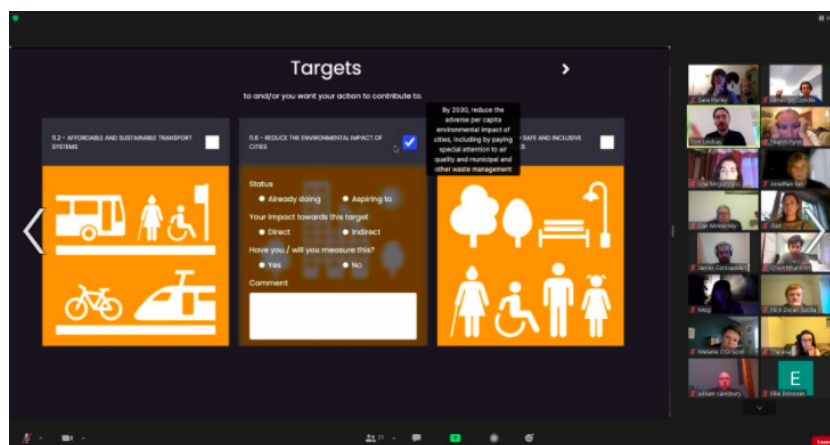


Figure: Screenshot of the initial workshop with SDG Advocates in September 2021

Method: The SDG Tag Tool

Development Perspectives commissioned the social enterprise Accelerating Change Together (ACT) to facilitate the use of ACT's SDG Tag Tool (www.acceleratingaction.com) by the Cohort. ACT led the Cohort through the use of the tool during a virtual session held in September 2021 as part of the Saolta Coaching and Mentoring programme. The Cohort were then given access again to the tool in early October to be able to assess their developed actions again.

The SDG Tag Tool is an online tool to assist local actors in mapping 'actions' (anything from policy and plans to projects) across the SDGs at a pace and scale required to achieve them.

The following report shows the results from the 19 Advocates who assessed their actions using the SDG Tag Tool. Note that some actions are ongoing while others represent intended actions currently under development.

RESULTS

The following sections show the overall results of the Cohort's assessments.

Type of Action Owner

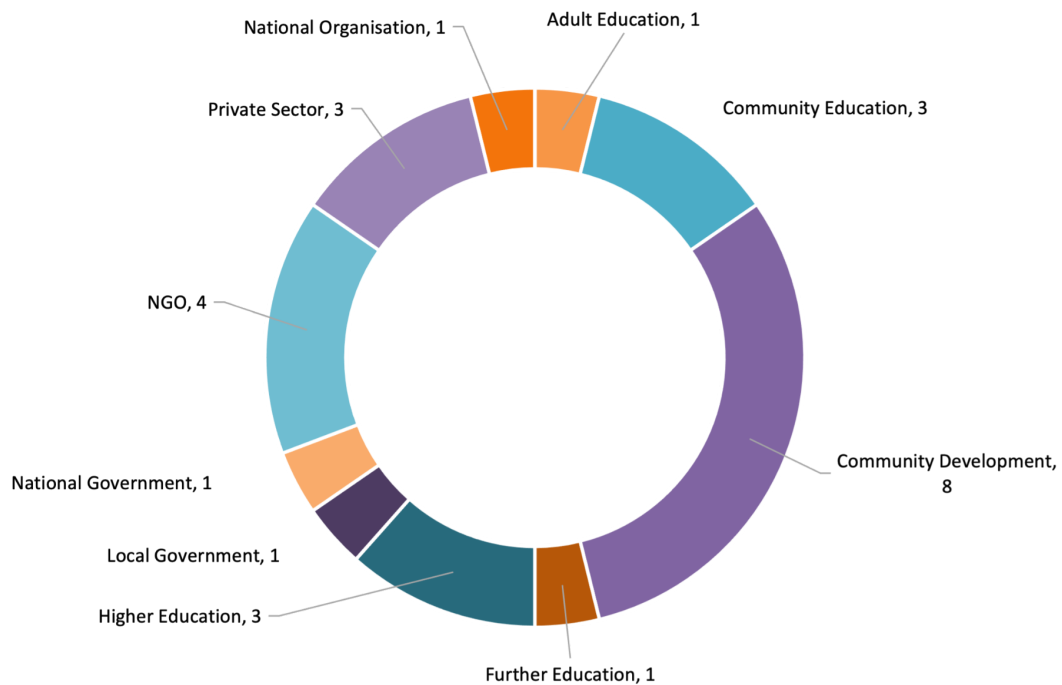


Figure: Action Owner Types

Action Owners represent a diverse group of actors: from the public, private and third sectors and national to local levels. The Cohort identified over half of all Action Owners as linked to themes of development and education namely 'Adult Education', 'Community Education', 'Community Development', 'Further Education' and 'Higher Education'.

