Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Report from the SDG National Stakeholder Forum Meeting

'Leaving No One Behind'

17 January 2023

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1. Introduction

Leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first are central commitments given under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the 2030 Agenda) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In response to feedback received in the 2021 SDG national consultation process, it was decided to hold a Sustainable Development Goals National Stakeholder Forum focusing on the principle of Leaving No One Behind and to begin a dialogue on what the principle means in an Irish context.

On 17 January 2023, a Forum meeting was held which aimed to facilitate a wide representation of individuals and groups to develop a shared understanding of the principle and key messages for policy makers to take into account when developing policy. This report captures some of the main outputs and findings from the day.

Work of the graphic harvester from the January SDG National Stakeholder Forum

2. Background

2.1. SDG National Stakeholder Forum

The Sustainable Development Goals National Stakeholder Forum is organised by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) and is the principal mechanism for national stakeholder engagement across sectors in respect of the 2030 Agenda. The overarching aim is to facilitate open and inclusive engagement and develop collaborative partnerships in support of the SDGs. The Forum is scheduled to meet on three occasions in 2023.

A commitment made under the SDG National Implementation Plan 2022-2024 was to appoint an SDG Forum Committee to redesign an improved Forum format based on stakeholder feedback. Twelve individuals, representing a variety of sectors and backgrounds, were appointed in November 2022 and are working with officials from DECC to co-design a well-publicised, accessible, inclusive and improved National Stakeholder Forum format for 2023. Please see Appendix 1 for the list of Committee members. The intention of the Committee was to ensure that the promotion of the forum meeting, the format of the meeting and participation at the meeting was as inclusive and accessible as possible for all participants:

- The event was promoted using plain English, it was made clear in the promotional material that everyone was welcome and specific harder-to-reach organisations and groups were directly invited.
- The event was held as a hybrid session which could be attended online or in-person.
- A sign-language interpreter was on stage and on screen.
- PowerPoint slides and materials used at the event were made available in advance of the meeting upon request.
- The venue was fully wheelchair accessible and clear signage for facilities was on display.
- Verbal accessibility instructions were given at the beginning of the meeting and an accessibility officer introduced for any questions or issues which arose during the day.
- A quiet room was available at all time and attendees were invited to participate in the workshops or to take time to reflect on the day and its theme individually.

"That notion of choice. Creating the conditions to choose to engage but also acknowledging that people participate in very different ways and that's a spectrum and not participating is participating as well."

– Valerie Lewis (SDG Forum Committee)

Spoken word poet FELISPEAKs performing "A Sigh"

2.2. Leaving No One Behind

The themes of inclusion, tolerance and empowerment run throughout the 2030 Agenda. The objective of the 2030 Agenda is that all people, in all countries, are to benefit from the achievement of the SDGs and the full realisation of human rights.

The 2030 Agenda calls for the empowerment of the following groups[1], ensuring that no one is left behind:

- children
- youth
- disabled people
- persons living with HIV/AIDS
- older persons
- indigenous peoples
- refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants

Additional information, including the factors identified by the United Nations as contributing to individuals and groups being left behind can be found on www.gov.ie/sdgs.

[1]Paragraph 4, Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development

3. National Stakeholder Forum January 2023: Leaving No One Behind

On 17 January 2023, an SDG National Stakeholder Forum was held focusing on the principle of Leaving No One Behind. The intention was to begin a broad and inclusive dialogue including a wide representation of groups and communities to develop a shared understanding of Leaving No One Behind in an Irish context and to ensure its further incorporation into policy and national SDG structures.

The Forum was a hybrid event and held in-person at the Aviva Stadium, Dublin and streamed online using Vimeo. Online participation was facilitated through Slido.

The Forum was organised by DECC and facilitated by Antaris Consulting. The Agenda from the day has been included in **Appendix 2** and can also be found at www.gov.ie/sdgs.

3.1. Objectives of the Forum meeting

The objectives of the Forum meeting were:

1. To develop a shared understanding of the principle of Leaving No One Behind and what it means in an Irish context.
2. To develop key messages that stakeholders want to convey to policy makers and for policy makers to take account of when developing policy.
3. To inform how we organise SDG National Stakeholder engagement going forward to better ensure wider and more inclusive and accessible participation.

The outputs from the workshops are to form part of the SDG training and toolkit which will be developed over 2023 for civil servants and local authority officers.

3.2. Attendance

568 participants joined in-person and online.

- 151 in-person attendees
- 417 online attendees

Participants joined online from 6 countries. A variety of sectors were represented at the meeting, as shown below in Figure 1.

