

STORIES OF ACTION

FROM THE 2024 SDG ADVOCATE TRAINING COHORT



2024 ADVOCATES



Rossa Cassidy
Ellen Corby
Christine Lynn
Norette Kirby
Amina Hadj Ameur

Alan Byrne
Eoin O'Brien
Stephen Matenga
Liam Kildea
Liam McGlynn

Daniel Binu
Mary Sinnott
Susan Barimo
Mysi Badenhorst
Ekaterina Koneva

Joanne Doherty
Sophie Walsh
Ciara O'Meara
Anna Gacquin
Philomena Obasi
Eolain Downey

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Speakers

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Chriomthann Morrison

Partners



Venues

Bru Moytura,
Corlisheen, Riverstown, Co Sligo,
F52 D290

Sonairte,
The Ninch, Laytown, Co Meath,
A92 D9XH

Common Knowledge,
Boghil, Co Clare, V95 DK38

ABOUT THE SDG ADVOCATE TRAINING

The SDG Advocate Training offers 23 Adult and Community Educators an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and be supported in the design and implementation of an informed SDG Action Project within their practice.

What are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)/ Global Goals?

In September 2015, world leaders from 193 countries came together to adopt the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs became a framework to guide our social, economic and environmental actions to achieve a better future for all by 2030.

As a result, everyone is responsible for making the SDG agenda a reality.

What is Global Citizenship Education (GCE)?

Irish Aid defines Global Citizenship Education as "a lifelong educational process, which aims to increase public awareness and understanding of the rapidly changing, interdependent and unequal world in which we live. By challenging stereotypes and encouraging independent thinking, GCE helps people to critically explore how global justice issues interlink with their everyday lives and how they can act to build a better world. This is particularly important in an increasingly globalised world faced with immense challenges, such as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, entrenched poverty and growing inequality, as well as misinformation-fuelled radicalisation." – Irish Aid.



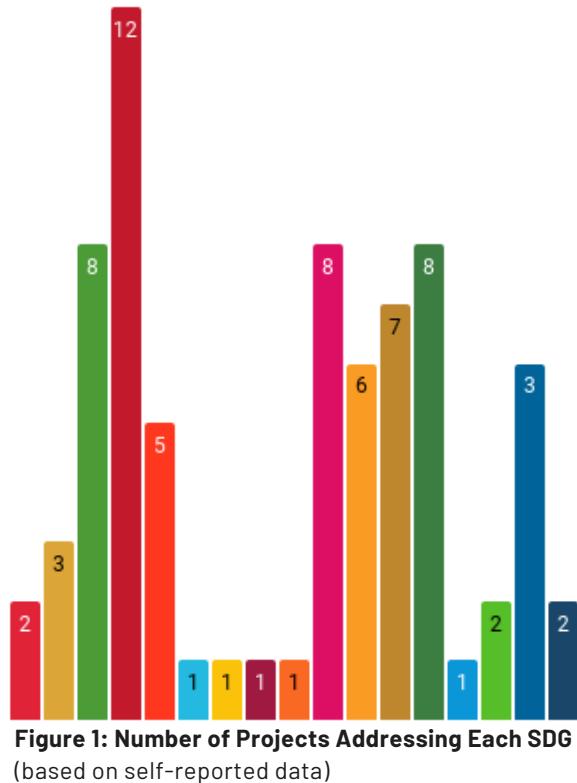


Figure 1 shows that each SDG is addressed by at least one Action Project in 2024, with SDG 4: Quality Education as the most popular SDG addressed (which is not surprising given the Training's focus on the Adult and Community Education sector). Other common SDGs include:

- SDG 3: Good Health & Wellbeing
- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
- SDG 13: Climate Action

Further, 13 of 18 Action Projects captured for analysis addressed at least three different SDGs, demonstrating both participants' understandings of the interconnectedness of the SDGs, as well as participants' capacities to apply the SDGs within their wide range of work and contexts.

"Be a global citizen. Act with passion and compassion. Help us make this world safer and more sustainable today and for the generations that will follow us. That is our moral responsibility."

The next section is a compilation of SDG Advocate's Story of Change accompanied with photos and illustrations of their Action Projects and learning over the course of the training.

Alan Byrne, alongside...



For Alan, embarking on the SDG Advocate Course was akin to setting sail on an expansive, enlightening voyage. Over seven transformative months, he became immersed in a vibrant tapestry of knowledge, dialogue, and discovery. Engaging with the SDGs broadened his critical perspective, enabling him to better understand the complexity of issues such as poverty, climate change, and equality.