Type of actions

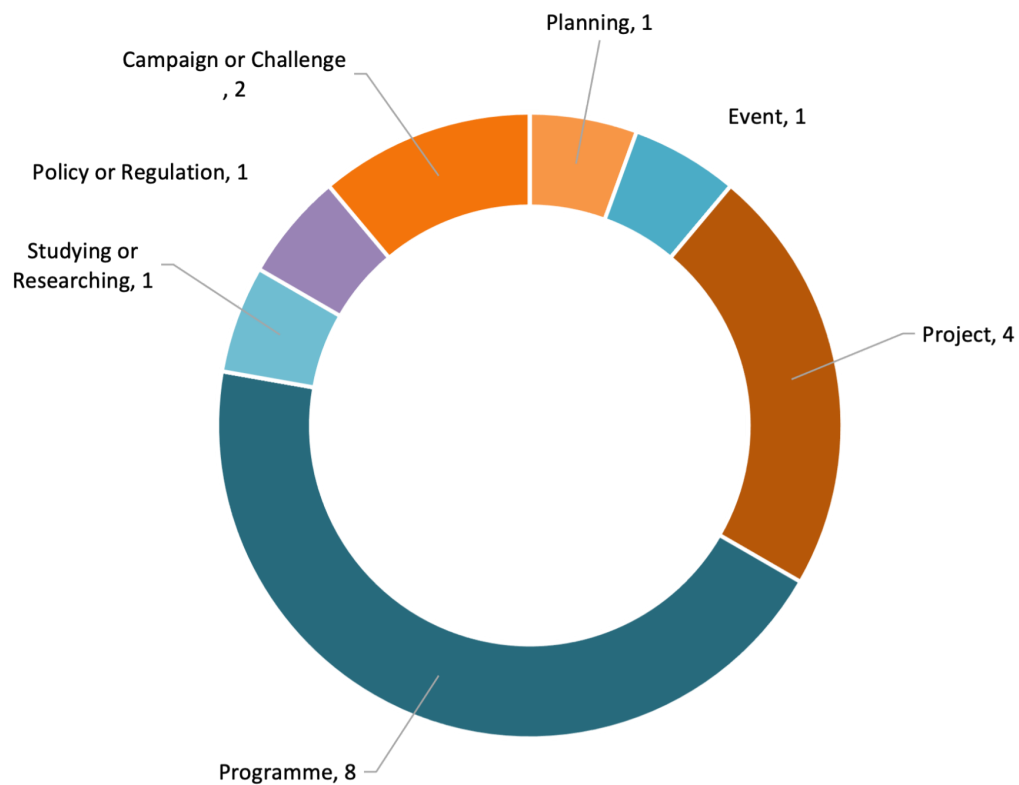


Figure: Action types

Over half the actions were identified as single activities by the Cohort ('Planning', 'Event', 'Project', 'Studying or Researching', 'Policy or Regulation', 'Campaign or Challenge'). It is firstly encouraging to note the diversity of action types as there is no one type of action that will help achieve the SDGs.

The transformative change required to achieve the SDGs needs concerted multi-faceted efforts and so it is also encouraging to see nearly half of all actions identified as 'Programmes' i.e. actions that are a set of coordinated activities with a particular long-term aim.