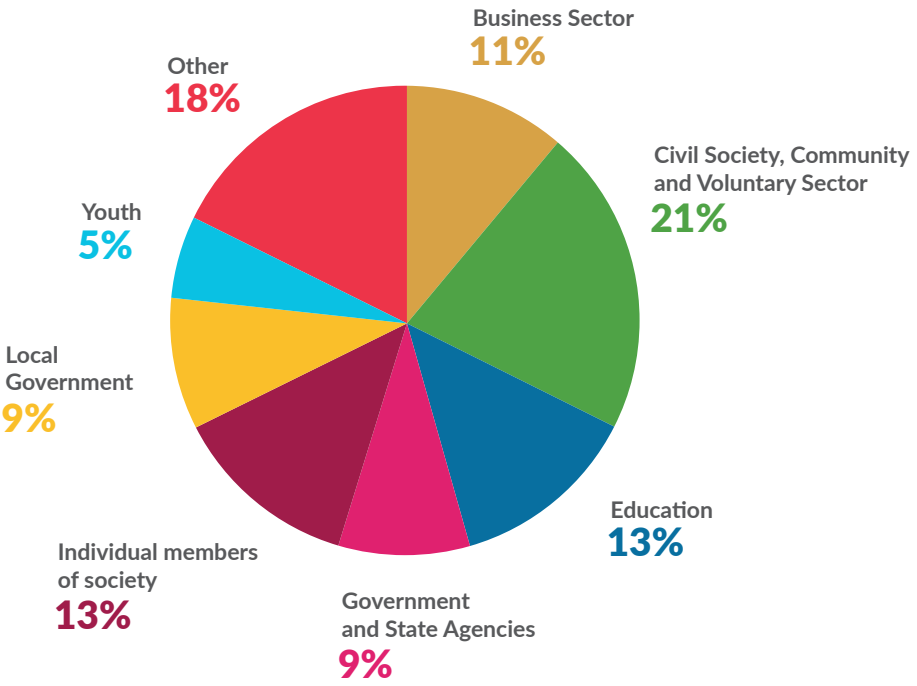


Figure 1: Stakeholder Attendance by Sector

3.3. Structure of the day

In order to take into account different engagement and learning styles and raise the energy of the event, the dialogue on Leaving No One Behind was facilitated through a number of methods. The traditional method for the Forum was used including policy and data presentations and a panel discussion. Also introduced was spoken word poetry, the sharing of lived experiences, music and the inclusion of a graphic harvester onsite capturing the discussions and events from the Forum.

Performance:	The event opened with a poem "A Sigh" from spoken word poet and performer FELISPEAKS.
Opening:	Geoff Dooley from Antaris Consulting and Chairperson for the event, introduced the meeting and read a letter addressed to the Forum from Uachtaran na hEireann, President Michael D Higgins. See Appendix 3.
Lived Experience:	Mavis Ramazani, from The Irish Refugee Council, spoke about her personal story of living in Ireland as a refugee and touched upon life in direct provision, food poverty in Emergency centres, digital poverty and employment.
Presentation:	Hannah Gilmartin from DECC provided an overview of the principle of Leaving No One Behind and set out what was hoped to be achieved at the Forum and how those outputs would be used going forward. The slide deck from the presentation is available online at gov.ie/sdgs.
Presentation:	Dr Mary Smyth from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) gave an overview of the statistical data reporting carried out in Ireland to monitor progress towards achieving the SDGs and spoke about what the data shows in terms of Leaving No One Behind. The slide deck from the presentation is available online at gov.ie/sdgs.
Lived Experience:	Linda O'Sullivan, an advocate for One Family, spoke about her experience as a single parent living in Ireland, the need for gender equality, the cost-of-living crisis and budget 2023.
Breakout session:	The first breakout session took place which explored what Leaving No One Behind means in an Irish context and participants worked together to develop a shared understanding and definition of the principle.
Lived Experience:	Sineád Harris, a Manager from Crosscare Ronanstown Youth Service spoke about Leaving No One Behind in the context of youth mental health and the impact of the pandemic on young people's mental health.
Lived Experience:	Fiona Ferris, Deputy CEO of ASIAM, spoke about using the Autistic Voice to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and highlighted that everybody has a role and responsibility to make the world more accessible and inclusive for autistic people and their families.
Breakout session:	The second breakout session focused on consolidating key messages and recommendations to national and local policymakers regarding Leaving No One Behind.
Performance:	Musical performance by Kiruu, Irish/Tanzanian singer and musician
Lived Experience:	Mary Brigid Collins from Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre spoke about the exclusion and discrimination experienced by travellers and the importance of ensuring the most marginalised and poor have a seat at the table.