This newfound awareness empowered him to approach these topics with a more nuanced understanding, informed by the varied experiences and insights of people worldwide. One of the most rewarding aspects of the training for Alan was the dynamic peer-to-peer engagement with individuals from diverse sectors of adult and community education, each contributing unique expertise and perspectives.

Exploring topics like global citizenship education challenged his preconceived notions and assumptions, a process that was both uncomfortable and liberating.

This introspection ultimately led to personal growth and strengthened his ability to foster

an environment of respect and understanding in his educational practice.

Informed by this experience, Alan is now poised to develop creative, innovative, and purposeful learner and tutor training programs within the adult education space. The shared passion among his peers has inspired him to continue this vital work, building a community of educators committed to making a meaningful impact.

Lesson Plan SDG Resources

A screenshot of a digital lesson plan for Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11). The page features a large orange header with the goal number and name. Below the header are several sections with text, images, and icons. One section shows a cartoon character of a person with short brown hair. At the bottom, there are two large buttons: 'WATCH NOW' with a play icon and 'CLICK HERE' with a cursor icon. The footer contains links to various UN-Habitat and CLEI resources.

Eoin O'Brien



The collaboration between Alan Byrne and Eoin O'Brien led to developing a transformative resource for the adult education sector, comprising a **comprehensive website**, **mobile app**, and **tutor training course**, all designed to integrate SDGs into the core adult and community education curriculum. Yet this initiative is more than just a teaching tool; it is an educational training program aimed at equipping tutors and staff with knowledge and skills to broaden the educational landscape within their own communities.

We all have a role to play in creating a brighter, more sustainable future. Through our action project, we are committed to empowering educators and learners alike to contribute meaningfully to the global goals, fostering an environment of collective responsibility and positive change.

Key Features of the SDG Tutor Training:

- **Universal Design Approach:** The project embraces a universal design approach, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity in tutor and staff training. This method allows us to reach a diverse audience, accommodating varying learning needs and styles.
- **SDG Mapping and Resources:** Tutors can utilise the platform to map SDGs to existing curricula and classes, drawing upon an extensive repository of resources. These resources are meticulously aligned to module descriptor learning outcomes across a wide range of subjects.
- **Training Program:** Our training program is crafted to place SDGs at the core of teaching practice. It provides tutors with practical strategies to incorporate sustainable development concepts into their lessons, making them a central focus of the learning experience.



Liam McGlynn



Liam works as an educator in Technological University Dublin TU Dublin – Blanchardstown Campus, where he taught on community development, human rights, cultural diversity, and research since September 2010. Before this, Liam worked in the midlands counties Offaly, Laois, Longford, and Westmeath in community and local development and education.



Liam feels a close connection with both the midlands and Blanchardstown communities, being a member of the Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group, the Sierra Leone Ireland Partnership, Community Work Ireland, and the Men's Development Network. He is also on the Teaching Council and is the Chair of the college's branch of the trade union.

Liam especially enjoyed how The SDG Advocate Training emphasised the connections between each of the SDGs, and how the Training used and expanded on the Learning Journey.

Liam is passionate about the Sustainable Development Goals and Global Citizenship Education, and aimed to host a webinar event on the SDGs with Third-Year Community Development and Youth Work students. Through focusing the event's themes on Human Rights, Peace and Justice, and Climate Action, the event centred on raising awareness of and actioning the SDGs with adults in the community.

Ellen Corby



Ellen signed up for the SDG Advocate Training to work with other GCE workers from all walks of life in Ireland and get a better idea of the kinds of campaigns and projects she can bring to her work with LYCS. While a lot of people living in the NEIC know of LYCS, they want to do further GCE outreach that links with other communities in the area and creates a sense of being part of the global community too.

The project began with a consultation involving the staff at LYCS, who were already familiar with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from prior training sessions conducted by the author and their predecessors. During this consultation, a few SDGs were selected as Key Focuses for the upcoming year. The team collectively determined that SDG 4: Quality Education should be a core principle underpinning all levels of the organization and its projects. This decision aligns with LYCS's commitment to inclusion and the Advantage Thinking principles, emphasizing that everyone in the room possesses skills and experiences that contribute to a rich learning environment.