Status of actions

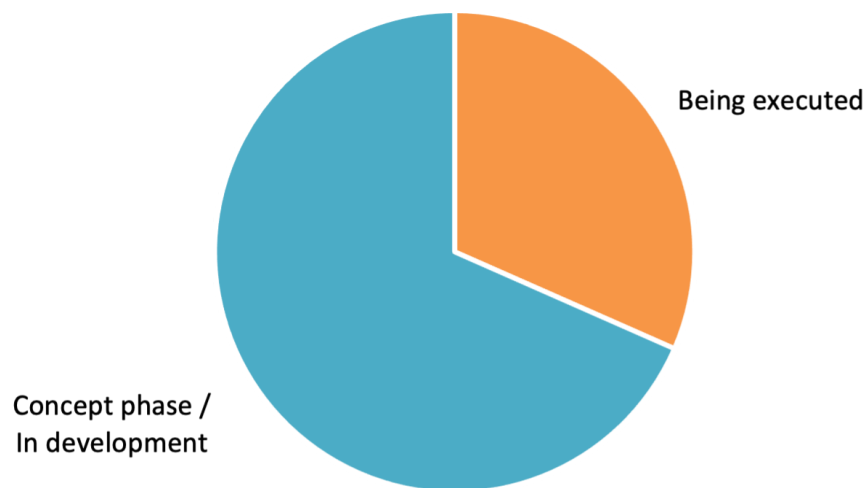


Figure: Status of each action

The Cohort's actions are in differing phases of implementation, perhaps reflecting the long-term versus short-term aims of each action. Approximately two thirds are either in the initial 'concept phase' or 'in development' while a third are 'being executed'.

Although it would be preferred that eventually all actions were being executed, there is arguably no desired status at this stage. For example, actions in the initial phases of concept or development, while perhaps currently further away from delivering impact, will be able to benefit from the Advocate programme's support in ensuring their actions are aligned with the SDGs. Meanwhile, actions currently being executed now may be able to make a more immediate impact.

Engagement

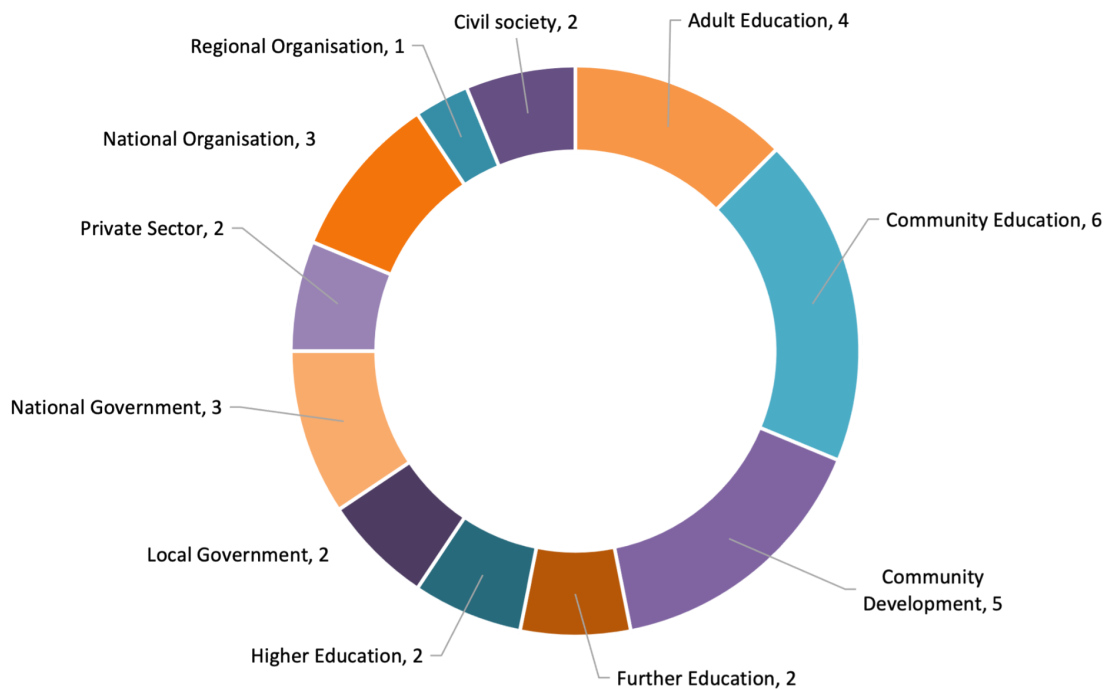


Figure: Answers to “who is the action owner engaging?”

The figure above shows the diversity of actors being engaged by the Cohort’s actions. Engaging all stakeholders is key to achieving the Global Goals – so much so it is even framed in one of the Global Goals: SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals.

FINDINGS

Most common Tags

As part of the SDG Tag Tool assessment, Advocates were asked to 'tag' their actions by choosing from a long list of preset terms linked to the SDGs and representing themes and topics within sustainable development more generally.

While this data does not capture specifically the relationship each action has with these themes and topics, it does present a broad picture of commonalities between the actions.

For example, the top five most common tags were 'youth', 'health and well-being', 'inclusive', 'sustainability' and 'education'. Many of these are linked not only to the SDGs but similarly the SDG Advocate Training's core principles (i.e. 'to contribute to lessening poverty, inequality and climate change through transformative education and active global citizenship') suggesting a close alignment between the core mission and action.