Feedback from the breakout sessions:	Facilitators from the breakout sessions were invited to summarise some of the key messages developed by their group.
Panel discussion:	A panel discussion was held to reflect on the feedback from the breakout sessions and to discuss the challenges and best approaches associated with developing policy and engaging with stakeholders in line with the principle of Leaving No One Behind. The panel was made up of: - Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamon Ryan - Minister of State for Communications, Circular Economy, and Cyber Security, Ossian Smyth - Dr Ebun Joseph, Director of the Institute of Antiracism and Black Studies - Former Ambassador David Donoghue, Co-facilitator of the UN negotiations on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Graphic harvester feedback:	Illustrator and Graphic recorder Esther Boldau spoke about what she had drawn and captured from the day.

3.4. Lived Experience Speakers

"As a refugee in Ireland, we long too for community. To be seen, to be heard and to be listened to. To contribute to a country that now is our home. Ireland is my home."

- Mavis Ramazani: Project Officer, Irish Refugee Council

"The message today is that we want to be involved. The most marginalised and poorest should have a seat at the table. We have creative solutions to offer and we have the trust of our community to bring people together".

- Mary Brigid Collins: Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre

In a survey of one parent families across the country, 80% described how they were discriminated against in various forms. Whether that be employment, housing or covid19."

- Linda O'Sullivan: Advocate on behalf of One Family, Ireland's organisation for people parenting alone and sharing parenting.

"For me, and the community I work in, we can see the impact of the pandemic in previous years and the lack of appropriate services have left us in a crisis in young people's mental health."

- Sineád Harris: Manager, Crosscare Ronanstown Youth Service

"We like to run with the motto 'Nothing about us without us.' We believe that the autistic voice should be absolutely central to every piece of discourse, every discussion, every policy change that autism involves."

- Fiona Ferris: Deputy CEO, ASIAM, Ireland's National Autism Charity

3.5. Breakout sessions

The breakout sessions represent a key part of the Forum experience. They provide the opportunity for participants to engage with others, build relationships, and directly contribute towards the overall objectives and outputs for the day.

In recognition of different types of participation, it was made clear to participants that the time allocated to the breakout sessions could also be used for personal contemplation or to work on the themes and questions privately.

In-person breakout groups were made up of 10 – 12 individuals working through set questions supported by a facilitator. Feedback was captured on flipcharts.

Those participating on-line had a shared experience with one facilitator guiding participants through the breakout session questions using Slido.

3.5.1. Breakout session 1: Developing a shared understanding and definition of Leaving No One Behind

Initial discussions focused on five main questions to gain clarity on participants thinking about Ireland's structures and national factors at play in respect of Leaving No One Behind:

1. Who is being left behind or at risk of being left behind?
2. Are there groups who face multiple forms of disadvantage that make them likely to be the furthest behind?
3. What does it/might it feel like and look like to be left behind?
4. Why are some people left behind? And for what reason?
5. Why are some people not left behind?

The groups then moved to collaboratively developing a definition of Leaving No One Behind for the Irish context with a voting system then used to identify the most preferred definition.

3.5.2. Breakout session 2: Recommendations for policy-makers

Groups divided into sub-groups to follow a think/pair/share format to discuss and develop recommendations for national and local policy makers to take into account to better ensure policies adhere to the principle of Leaving No One Behind. Key recommendations were then agreed as part of the wider group.

4. Key outputs from the January Forum breakout sessions

4.1. Developing a shared understanding of Leaving No One Behind

Participants were initially asked what if feels like or what it might feel or look like to be left behind. The majority of responses highlighted the themes and feelings of loneliness, isolation, abandonment and being forgotten.

Figure 2: 'What might it feel like to be left behind?' Response from online participants

Participants were asked why some people are left behind and others are not. A summary of the key points is captured in the below two tables.