For the three focus areas for individual outreach events, the staff selected SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing, SDG 5: Gender Equality, and SDG 13: Climate Action as the most relevant to learners across all age groups.

Next, Ellen began planning event days themed around each SDG. This is still an ongoing process, with one such event October 2024. For the Gender Equality event, on International Eradication of Poverty Day LYCS hosted a screening of the new film *She Rises Up* about supporting female entrepreneurs in the Global South to develop their local areas and create employment to help end forced migration. Several CTC and Adult Ed learners and staff attended, along with several staff and service users from other local organisations.

There are more events planned for 2025: a Sports Day will be designed and run by LYSC's Adult Learners for our Early Years Centre, with each event themed around the SDGs. This process will involve the learners training on the SDGs, which will then inform their design of the programme aimed at passing on this new knowledge to young children, nurturing connections between each part of the organisation. Parents and families will be invited to the day, and Adult learners will be supported to continue the cycle of imparting knowledge and passion about GCE and the SDGs.

"The SDG Advocate Training has broadened and challenged my understanding of the SDGs – their creation, implementation, and future. Mentorship from the Development Perspectives team and fellow advocates was very useful, providing positive critique and ideas for further events and approaches. As we are updating our organisation's webpage and online presence in the coming months, I hope to start social media campaigns that link to the SDGs, and that bring LYCS life outward to the community, and set the precedent for yearly events."

Liam Kildea



Liam Kildea embarked on the SDG Advocate Training to learn how to incorporate the SDGs into the work and activities done by the committee of Taughmaconnell Hall in County Roscommon, to which he's the Chairman.

Focusing on Target 10.2 under SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities and SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, Liam's action project brought different members of the community in Roscommon together in Taughmaconnell Hall to celebrate the environment and the community through music, dance and storytelling. Inspired by Culture Night, this event focused on inclusion and was designed to be accessible for community members with additional needs.

Going forward, participants hope to make this a regular event and Liam believes the project is about to take on a life of its own. Liam also intends to continue to highlight the SDGs through the Hall's events and visuals, with an intergenerational event currently in its planning stages. He also hopes to become more of an advocate for his local community in the wider SDG space.

The SDG Advocate Training was hugely beneficial to Liam's action project and Liam felt he had found a home and a group of people with a similar ethos. The journey has been empowering and Liam now feels he can put his work and the SDGs into stronger terms and connect the two together when previously he had heard of the SDGs at various events and seen the logos yet did not have a deep understanding of what they were. The SDG Advocate Training also challenged Liam to think "outside the box" and he benefited from the opportunities to discuss his project with the other advocates at different stages of project planning, doing, and reviewing, and the thought-provoking exercises during the training.



Rossa Cassidy



Rossa is the Lead Education Officer for the Rediscovery Centre, National Centre for the Circular Economy, and undertook the SDG Advocate Training to support the Rediscovery Centre in developing an educational project on the Sustainable Development Goals. Through tailored workshops around the SDGs, this project will support Primary Schools with embedding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) into everyday life.

Designed to be insightful, engaging, practical and interactive, the project aims to build students' knowledge around the SDG's and supply them tools to create local change. Each workshop focuses on where different Sustainable Development Goals intersect with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) to provide students with practical learning and actions they can take.

Follow-up workshops will then support students with charting their activities and progressing their projects within their schools. Additional resources and a dedicated website will also assist teachers and guardians in supporting their students. The Rediscovery Centre will shortly start prototyping these workshops before starting their delivery in the new year.

"The SDG Advocate Training with Development Perspectives has been an incredible aid for me and my team in developing this education programme. The immersive and skill-based nature of the training have significantly informed and inspired the contextualising and framing for our own programme."



Christine Lynn



Christine signed up for the SDG Advocate Training because she considered it a good opportunity to educate herself on the SDG's and to meet with people who also believe in action rather than just talking about change for the better. Her Action Project linked to SDG 16 primarily, and also SDG 3, 4, 5, 10, and 11, as she wanted to find more ways for The Prem Rawat Foundation's Peace Education Program to be made available to people in Ireland regardless of their life situation.

Today, many people assume 'peace' is simply the opposite of war. However, by looking at peace as a fundamental need like food or water, people develop a different perspective on how we approach the world - this is what the Peace Education Program is all about.