Table: Most common Tags

Most common Tags	Totals
youth	14
health and well-being	13
inclusive	12
education	11
sustainability	11
equality / inequality	10
older persons	9
environment	9
persons with disabilities	8
vulnerable people	8
marginalized communities	8
resilience	8
partnerships	8
culture	8
mental health	8

Most common SDG Targets

Of the 169 Targets, the Cohort's actions either are or will be contributing to just over half of them (87). Each action was linked to on average around 10 SDG Targets. It is important to be able to recognise the diverse and multiple benefits a single action can have on the SDGs. Firstly, being able to identify and align to multiple SDG Targets across multiple SDGs speaks to the 'integrated and indivisible' nature of the SDGs. This is important as globally it is common for actions and/or organisations to align themselves to only a few SDGs. However, unless we realise the broader potential contribution of our actions it is less likely we will realise the full benefits.

The most common SDG Target was '4.7. Education for sustainable development and global citizenship' which was selected seven more times (13 instances) than the second most common SDG Target (6 instances). Perhaps the reason for this is Target 4.7. appears to align closely with the target of the SDG Advocate training itself.

Many of the other most commonly chosen SDG Targets are perhaps not a surprise as they are the kind of targets that can be achieved by more local, human-centred action e.g. targets relating to promoting inclusion, education and sustainability.

Table: Most common SDG Targets

Most common SDG Targets	Totals
1.5. Build resilience to environmental, economic and social disasters	4
3.4. Reduce mortality from non-communicable diseases and promote mental health	4
4.3. Equal access to affordable technical, vocational and higher education	4
4.7. Education for sustainable development and global citizenship	13
5.5. Ensure full participation in leadership and decision-making	4
10.2. Promote universal social, economic and political inclusion	6
11.1. Safe and affordable housing	4
11.3. Inclusive and sustainable urbanization	4
11.6 Reduce the environmental impact of cities	4
11.7. Provide access to safe and inclusive green and public spaces	5
12.2. Sustainable management and use of natural resources	5
12.5. Substantially reduce waste generation	6
12.6. Encourage companies to adopt sustainable practices and sustainability reporting	4
12.8. Promote universal understanding of sustainable lifestyles	4
13.3. Build knowledge and capacity to meet climate change	6
16.7. Ensure responsive, inclusive and representative decision-making	4
17.17. Encourage effective partnerships	5

Most common Global Goals

All 17 of the Global Goals are reflected in the actions of the Cohort. While quantity may not correlate directly with quality, it is good to see that no SDGs were ignored.

The most commonly identified SDGs again speak to human-centred local action: education (SDG 1), consumption (SDG 12), cities and communities (SDG 11), partnerships (SDG 17).

The least chosen SDGs don't necessarily mean the Cohort considered them less important, rather the least common SDGs may be too specialist for a general audience e.g. an action would likely have to be intentional in covering specialist topics such as hunger (SDG 2), life under water (SDG 14), water and sanitation (SDG 6) etc.

Table: Most common SDGs

Most common SDGs	Totals
1. No Poverty	9
2. Zero Hunger	3
3. Good Health and Well-being	16
4. Quality Education	27
5. Gender Equality	10
6. Clean Water and Sanitation	4
7. Affordable and Clean Energy	5
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth	13
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	6
10. Reduced Inequalities	10
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities	20
12. Responsible Consumption and Production	25
13. Climate Action	10
14. Life Below Water	4
15. Life on Land	6
16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	10
17. Partnerships for the Goals	17

CONCLUSION

We hope to show through this exercise that the Cohort's actions add up to something bigger, how necessary engagement and partnerships are in realising the SDGs and that even an individual Advocate can contribute to more SDGs and SDG Targets than they may necessarily have realised. We all have a part to play.

The assessment process also brought up some big questions for the SDG Tag Tool and the UN:

1. There remains a difficulty and disconnect between the Global Goals and a clear link to how they can be realised through local action. The SDG Targets give clearer indication as to how the SDGs can and should be achieved, however even they speak to national level efforts and are described in technical terms that at times is not suited for a more general audience of local non-state actors.
2. Some of the language used in the SDGs can and has become outdated. The SDGs were created in 2015. Nearly seven years on and half way to the end point of 2030, terms like 'slums' that are used in the SDGs are now seen as outdated within development education.

Ultimately, the results from the Cohort send a positive message of hope: that action can and is happening at a local level.