Table 1: Reasons for being left behind

Short-term targets	Discrimination	Socioeconomic disadvantage
Language barriers	Lack of early intervention	Lack of accessible transport
"Can't see it, can't be it"	Impact of legislation/policy	Poor targeting
Short-term political cycle	Lack of funding for community resources	Lack of access to equitable opportunities
Poverty	Representation (or lack of)	Geographic location
How one behaves (acts), sounds (accent), looks (colour)	Lack of voice/power/influence	On the margins of communities – lack of contact with others

Table 2: Reasons for not being left behind

Luck! Where born	Impact of a progressive policy	Good access to education
Good opportunities	Good health	Capitalism
Geographic location	Financial/networking resources	Wealth/white privilege
Culturally living within acceptable norms	"He who shouts loudest"	Stable home environment
Family name	Nepotism	Gender
Self-belief	Financially secure/financial education	Access to good nutrition

Participants considered the relevance of the list of groups which the 2030 Agenda calls for the empowerment of[2], including:

- Children
- Youth
- Persons with disabilities
- People living with HIV/AIDS
- Older persons
- Indigenous peoples
- Refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants.

Participants believed that this list is relevant for Ireland, however they felt that a number of amendments could be made to the language used, and that additions to the groups included could be made to fit the Irish context.

[2]https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda: "People who are vulnerable must be empowered. Those whose needs are reflected in the Agenda include all children, youth, persons with disabilities (of whom more than 80% live in poverty), people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants."

Groups to be empowered in Ireland*

Everyone living in Ireland should be empowered. Groups at particular risk of being left behind and whose needs should be specifically considered when developing policy include:

Table 3: Groups to be empowered in Ireland as Developed by the SDG National Stakeholder Forum 17 January 2023

Children and young people	Disabled people	People living with long-term health issues, including HIV and AIDS
Older people	The Travelling community	Refugees, internally displaced people and migrants
People who are homeless	People with mental health issues and/or affected by addiction	People living in rural Ireland
LGBTQI+ community	People who are socio-economically disadvantaged; the working poor and those below the poverty line	Ethnic minorities
Disconnected Communities	Single parent families and carers	Gender

The discussion on defining Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) in an Irish context raised the following insights.

For many participants, it means we embrace diversity by being more actively inclusive. They believe that while openness to diversity may enable those on the margins to be seen, this is not sufficient for leaving no one behind in Ireland. We need inclusiveness where diversity has a seat and a voice. The journey from diversity to inclusiveness might be described as moving from allowing space in the room for others to changing the structure of the room. Leaving No One Behind means changing the structure of the room.

As with diversity and inclusion – ideas around equality and equity were prominent in the discussion. Equality means that everyone should receive the same treatment and have access to the same life chances, and the same resources. The discussion aligned equality to the concept of fairness.

While fairness was identified as fundamental to Leaving No One Behind in Ireland, equity was also emphasised. Equity was defined as everyone getting what they need to succeed. Therefore, while equality aligns with fairness, equity aligns with justice. And Leaving No One Behind in Ireland is a matter of justice.

*Developed by the SDG National Stakeholder Forum 17 January 2023

Figure 3: "What does 'Leaving No One Behind' mean? Response from online participants

The narrative of the day – shared through stories of lived experience – is that to be equitable and to have justice, the reality of peoples' situations must be considered. For Leaving No One Behind in Ireland, it is not just about treating other people as we would like to be treated ourselves. The Forum called upon all of us to go further and treat other people the way they would like to be treated.

Enabling people to have a real opportunity to succeed means acknowledging that we all start from different places that are not based on individual skill or motivation. Instead, our starting points correlate to categories of privilege and marginalisation on a scale that are based on ethnicity, poverty, gender, age, displacement, disability, socioeconomic status, family situation, and other aspects of identity.

4.2. Developing a definition of Leaving No One Behind

The Forum took on the challenge of finding a definition of Leaving No One Behind and a synthesis of the Forum's definition of Leaving No One Behind is as follows:

> **"An inclusive and empathetic society that empowers everyone to engage with and be represented in decision-making, accelerating dignity and enabling equal opportunities and equitable outcomes."**

A list of some of the different definitions developed at the January Forum can be found at **Appendix 4**.

4.3. Recommendations for Policy Makers

In the second breakout session, participants were asked to think and discuss what policymakers might need to consider (e.g., start doing, stop doing or do better) in the context of Leaving No One Behind.