The SDG Advocate Training has given me a lot of inspiration and confidence in promoting something that I strongly believe can benefit people in Ireland, especially

those in seemingly hopeless situations such as incarceration, homelessness, and residing in Direct Provision centres. Learning more about myself and who I am was the most exciting type of learning in this training, and everyone should have the opportunity to experience it.



Christine especially enjoyed one of the talks given by Bobby during the Training on Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey; the mentor, the obstacles that will most likely present themselves, the storytelling, the journey home, all play a part in the fruition or coming together of an idea.

With what she learned about 'reflective practice' and more from the DP team, she has developed insightful feedback forms for her fellow volunteers, set up stands at Mind and Body Experience fairs across the island, and started a 10-week virtual Peace Education programme in September 2024. Her learning continues to support her and her team as they continue to build relationships with organisations and offer the Peace Education programme to refugees and asylum seekers in Mayo and across Ireland.

Norette Kirby



With the concept of "Think Globally, Act Locally" in mind, Norette is initiating an action project centred around a network of communities/districts similar to the original cooperative movement in the late 1800s in rural Ireland.

Through building links and offering an alternative platform which is citizen-centred, knowledge-based, and value-led, this network will tap into the wide range of established communities, rural and urban producers, makers with services, suppliers, retailers, consumers, and so on.

Joined together, each area/district will facilitate a unified approach underpinned by shared intrinsic values to embed the SDGs in their work, all under the umbrella of one shared organisation and vision. In other words, this project aims to build a bottom-up, citizen-led network of producers which can counteract the top-down approach to production and consumption which proves highly destructive to the environment.

In particular, Norette is initiating this project with the following aims:

- To ameliorate the effects of an urban-centred bias and urban-rural divide.
- To facilitate local and on-island sourcing of produce, reducing associated transportation.
- To encourage more producers to pursue organic/biodynamic/natural farming methods.
- To establish an accessible platform for circulating surplus production, preventing waste.
- To archive, nurture, and enhance local knowledge/wisdom in rural Ireland.

Amina Hadj Ameur



Amina has a background in Political Science and International Relations from Izmir University of Economics in Turkey together with an MS in International Humanitarian Action from UCD and Uppsala University. She has worked with various organisations from Turkey, Jordan, and the UK, including Trust Consultancy and Development, UNRWA, Concordis International, and the Business and Human Rights Resource Center. Amina has worked on various thematic issues including human rights, migration, and peacebuilding in Central Africa and the MENA region.

Before starting the SDG Advocate Training, Amina's volunteer work included 6 weeks in Brazil under AIESEC with NGOs Casa Shalon and Harpias, focusing on UN Sustainable Development Goal 13, Climate Action. Amina is trilingual, fluent in Arabic, French and English. She also started working recently with Amal Women's association as a Community Development Officer, supporting Muslim migrant women in Dublin.

During the SDG Advocate Training, Amina was especially concerned with inclusion, discrimination and prejudice, structural inequalities, and issues affecting mental health and wellbeing among asylum-seeking and refugee men in Ireland. Because social peace starts with inner peace, Amina focused on connecting the SDGs for Good Health and Wellbeing (SDG3) and for Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (SDG16) with the Inner Development Goals and Trauma-Informed principles.



Stephen Matenga



Besides working as a freelance journalist since 2006, Stephen has been actively involved in students activism and youth development. He was elected President of the Students Representative Council in Zimbabwe while in Journalism school before his expulsion and subsequent banning from all institutions of higher learning for his activism against the dictatorship. Prior to completing further studies in the Netherlands, Stephen founded a number of youth organisations, many of which he continues to serve on the boards for. When he returned to Zimbabwe, Stephen established a rural health clinic and set up the National Association of Freelance Journalists.

Now based in Ireland, Stephen's work currently focuses on SDG targets 4.7 (Quality Education), targets 16.6 and 16.8 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and 17.1, 17.3 and 17.6 (Partnership for the Goals).

Stephen joined the SDG Advocate Training to further develop and combine his skill sets in Environmental Education, Climate Action, Youth Work, and Journalism to advance the SDGs through Global Citizenship Education.

Stephen's Action Project is part of the creation and operationalisation of the Centre for International Sustainable Development Cooperation (CISDC). Through Global Citizenship Education (aka Education for Sustainable Development), the CISDC aims to mobilise young people to take action for sustainable development.

Stephen is currently planning a Cycle Tour for Sustainability (Ireland and Zimbabwe) in Spring 2025 to raise awareness of the SDGs, raise resources to support young people's action projects in Africa, and to promote cultural exchange between young people across the continents.



Daniel Binu



From childhood, Daniel has harbored a passion for community engagement. During his degree studies, he actively addressed social, political, educational, and environmental issues, and was strongly influenced by Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

After migrating to Ireland in 2008, Daniel closely observed the evolving social, economic, political, and cultural landscapes, but found limited opportunities for direct engagement. Nonetheless, he consistently worked with Indian communities in Ireland, tackling environmental and social issues whenever possible. His community involvement included running a chess club, participating in cultural and literary clubs, and creating a short film and a one-act drama on environmental themes. Now a father of three, Daniel continues to pursue his passion for community work and lifelong learning.

Since 2018, Daniel has run Pedals Ireland, organising annual workshops and competitions for school children on a modest scale, while also pursuing further studies in areas including the History of Slavery, Migration, Interfaith Dialogue, Politics, Economics, and Irish History and Tour Guiding.



Through Pedals, Daniel's Action Project The "Empowering Tomorrow" aims to create a deep awareness of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among older secondary school students aged 15-19. Through a series of interactive workshops followed by focused activities, the project will inspire students to take SDGs seriously in their future studies and career paths. The project seeks to bridge the gap between academic learning and global responsibility, encouraging students to engage with real-world issues and consider how their future decisions can contribute to sustainable development.

Mary Sinnott



Mary Sinnott is a cycling and sustainability activist in Waterford. She participated in the SDG Advocate Training to learn more about the SDGs in order to integrate them into her local and national advocacy. Since childhood, she was drawn to nature and sustainability. Through sport and gardening, Mary was challenged to leave aside the tidy, ordered, perspective on nature, and to think about it as an entity in its own right which we should regard and protect.

Mary's action project is called 'Grow It Forward' and encourages people to have a "pocket of nature" in our homes - even as small as 1 metre-squared - to develop a closer relationship with nature and life on land. It is for adults of all ages and abilities who don't really have a garden and don't have confidence around nurturing and minding plants. The key learning is to think in systems and connect with people in very small ways in order to build our personal networks and work towards sustainability - all through developing people's confidence and abilities with that little pocket of greenery in their own home environment.



Through her action project, Mary has not only shared plants but also her own skills of gardening and love of nature, encouraging others to offer the same to others. Mary firmly believes that modern consumer life has led to the loss of these human connections which we must build back to reinforce sustainability, the rights of Nature, the benefit of Nature and our dependence on it. Through the joy of seeing plants grow and insects and animals explore and thrive on a small patch of Nature in one's home, we are prompted to appreciate nature and develop an appetite for circular living.

Susan Barimo



Susan is an experienced clothing maker and sewing instructor with a deep rooted passion for community engagement and environmental sustainability. Growing up in Boston and Maine, Susan developed a love for creative skills early on. She studied textiles, clothing design, sewing and pattern drafting in Boston, where she honed her technical expertise.

After graduating, Susan managed a fabric and craft store that also sold sewing machines. She initiated a teaching program at the store, bringing in various facilitators and creating a rich learning environment that benefited the community.

Married with three children, Susan continued to teach sewing, constantly learning new skills and establishing numerous clubs to share her love of creativity, sewing, and crafts. Her efforts have consistently brought people together, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose.



Passionate about the environment and community resilience, Susan believes in the healing power of collective learning and creative practice. She is dedicated to teaching and empowering individuals with skills that foster unity and resilience, shaping and inspiring futures.

Currently Susan serves as the Co-Director of the Living Commons, a not-for-profit socially engaged arts association based in Cork City. She runs community classes from their community center on Shandon Street. Susan also facilitates a Women's Shed at the Blackpool Community Center, where she teaches clothing construction and pattern making.

She also teaches dressmaking, fibre arts, and various crafts for multiple organizations across Cork City. She is currently designing a social enterprise hub for sewing, repair and upskilling, and recently partook in a fundraiser fashion show in which each piece showcased a different type of up-cycling and centred on a feminist/gender equality message.

Susan's unwavering commitment to teaching and community building makes her a valuable asset to the arts and crafts community, continually fostering creativity and togetherness.

Ekaterina Koneva



Ekaterina decided to participate in the SDG Advocate Training to improve her knowledge about the SDGs and receive support as she pursued my Action Project. Through the Training, she got a chance to build a network of people with similar backgrounds, concerns, and project ideas.

As part of Ekaterina's role as a trainer at the Immigrants Training and Advice Services, her Action Project is the creation of a new educational programme, '**Start with Yourself**', to build awareness and knowledge about Ireland, Climate Change, and the SDGs. This programme will be aimed at members of the migrant community in Ireland who have not had the chance to learn about the country and its history, its landscapes and climate, or local and broader environment and social issues.

The programme will include lectures, training, workshops, practical demonstrations, information sessions on schemes and supports available to learners, and 1-to-1 sessions for support and assistance if required. All this will build up learners' knowledge and skills and encourage practical, sustainable behaviour change.

While the short-term goal is to deliver the programme through live sessions, the long-term goal is to offer online recordings and digital materials and documents so the learning experience can be as accessible as possible. Further, the course will be created in 3 languages: English, Polish, and Russian, and may even be adapted for children and teenagers in time.

This programme plans to be developed and delivered in cooperation with different organisations, government and charities, for example, SEAI, local authorities, local development companies and local community groups. The pilot training is planned to be delivered by Spring 2025.

Philomena Obasi



Philomena signed up for the SDG Advocate Training to enhance her understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their critical role in promoting equitable education for all. As a migrant-turned-Irish-citizen, she has experienced first-hand the challenges faced in different education systems, and this training aligned with her passion for creating inclusive, accessible education and empowering marginalised communities. Philomena was particularly motivated to learn strategies for bridging gaps in education levels and capacities, ensuring that every learner, regardless of their background, can thrive. She aspires to be an incentive for positive change within her community and beyond.

Philomena's action project focuses on improving learning outcomes for migrant learners through Conversational English Classes. These classes are specially designed for non-native English speakers in Ireland, allowing them to create content rooted in their realities and perspectives. As a migrant from Nigeria, she has experienced the challenges of integration and acclimatisation, which motivates her approach to teaching.

While conventional textbooks are used, the classes prioritise practical, everyday topics, such as greetings, navigating public transport, and interacting in community settings (GP visits, shopping, Post Office engagements, children's school/teacher relationships, etc.). These topics equip adult learners—who often juggle family and work responsibilities—with the conversational skills needed for daily life.

In the classes, discussions are encouraged comparing learners' cultures with Irish culture, creating an inclusive environment where all voices are heard. This fosters ownership over their learning spaces, transforming them into "brave spaces" for open dialogue. The methodology also emphasises the importance of non-verbal communication, acknowledging that gestures, expressions, and body language play crucial roles in conveying meaning.

Ultimately, this approach aligns with SDG 4, aiming for Quality Education that is meaningful and accessible. The Training's emphasis on critical thinking, systems thinking, problem-solving, and active citizenship has elevated our methods for teaching conversational English to migrants. Further, through conversational learning, we empower migrant learners to navigate their daily lives confidently, reinforcing their integration into Irish society while celebrating their unique cultural identities (SDG 10).

Eolain Downey



A past self would have presumed 'Developed' parts of the world like Ireland and the EU "had their affairs in order", which is a dangerous pit that a lot of people easily fall into by thinking big problems in the world are far away from us, consequentially making them seem all the more difficult to solve.

The SDG Advocate Training has been an important part of Eolain's learning and growth around global issues, human rights, and active citizenship. With the attention this training brought to thinking critically about what goes on behind the façade of control and compliance, he has realised the importance of active citizenship by individuals all over the world, and the necessity to act against complacency and ignorance of corporate greed.

The Training also highlighted the general lack of awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals, which informed Eolain's own Action Project becoming an awareness-raising campaign to inform citizens about the SDG's with a call to action to be more active citizens.

The full campaign will be a series of short videos for social media, designed to captivate attention and motivate

viewers to find out more about the SDGs, their significance, what people can do to become active citizens, and perhaps even encourage others to take part in opportunities like the SDG Advocate Training.

So far, he has completed and posted an introductory video to the SDGs, taken part in more trainings on social media, video editing, and stand-up comedy, and he has begun leading a Youth team of Comhairle na nÓg to support their own learning about the SDGs and video production. Eolain expects to produce several crash course-style videos and more as this Action Project progresses and develops over time.



Thank you!

Special thanks to our 2024 Training Team

Chriomthann Morrison
Leader

Jill Fletcher
Leader

Bobby McCormack
Lead Facilitator / CEO

Margaret Downey
Coordinator

Tulip
Videographer /
Photographer





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