The complexity of Leaving No One Behind from a policy makers' perspective was summed up by Dr Ebun Joseph when she observed:

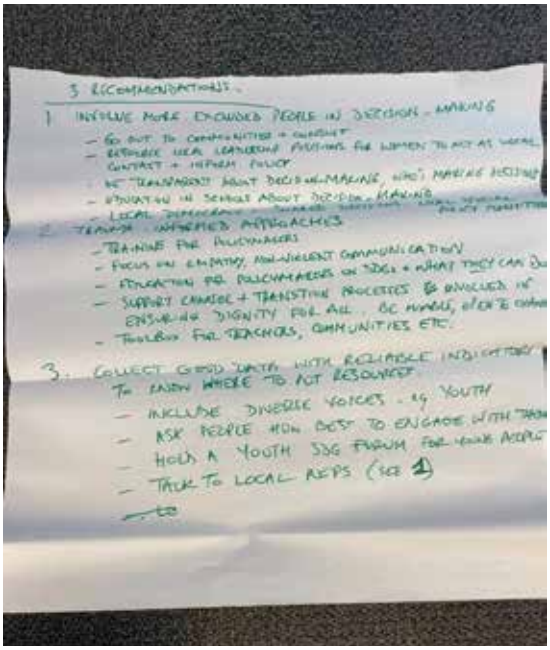
> **"Every new policy marginalises a group of people. You've just come up with a fantastic new policy, but that new policy [...] has marginalised a new set of people. You have put a new set of people on the danger line! So, the question is, when we create new policy, how do we mitigate for those people [on the danger line] so that they don't become the new poor, or the new crazy, or the new impacted?"**
>
> - Dr Ebun Joseph, Director of the Institute of Antiracism and Black Studies

The Forum's response was clear - If we are to do better in working towards Leaving No One Behind in Ireland we need to adopt a deeper, better informed, joined up and more inclusive form of engagement in the development of policies. Addressing Leaving No One Behind requires policies that promote inclusive and resilient communities that can tackle challenges and seize opportunities. This is not going to be possible if citizens and communities feel excluded, have not been properly engaged, or feel powerless to affect decisions that impact their lives.

Work of the graphic harvester during breakout session 1: developing the definition of "Leaving No One Behind"

Some specific recommendations and messages arising out of the Forum included:

- Build capacity for systems thinking across the civil and public service sector. Identify skills gaps and develop a programme of systems thinking, where there is a culture that can address systemic issues and intersectional complexity.
- Undertake a risk assessment of policies and resource allocation so that geographic, educational, financial, discriminatory, generational, and environmental challenges that can cause people to be left behind are understood and targeted.
- Promote local and national participatory engagement across all phases of policy and planning processes that adapts to a strengths-based view of the participants to achieve connective community empowerment and meaningful inclusion. Ensure that participation is not just consultation but real and meaningful inclusion of the opinions of those furthest behind. Two-way dialog and feedback. Inclusive and simple language.
- Information across all public services must be inclusive of those without access to online services and presented in plain language.
- School curricula should address structural and systemic issues that may obstruct inclusiveness, such as cultural blindness, inherited privilege, racism, neuro-divergence, and inter-generational disadvantage.
- Every new policy should have an SDG indicator or score that is monitored and measured.
- Create a Ministry for the Sustainable Development Goals so that the SDGs are mainstreamed across Government policy. Officials in local and national government should be encouraged and empowered in incorporating the SDGs in their daily work. Irish Government should lead the way on SDG implementation internationally.
- Align spending, policies and legislation to the SDGs.
- Improve the collection, use & transparent publication of disaggregated data with reliable indicators to inform policy development and monitor its impact. Align datasets with indicators and targets.



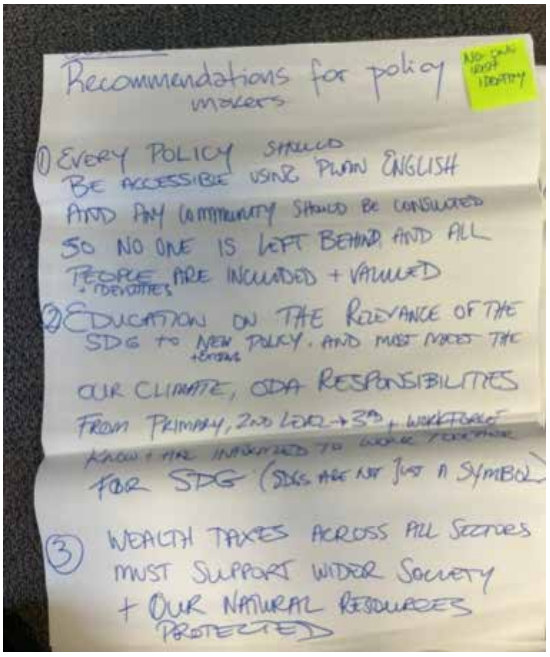


Figure 4: Recommendations for policy makers that emerged from the breakout session discussions

Panel discussion with Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications; Eamon Ryan, Minister of State for Communications, Circular Economy and Cyber Security; Ossian Smyth, Former Ambassador and Co-facilitator of the UN negotiations on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; David Donoghue, Director of the Institute of Antiracism and Black Studies; Dr Ebun Joseph

4.4 Panel Discussion

"Diversity and inclusion is not just about morality, it's not just about doing the right thing, you get a better decision-making process when you get people from different perspectives involved in the room [...] People who have confidence to stand up and speak and to speak on behalf of other people and who have the time, who can afford the time to go to the community centre and give their opinions, those kind of people are likely to have different opinions or different views from the person who is at home doing the washing up or looking after the kids or whatever and I have to go out and knock on their door. We have to go out and go out to people. So, outreach is absolutely critical if we're to get decent public consultation."

- Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure; Ossian Smyth

Panel discussion with Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications; Eamon Ryan, Minister of State for Communications, Circular Economy and Cyber Security, Ossian Smyth, Former Ambassador and Co-facilitator of the UN negotiations on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; David Donoghue, Director of the Institute of Antiracism and Black Studies; Dr Ebun Joseph

"In the world of politics, it's so easy to get caught up in immediate urgent crisis rather than thinking on 17 complex needs we have to meet [...] we need to start measuring our progress in a much wider way but the challenge is in the day to day world [...] it tends to always revert back to the kneejerk figure that it's the most dramatic, the most yes/no type figure. Whereas the truth is development is a much more complex thing."

- Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communication, Eamon Ryan

"When we talk about inclusion, inclusion is not something out there, it's what you and I do, it's how we do what we do and if we constantly keep thinking about it like how this is what we want to do, how we're going to do it in such a way that this group of people are not further marginalised."

- Dr Ebun Joseph, Director of the Institute of Antiracism and Black Studies

"For those who remember the Millennium Development Goals [...]what was overlooked in that was the needs of those at the margins, the huge disparities in many countries between top and bottom...I think that the more countries like Ireland can step up to the mark and show that they take this commitment [Leaving No One Behind] seriously, the better." F

- Former Ambassador David Donoghue, Co-facilitator of the UN negotiations on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

5. Going Forward

The January 2023 SDG National Stakeholder Forum marked the beginning of the conversation on Leaving No One Behind. The outputs from the Forum will be used to inform the development of:

- the SDG training and toolkit which will be developed over 2023 for civil servants and local authority officers;
- to inform how SDG National Stakeholder engagement is organised going forward; and
- Ireland's 2023 Voluntary National Review (progress report on SDG implementation) to the United Nations in July 2023.

Feedback received following the January Forum, included the use of live transcription to help improve the accessibility of the Forum, a greater gender balance across speakers and participants and the requirement for outreach to connect with those individuals and communities not comfortable with attending a formal conference.

Ireland's UN Youth delegates Jessica Gill and David Giles who provided the final remarks for the Forum

"If you read the declaration [the 2030 Agenda] it really instils hope in a world that sometimes feels like it's falling apart a little bit. But really, the impact of this on the ordinary people, on the normal people as we heard earlier, the people living in communities across Ireland, it's going to be the way we can translate these 17 goals and 169 targets into policies that affect these very fundamental things like hunger, education, poverty, and access."

- Ireland's UN Youth delegates Jessica Gill and David Giles

Appendix 1: SDG Forum Committee Members

Lauren Minion
SVP

Conor Minogue
IBEC

Bridie Collins
Councillor

Valerie Duffy
NYCI

Meaghan Carmody
Coalition 2023

Regina Clery
Civil Engineer

James Kiernan
Chambers Ireland

Grace Murphy
Disabled Women Ireland

Sean Moyniham
ALONE

Catherine Bates
TU Dublin

Valerie Lewis
Tipperary ETB

Michael Ewing
Environmental Scientist

Appendix 2: Agenda for the January SDG National Stakeholder Forum

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Leaving No One Behind
National Stakeholder Forum

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Havelock Suite, The Aviva, Dublin
Tuesday 17 January, 10.30 – 16.30

10:00	**Arrival, Registration, Tea/Coffee** Opportunity to record a piece to camera for the video on 'Leaving No One Behind'
10:30	**Spoken word performance by FELISPEAKS** *Poet, Performer, Playwright*
10:35	**Welcome and Introduction**
10:45	**Lived Experience 1** **Experience of living in Ireland as a refugee** Mavis Ramazani, *Project Officer, The Irish Refugee Council*
10:55	**Leave No One Behind and the Sustainable Development Goals** Hannah Gilmartin, *Assistant Principal Officer, SDG Unit, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications*
11:10	**Leaving No One Behind – what does the data show?** Statistician Mary Smyth, *Central Statistics Office*
11:20	**Lived Experience 2** **Experience of a single parent living in Ireland** Linda O'Sullivan
11:30	**Introducing the first breakout room session**
11:40	**Breakout Rooms:** ***Developing a definition of Leaving No One Behind for Ireland***
12.40	**Lunch** Opportunity to record a piece to camera for the video on 'Leaving No One Behind'
13:40	**Lived Experience 3** **Experience working with young people and what Leaving No One Behind means for them** Sineád Harris, *Manager, Crosscare Ronanstown Youth Service*
13:50	**Lived Experience 4** **Using Autistic Voice to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions** Fiona Ferris, Deputy CEO of ASIAM, autistic adult and parent of an autistic child
14:00	**Introducing the second breakout room session**
14:05	**Breakout Rooms:** ***Developing Leave No One Behind recommendations for national and local policy makers***
14:45	**Coffee/Tea Break**
15:00	**Musical performance by Kiruu** *Irish/Tanzanian singer and musician*
15:05	**Lived Experience 5** **How can a Pandemic Treaty help ensure no one is left behind? Case Studies from HIV, COVID-19, and MPX** Robbie Lawlor, *Co-founder of Access to Medicines Ireland*
15:15	**Lived Experience 6** **Leaving No One Behind: Irish Travellers & Roma** Mary Brigid Collins, *Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre*
15:25	**Feedback from Breakout rooms**
15:50	**Panel feedback and discussion:** – Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications Eamon Ryan – Minister of State for Disabilities Anne Rabbitte – Former Ambassador David Donoghue, Co-facilitator of the UN negotiations on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
16:15	**Graphic harvester feedback** Esther Blodau, *Illustrator and Graphic recorder*
16:20	**Closing Remarks** Brian Carroll, *Assistant Secretary of the Climate Action and Environment Division, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications*

If you are posting on social media, please use the **#SDGsIRL**

Appendix 3: Letter from President Michael D Higgins

UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

Message from President Michael D. Higgins

Sustainable Development Goals

National Stakeholder Forum

Aviva Stadium, Dublin

Tuesday, 17th January, 2023

May I send my best wishes and a Happy New Year to all those participating in the Sustainable Development Goals National Stakeholder Forum, both those attending the event in Dublin's Aviva Stadium, and those participating online.

The Forum represents an important opportunity to hear the voices of all the citizens of this country, to encourage an inclusive participation, to garner the views as to how policies may be developed and implemented in the most inclusive way and thus with the best prospects for success. Such inclusion is a core principle underlying the United Nations 2030 Agenda and related Sustainable Development Goals which constitute a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity.

The Sustainable Development Goals, and indeed this Forum, represent an important input to promote debate about crafting new models of human peaceful coexistence within the borders of ecological responsibility, founded on ethics and critical thinking, and drawing on human rights and dignity. The Sustainable Development Goals implore us to think long-term, and to focus on the needs not only of those who currently dwell on this planet, but also those yet to come.

The agreement reached in 2015 on the Sustainable Development Goals in New York was a moment of the brightest hope for the building of a sustainable future for humanity and for our planet. Despite some progress, there is evidence to suggest that we are receding in our advancing of these Goals. We must not allow the shadows of war and militarism under which we are living to defeat what are our best hopes, agreements which have such an intergenerational appeal.

We are now at a point where world leaders and our global institutions themselves must strongly consider how they can operate in order to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals are delivered both effectively and with shared transparency.

Among the essential steps which we must take as a global community is to accept that we must do things differently, have a new model of connection between ecology and economics, of sufficiency and cohesive societies, our best hope for a peaceful coexistence.

I think in particular of Sustainable Development Goal 2 – zero hunger. Later this month, I travel to the World Food Security Summit in Senegal. Surely the most important right which any of us must have is the right to be free from starvation.

Yet today we find ourselves, once more, in the position of another grave hunger crisis in Eastern Africa, one of cataclysmic proportions, with a death occurring every 48 seconds in drought-ravaged Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

As we reflect on this crisis, the third in as many decades, we must be willing to acknowledge that there are embedded structural reasons behind these recurring food emergencies, structural features which the most powerful in particular are not recognising or showing willingness to change.

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We have a permanent display on the Sustainable Development Goals, and Sabina and I have regular gatherings on this most important, shared, urgent global project.

At this year's National Forum, I appeal to all of us, as global citizens, to reflect on the meaningful steps which are immediately required to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals, upon which we have all agreed, are brought to fruition, and with urgency, to ensure that we create inclusive societies and economies, end discrimination, empower women and girls, reduce inequalities and eliminate extreme poverty. In doing so, we have the opportunity to empower citizens so that we may achieve the full realisation of universal human rights and create a world that is more just, inclusive and peaceful.

Beir beannacht

Michael D. Higgins
Uachtarán na hÉireann
President of Ireland

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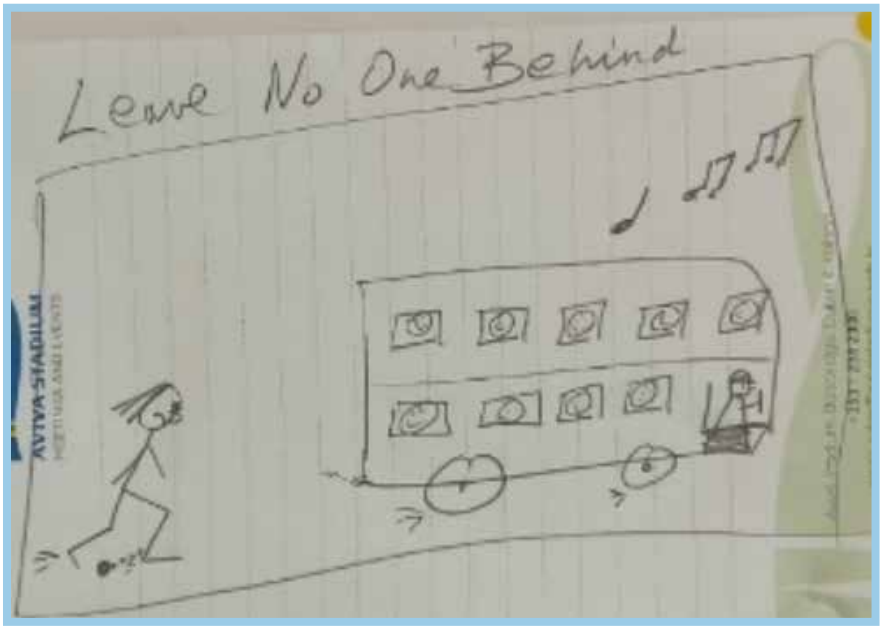
Appendix 4: Alternative definitions developed of Leaving No One Behind at the January SDG National Stakeholder Forum

Below are some of the definitions and illustrations of LNOB in an Irish context, developed by participants during breakout sessions:



An example of participant work during the breakout sessions

"Recognise that geographic, educational, financial, discriminatory, generational and environmental challenges can cause people to be left behind and ensure these risks are targeted by policies and finances."

"Building an environment that is socially, economically and politically inclusive and provides adequate opportunities for everyone to be empowered to engage and be represented in decision making."

"A caring society where things are levelled up."

"A society where we all belong and prosper to share in equitable communities, irrespective of our economic status, background, or identity, achieved through resourcing. People in communities to have meaningful influence on government policy & action, growing sustainable communities and resulting in equal opportunities and equitable outcomes."

"Allows all people in Ireland a future where people live in harmony with nature + degradation of planet is being handled and reversed. All people are awarded social and economic opportunities to fulfil their potential and live a daily life with access to human rights, basic services and wellbeing. We do this by increasing empathy for others, to live in prosperity + integrated into their communities. Social protections will capture, support and protect people if they become marginalised/at risk in their lives."

"An inclusive Ireland that celebrates and values diversity, where everyone can access the options and resources necessary to participate fully in society."

"Regardless of background, circumstances and responsibilities, ensuring fair and supportive access to resources and opportunities across Ireland, to address inequality, marginalisation and poverty, accelerating dignity by assisting people who currently can't help themselves to help themselves."

"A balanced, flexible, multifaceted system that recognises all parts of society and provides universal access and opportunity."

"Identify vulnerable groups + reduce the vulnerability. Co-create solutions & build resilience."

"Look up to look out for those we must look after. Global view as global citizens. An inclusive, peaceful co-existence representing all people in society forwarded in ecological sustainability, dignity and respect."

"A human rights and evidence-based approach that considers the multifaceted identities which exist in Irish society, and how international, national, regional & local policies + context can be crafted with a balanced and representative approach to reach those who are struggling and at risk of being left behind."

Prepared by the Department of the
Environment, Climate and Communications

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland