



# Global School Partnerships Guide



# About the Global School Partnerships Guide

WorldWise Global Schools (WWGS) is the national post-primary programme for Global Citizenship Education in Ireland and it provides coordination and support for the post-primary sector in many different ways.

WWGS has produced this Global School Partnerships Guide to support schools that are interested in partnering with, or already partnered with, a school in the Global South, as a tool for reinforcing and supporting Global Citizenship Education. It is intended that this guide will provide guidance for educators to reflect on the reasons for a Global School Partnership in their setting and to ensure good practice in engaging in such a partnership. WWGS has produced this guide in collaboration with a number of other organisations.\*



A Global School Partnership is a relationship between a school in Ireland (in the Global North) and a school in the Global South, based on joint learning, equity and respect. Partnerships between schools in the Global North and Global South can be a very valuable shared learning experience for all involved. Global Schools Partnerships can however be challenging and unequal due to disparities in resources, power dynamics, and cultural perspectives. Schools in the Global North often have greater access to funding, technology, and infrastructure, which can create imbalances in decision-making and project ownership. These partnerships may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes, with the Global South schools perceived as recipients rather than equal contributors to the partnership. Additionally, differences in educational priorities, language barriers, and historical legacies of colonialism can further complicate collaboration. It is essential to prioritise mutual respect and equitable engagement in initiating and nurturing partnerships between schools in the Global South and Global North.

## Building Equitable and Reciprocal Global School Partnerships

In some Global School Partnerships, schools in the Global North can unintentionally focus primarily on the experience of their own students, emphasising personal growth and cultural exposure, without giving equal attention to the perspectives and realities of their partner school in the Global South.

This approach risks creating an unbalanced partnership, where the voices and experiences of the Global South are sidelined. Whether you are thinking about having a partnership, or if you already have one we hope that this guide will help you explore ethical and equitable ways in which to have that engagement. A Global School Partnership can enable you and your partner school to explore different perspectives on local and global justice issues together.

## A Note on Nomenclature

The term Global South is used broadly to define regions in Africa, Asia and Latin America that are marginalised economically and politically. This guide uses the term 'Global South' to refer to countries with relatively low average incomes, economic indicators and levels of industrialisation, which are often former colonies of the 'Global North'.

However, there are several criticisms of the term:

Geographical inaccuracy; for example Australia is in the Global North, though it is south of the Equator, and India is in the Global South, though north of the Equator.

Inequality within countries is not reflected; for example, marginalised groups in the USA and Europe.

Shifting power centres do not fit the criteria; for example, China is categorised as a Global South country but is industrialised, lies north of the equator and has never been fully colonised.

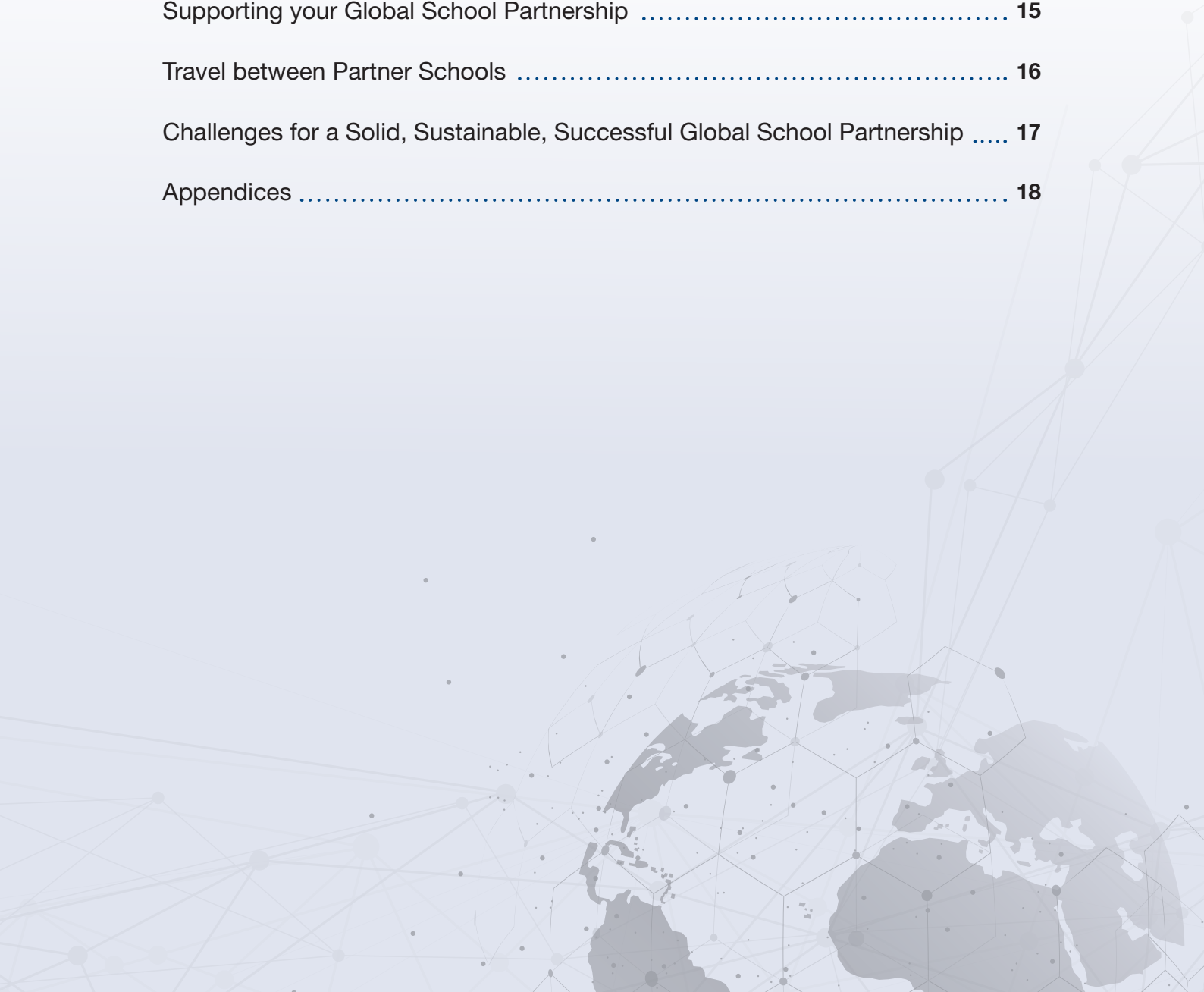
## Acknowledgements

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# What is Global Citizenship Education?

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is an approach to teaching and learning that links global and local justice issues. GCE explores the root causes of these issues and equips learners and educators to think critically, build empathy, challenge unjust global systems and take meaningful action towards a kinder, fairer and more sustainable world.

GCE inspires global solidarity by supporting people to fully realise their rights, responsibilities and potential as global citizens in order to take meaningful action for a just and sustainable world. GCE plays a crucial role in building an informed and engaged global society. To support this mission, WorldWide Global Schools has developed five Guiding Principles for GCE that outline the core values and priorities of this approach.



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# What is a Global School Partnership?

**A Global School Partnership** is a relationship between a school in Ireland (the Global North) and a school in the Global South, based on joint learning, equity and respect. Being involved in a Global School Partnership can encourage participating schools in Ireland and the Global South to broaden their perspectives, increase global awareness and challenge preconceptions about other countries and people. An effective Global School Partnership can be a vehicle for transformative learning that builds awareness, solidarity, understanding of identity, diversity and interdependence. This guide focuses on partnerships with schools in the Global South because of specific issues born of colonialism, human exploitation and resource extraction, such as inequality, unfair trade rules and power imbalances. The guide invites you to take a closer look at developing or maintaining a Global School Partnership through the lens of the WWGS Global Citizenship Education Guiding Principles.

There are five WWGS Global Citizenship Education Guiding Principles:

- 1. Unlearning and Reconstructing:** This guide will help you unlearn any biases or misconceptions of a GSP, such as 'Global South schools need our help', and reconstruct them into relationships based on equality, mutual respect and learning.
- 2. Finding Root Causes:** Finding the root causes of the systems that perpetuate inequality is crucial before embarking on a partnership. Take the time to think about what power imbalances may exist between you and a partner school. For example, if your school has greater access to technology, funding, or opportunities for international travel, consider how this might affect decision-making and whose voices are prioritised in the partnership.
- 3. Prioritising Human Rights:** When developing a Global School Partnership, respect for human rights is foundational: for example, the right to equality and dignity (from Article 1 of the UN Convention on Human Rights) and the right to education that promotes 'understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups' (from Article 26).
- 4. Making Local to Global Links:** Before delving further into the partnership, what are the links, both current and historical, between this partner country and Ireland?
- 5. Acting in Solidarity:** Using the 'Charity and Solidarity' table and the reflection questions, make sure that the partnership is based on solidarity and equity.

Further details on each Guiding Principle can be found on [our website](#).

# The Charity and Solidarity Approaches to Partnerships

A charity approach to Global School Partnerships is one where schools or organisations in the Global North provide support and resources to schools in the Global South out of a sense of goodwill or moral obligation. This often takes the form of fundraising, immersion trips or other initiatives designed to ‘help’ the partner school. While well-intentioned, a solely charity-based approach can easily overlook the voices, agency and priorities of the partner school, leading to an imbalanced relationship rather than a truly collaborative partnership. In the charity approach, the emphasis is on providing donations such as money, books or clothes to meet immediate or short-term needs. This sets up a relationship of ‘donor’ and ‘recipient’ between the two organisations, which can reinforce stereotypes and foster dependency rather than empowerment. Without addressing underlying systemic issues or involving the local community in decision-making, the relationship may be unsustainable. In a true partnership there are opportunities for equal learning, sustainable empowerment and cultural exchange.

Many schools and organisations may already be involved with a charity approach and may use this guide to move to a collaborative solidarity focused approach. A solidarity approach will emphasise equality, mutual respect and shared learning, which aims to empower for lasting impact. Importantly, this guide encourages schools to honour and retain the worthy values that have informed current and past approaches recognising the dedication and goodwill that have shaped existing programmes. The goal is not to abandon what has been done before, but to build on it. In this way, you can guide your school to gradually refine their practice in a way that values teachers’ efforts and sustains meaningful programmes.

## Challenges of the Charity Approach

While charity often stems from a sympathetic desire to help, the risk is that without awareness, attention and education, it may lead to a one-way relationship based on unequal power and privilege.

Simply giving money or gifts without talking together about what is actually needed can create an unequal relationship. It is worth pausing to ask why we feel charity is needed at all, and to reflect on the assumptions or hidden biases that might shape how we see our partner school and its community.

Giving resources without questioning the underlying causes of inequality can create a power imbalance. It can overlook the critical thinking needed to ‘unlearn’ biases or incomplete narratives, and to ‘reconstruct’ perspectives in order to bring justice. For more on this, see WWGS Guiding Principle 1 ‘[Unlearning and Reconstructing](#)’.

The charity approach risks being transactional, focusing on an immediate need but not necessarily empowering the recipients or changing structural issues that perpetuate the dependency.

## Implementing and Supporting a Solidarity Approach

A solidarity approach is grounded in mutual respect and shared learning, recognising that both schools bring valuable knowledge and experience. It encourages dialogue and actions that address root causes of inequality rather than just its effects, building a partnership that is balanced and empowering for both sides. Examples of this could include:

**Joint Curriculum Projects:** Students from both schools collaborate online to research a shared GCE interest.

**Co-Created Cultural Collaborations:** Students share stories, traditions, creative approaches to solving problems ensuring that each perspective is valued equally.

A solidarity approach focuses on listening and collaborating with partner schools to identify shared goals and decide together what actions are most meaningful. Rather than assuming what is needed, schools work side by side to build mutual understanding, learn from one another, and create solutions that respect both contexts. This approach recognises the equal value of all voices and seeks to address the root causes of inequality, not just its symptoms.

Example: **Shared Learning Project:** A Global North and Global South school decide together to explore the topic of climate change. Each school investigates how climate change affects their own community, then they meet online to compare findings, share local solutions, and create a joint action plan.

A solidarity approach involves working together to explore the root causes of inequality and engaging in dialogue to challenge biases and incomplete narratives. It focuses on co-creating knowledge, sharing power and transforming perspectives so that both partners can build a more just and equitable relationship.

Examples: **Collaborative Research and Advocacy:** Students from both schools investigate why some children in their communities lack access to quality education.

**Joint Cultural and Historical Projects:** Students work together to examine local histories, challenging stereotypes or incomplete narratives about each other’s communities. They co-produce a digital exhibition or presentation that highlights both perspectives, fostering mutual understanding, respect, and critical reflection on inequality and bias.

An equitable partnership builds alliances that respect each partner’s agency, foster empowerment, and work toward lasting social justice rather than short-term relief. A solidarity approach strengthens this by creating long-term, collaborative relationships that address the root causes of inequality through shared learning, critical reflection, and joint action, ensuring meaningful change for both communities.

Examples: **Co-developed Community Project:** A Global North and Global South school work together to improve local food security. Both schools identify challenges in their own communities and share strategies to improve this, other than providing temporary food aid.

**Joint Curriculum Design:** Teachers and students from both schools collaborate to create a curriculum unit on a shared GCE topic.

# Existing Global School Partnerships

Your school may already have a partnership with a school in the Global South. We suggest that you take some time to review the partnership and question:

How was the partnership established:

- Through a religious, parish or community connection?
- After a staff member's volunteering trip or holiday?
- Through a student or family in your school?
- Through a charity or nongovernmental organisation?
- Other (describe).

Does anything in your existing partnership indicate a one-way relationship or power imbalance? Activities which can lead to power imbalances include:

- Fundraising without guided instruction or the scaffolding needed to understand the context and respond appropriately
- Any learning that suggests your school is working 'for' and not 'with' the partner school.

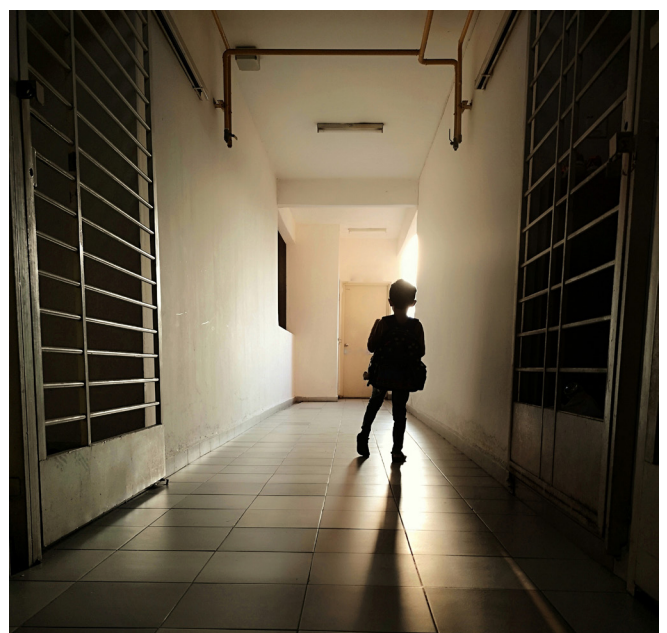
Take the time to reassess the proposed or existing partnership and ask key stakeholders why they think it should, or should not, continue. If you decide to continue, follow this document and complete the WWGS Global School Partnership Agreement to ensure the partnership is equitable and is based on mutual learning, respect and solidarity.

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## Avoiding Partnerships with Orphanages

If you are in a position to develop a Global School Partnership, it is important to avoid linking with orphanages or residential care institutions. Research from around the world shows that growing up in institutional care can cause serious harm to children's emotional, social, and cognitive development. In fact, many children in orphanages are not orphans at all; most have at least one living parent and have been placed in care because of poverty, disability, or a temporary family crisis.

While well-meaning, fundraising for or visiting orphanages can unintentionally do harm. Donations can encourage the establishment of more institutions and increase the number of children separated from their families. Short-term visits by volunteers can also be disruptive, leading to repeated attachment and then loss for children who need stability and long-term relationships.



# FICTIONAL Case Study

## Identifying potential pitfalls of a Global School Partnership between Coláiste Éireann and Rising Horizons Academy

*This fictional case study highlights some unhelpful practices that can be damaging a Global School Partnership. It is recommended reading for anyone engaging in Global School Partnerships, such as educators, students and other school stakeholders. It is followed by a series of reflections designed to guide thinking about how partnerships can sometimes become problematic and how they might be improved.*

Coláiste Éireann is a fictional post-primary school in Ireland. Rising Horizons Academy is a fictional post-primary school in Uganda.

A teacher from Coláiste Éireann recently visited Rising Horizons Academy, a post-primary school in Uganda, and has suggested a partnership between the two schools. Coláiste Éireann is an urban, well resourced post-primary school with a religious ethos. Most of the students will go on to third level education. The school has ample support from parents and the wider community. Rising Horizons Academy is a school in Uganda. It serves a population affected by poverty and climate change - both droughts and floods - that can hinder school attendance. There is a lack of infrastructure, such as poor roads and limited transport, and there are few digital resources.

In the initial discussion about a Global School Partnership, Coláiste Éireann students decide to have a bake sale to raise money for Rising Horizons Academy. From the money raised, Coláiste Éireann decides to send a box full of different items to the Ugandan School to establish the partnership. Students and teachers brainstorm ideas of what to include in the parcel; they decide to send some sweets, some photographs of the Coláiste Éireann students during their bake sale, a copy of the school's newsletter, some sports jerseys, some sanitary items (toothbrushes and soap) and some colouring pencils. On receiving the parcel, Rising Horizons Academy in Uganda sends cards to thank the Coláiste Éireann school community for their generosity. Coláiste Éireann creates a display of these cards and makes a banner titled 'Helping the Children in Africa'.

Coláiste Éireann are eager to pursue this partnership further to help their students learn about those less fortunate than themselves. Coláiste Éireann has a student leadership programme and they anticipate that this Global School Partnership will strengthen their students' leadership skills. They decide to add this as one of their goals in the student leadership programme, which is part of the prospectus given to future students.

Coláiste Éireann and Rising Horizons Academy decide to meet online so the students can see each other. After the online meeting the Coláiste Éireann students and teachers discuss the poor internet connection, the lack of uniforms and the large number of students that were in the room for the online meeting. Based on this, Coláiste Éireann decides to fundraise for Rising Horizons Academy. Staff and students start a drive to donate used school books, uniforms and computers which they will send to Rising Horizons Academy. Coláiste Éireann publicises its campaign on local radio, in local newspapers and on social media using screenshots from their online meeting. Students and staff begin fundraising for a trip to Uganda to deliver the items personally. They contact the Ugandan school and begin to arrange a visit for the next academic year. Some Coláiste Éireann teachers decide that, while they are there, they will provide teacher training for the Ugandan educators. However, soon after this planning, the Coláiste Éireann teacher leading the initiative moved to a different school and it was decided to end the Global School Partnership.

### Activity to explore the difficulties with this 'partnership'.

1. List the decisions that have been made in this 'partnership' and who has made these decisions. Consider who has the power, whose voices are heard and whose are not heard.
2. List the benefits Coláiste Éireann might imagine for each school.
3. Now reconsider those benefits predicted by Coláiste Éireann for the Ugandan school. What assumptions have you made that could be wrong?
4. What contents could be inappropriate, or useless, in the well-intentioned Coláiste Éireann parcels and donation drive? What damaging messages could they send?
5. What stereotypes are reinforced by Coláiste Éireann's attitudes, decisions and actions at each stage?
6. What are the problems with the fundraising and the planned trip? Where do you see examples of a 'saviour' mentality (the false assumption that the Global North school has the answers and can 'rescue' the Global South School, thus implying superiority) in Coláiste Éireann's approach?
7. Show where Coláiste Éireann has a simplistic approach, instead of working to understand the systemic causes of inequality between the schools.
8. The partnership ends as the teacher leading the initiative in Coláiste Éireann moves to a different school. Consider the impact of this termination, and the actions leading up to it, on Rising Horizons Academy.

### Points to consider when answering the questions above.

1. Most decisions in this 'partnership' were made solely by Coláiste Éireann, whereas an effective Global School Partnership requires both schools to be actively involved and contribute to decision-making. Coláiste Éireann made many choices about Rising Horizons Academy without consulting them. A truly equitable partnership would involve Rising Horizons Academy in all decisions and working with them to set joint priorities. This could include collaboratively designing projects, seeking input on resource allocation, establishing regular dialogue and feedback and sharing leadership roles in initiatives.
2. In this fictional case study, Coláiste Éireann focused on its leadership programme and the benefits the Global School Partnership would bring to its own students, portraying the partner school as 'less fortunate' and emphasising material or monetary differences. To create a partnership of equals, Coláiste Éireann could have focused on mutual learning and shared interests, such as stories, crafts, music, or local traditions. This could include shared interests and joint projects highlighting the strengths of both schools, and opportunities for students to learn from each other's experiences. By valuing the knowledge and perspectives of Rising Horizons Academy, the collaboration would be based on respect, reciprocity, and solidarity rather than a one-sided view of advantage or need.
3. In this 'partnership', many assumptions were made by the Coláiste Éireann school community. While well-intentioned, such assumptions can reinforce stereotypes, misrepresent the partner school, perpetuate inequality and limit opportunities for genuine understanding and collaboration. Coláiste Éireann could have acted in solidarity by including Rising Horizons Academy in decision-making and having open dialogue about expectations and assumptions. Both schools could work together to plan activities to make sure there is accurate representation of the school and community.
4. Although the parcels and donation drive were organised with good intentions, they reflected the values of Coláiste Éireann's own culture. Some items could reinforce stereotypes about people in the Global South or be unsuitable for the climate, curriculum, or infrastructure, creating challenges for the partner school. Coláiste Éireann could have approached the drive in solidarity by consulting Rising Horizons Academy to identify items that would be genuinely useful and culturally appropriate. This could include prioritising locally sourced materials or exploring alternative support or collaborative projects. By consulting with the partner school rather than assuming what their priorities are, Coláiste Éireann would respect the local context, avoid reinforcing stereotypes, and foster equitable collaboration.

5. Coláiste Éireann may not realise that their well-meaning efforts risk reinforcing stereotypical views of the Global South. The gifts they send could imply wrongly that students in Rising Horizons Academy lack basic necessities or could perpetuate dependency and inequality. Furthermore, while these gifts reflect Coláiste Éireann's values, they may not align with the priorities or culture of the Ugandan school, creating a relationship shaped more by assumptions than mutual understanding. Acting in solidarity, Coláiste Éireann could have consulted Rising Horizons Academy to identify their actual needs and priorities.
6. Coláiste Éireann, though well-intentioned, decided to raise money based on assumptions from one online meeting and planning a trip focused on personally delivering items to Rising Horizons Academy. This approach positions Coláiste Éireann as the 'saviour' and the Ugandan school as the 'grateful recipient', raising questions about who truly benefits, especially given the financial and environmental costs of the trip. Acting in solidarity, Coláiste Éireann could have reassessed the purpose of the visit in consultation with Rising Horizons Academy, ensuring it aligns with the Ugandan school's priorities rather than assumed needs. This could involve co-planning the project, exploring local solutions for resources, supporting initiatives remotely, or investing in capacity-building activities or joint virtual projects.
7. We have established that Coláiste Éireann's actions are well-meaning. The school community needs to understand that its simplistic view overlooks systemic issues that drive inequality. These gifts, the banner and the fundraising all fail to explore the root causes of educational challenges in Uganda, such as the legacy of colonialism, extractivism by the Global North leading to a lack of resources and infrastructure, debt repayments, unfair trade rules, climate injustice etc. Coláiste Éireann could act in solidarity by sharing and learning from the partner school and researching Uganda's historical and systemic challenges, caused by these injustices.
8. The rapid establishment and dissolution of this 'partnership' may have negatively impacted the Rising Horizons Academy community, as they were treated as disempowered recipients rather than equally valued partners. To ensure a sustainable and equitable collaboration, Coláiste Éireann could have created a long-term partnership structure that actively involved Rising Horizons Academy in planning and decision-making.

#### **How could Coláiste Éireann change this partnership into one that is equitable?**

1. Promote mutual decision-making where both schools decide on how the partnership will work.
2. Move from charity to solidarity activities. In the future they could prioritise sharing skills and knowledge rather than one-sided aid, however well meaning.
3. Follow the WorldWise Global Schools Global Citizenship Education Guiding Principles to interrogate the root causes of inequality.
4. Build a team to make sure the partnership would survive, even if the lead person leaves the school.
5. Include the Global South School in all decisions about the partnership.

#### **A Solid, Sustainable, Successful Partnership:**

- Has a Partnership Agreement
- Communicates regularly
- Reflects at the end of each year
- Is based on solidarity, not a one-way relationship where power is imbalanced
- Works on projects that have shared input - Joint Learning Project
- Has a strong team to ensure the partnership will continue even if a key person is absent or leaves
- Is fun and enjoyable
- Is jointly managed by adults in both education settings

# Reflection Questions

Once you are confident that your partnership will be based on a solidarity approach, we invite you to take some time to consider why your education setting would benefit from a Global School Partnership.

The next part of this guide invites you and others in your setting to think about the partnership in greater detail. Gathering the thoughts of representatives from at least three stakeholder groups connected to your school or setting (such as educators, parents, school leaders or learners) will be critical to develop your thoughts around a partnership with a Global South school.

Your school may already have a partnership with a school in the Global South. These questions can be adapted to reflect on this existing partnership and decide if any changes should be made for the future.

The questions will guide the school to think about the reasons for a new or existing partnership. They can be tailored to your context and presented in person or as an anonymous online form.



## Reflect on your motivation for considering a Global School Partnership

Summarise in a few sentences why your school is interested in a Global School Partnership. Take some time to consider your motives for considering a Global School Partnership and see if they promote equity and solidarity.

## Reflect on the potential partner school's country

Think about the country of your potential partner school. Ask members in your stakeholder group to write down five things they know about this country.

- Reflect on the words used by yourself and the stakeholder group. Do these words:
  - Show a lack of important knowledge about the country?
  - Make unfair or unsubstantiated generalisations about the country?
  - Show conscious prejudice or stereotyping?
  - Reveal unconscious bias?
  - Indicate power differentials; for example a Global North superiority?

Take some time to reflect by looking at the words you have collected. Ask yourself and those in your stakeholder group:

- Do these words reflect prejudice?
- Do these words suggest that the partnership could be equitable?
- Is there more exploring and learning to be done about the prospective partner country?

If any of the words reflect conscious or unconscious bias, we strongly advise the stakeholder team to redress these biases before embarking on a Global School Partnership. Your WWGS Education Officer will provide you with resources to support your critical exploration of challenging perceptions and prejudices.

## Reflect on the Educators in both settings

Think about the educators in your own setting. From your perspective, how would a Global School Partnership benefit them?

Think about the educators in the prospective partner school; from your perspective, how do you think a Global School Partnership might benefit them?

- In their professional and personal development?
- In their understanding of Global Citizenship Education?
- In their appreciation of and ability to relate to a different culture?
- In other ways? In their capacity to act as a global citizen? For example by raising awareness, campaigning, lobbying around global justice issues relevant to the Global School Partnership.
- What challenges and benefits do you perceive for educators?
- What training do you think might benefit educators?

Take some time to reflect on whether these reasons are equitable. Do they promote solidarity? Will educators in the prospective partner school benefit as much as those in your school? This is an essential part of a Global School Partnership. Continue with the questions in this section of the guide if you feel that this partnership will promote equity and solidarity.

If you are unsure, your school may not be ready for a Global School Partnership. Please contact your WWGS Education Officer if you need guidance on this.

# Reflection Questions

## Reflect on the learners in both settings

How do you feel a Global School Partnership could benefit learners in your setting?

Think about the learners in the prospective partner school; from your perspective, how do you think a Global School Partnership might benefit them?

- In their curriculum?
- In their extra-curricular activities?
- In their personal development?
- In their life and career choices?
- In their appreciation of different cultures?
- In their opportunities for cross-cultural learning and friendships?
- In their global perspective and understanding of Global Citizenship?
- In other ways? What global justice issues could educators and learners take local action on, which are relevant to this partnership (For example climate justice or climate action campaigns like [Friends of the Earth Ireland](#) or campaigns for global debt relief such as [Jubilee 2025](#)).
- What challenges could you imagine for learners?

Take some time to reflect on whether these reasons are equitable.

Do they promote solidarity? Will learners in the partner setting benefit as much as those in your school or setting? This is an essential part of a Global School Partnership. Continue with the questions in this section of this guide if you feel confident that your partnership will promote solidarity.

If you are unsure, you may not be ready for a Global School Partnership. If that is the case, you might consider establishing a partnership between the two schools involving educators only. Or you could choose to set up a partnership with a school in Ireland. Please contact your WorldWise Global Schools Education Officer if you need guidance on this.

## Reflect on the senior leaders in both settings

How do you feel the senior leader in your school would benefit from a Global School Partnership?

Think about the senior leaders in the prospective partner school; from your perspective, how do you think a Global School Partnership might benefit them?

- In their leadership?
- In their personal and professional development?
- In their understanding of global citizenship? In their capacity to act as a global citizen by raising awareness, campaigning and lobbying around global justice issues relevant to the Global School Partnership such as climate justice, migration, or trade and tax injustice.
- What do you perceive as the challenges for senior leadership?

Take some time to reflect on whether these reasons are equitable. Do they promote solidarity? Will senior leadership in the partner school benefit as much as senior leadership in your school? If you are unsure, your school may not be ready for a Global School Partnership. Please contact your WorldWise Global Schools Education Officer if you need guidance on this.

## Overall Reflection

Now that you and the group have reflected on why you want a partnership with a school in the Global South, it may be time for you to take the next steps in this guide. However, if you do not feel that a partnership with a school in the Global South would be suitable at this time, you could consider a partnership with a local school instead. Please contact your WorldWise Global Schools Education Officer if you would like advice on engaging in a local partnership.

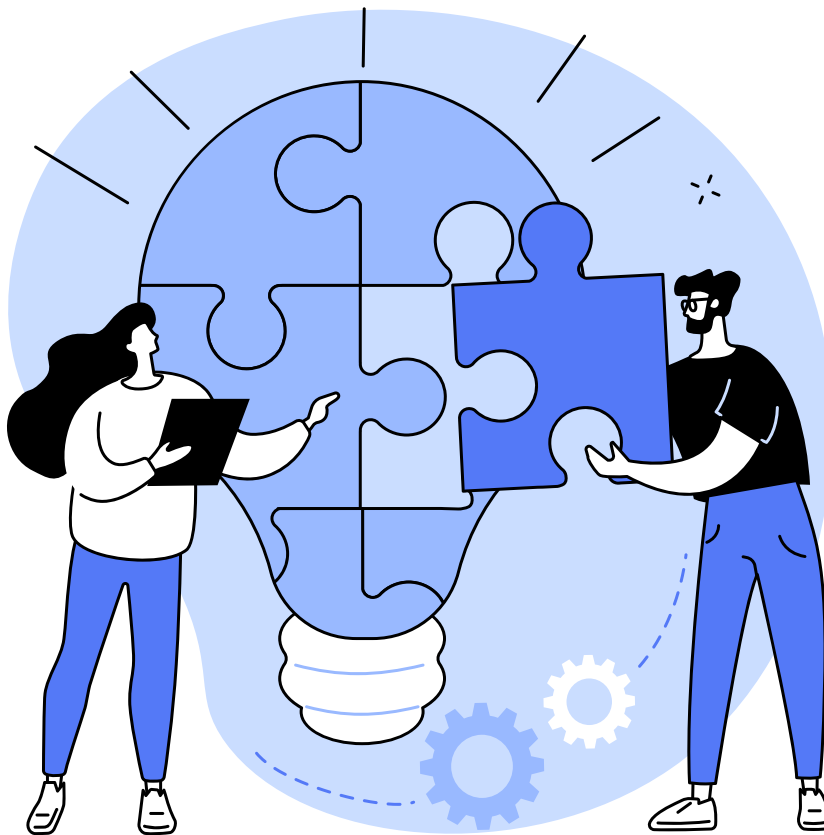
# WWGS Global School Partnership Agreement

Looking back on the reflection you and others have undertaken, you should now have a clear rationale as to why this Global School Partnership will, or will not, benefit both schools equally. If you feel you are ready for such a partnership, we suggest you put this vision in writing, ready to share when you reach out to a prospective partner school.

Reaching out to prospective partner schools can be done in many ways. Traditionally, Irish schools have developed partnerships through, for example, a school patronage connection, through a personal connection, after a trip, through a religious organisation connection, or through a reputable organisation that facilitates school partnerships. Use this guide to help you and your school community build an equitable partnership that has mutual learning opportunities, respect and sustainability.

Once you have identified a prospective school, you are welcome to invite your partner school to go through a similar process of reflection that you have undertaken to get to this point. Share your vision with them and allow them time to reflect on whether a partnership would be suitable for them. If the partner school ultimately agrees, giving them sufficient time for reflection, you are ready to create a partnership agreement.

Global School Partnerships do not form in a vacuum. In a world that is unequal, you are trying to establish a partnership of equals. WorldWise Global Schools will support you to build a partnership of solidarity based on mutual respect and empowerment. A template of the WWGS Global School Partnership agreement can be found on page 18.



# WWGS Global School Partnership Agreement

If your school is confident that it can move towards a mutually beneficial partnership we recommend using this table 'Stages of a Global School Partnership' as a guide to help to get to know your partner school. Creating a relationship with a school from a different country and culture may not be a straightforward process. However, there can be benefits, given time, resources, patience and perspective. Your WWGS Education Officer will have ideas on how to build an equal partnership.

Stage 1: Getting Started	Stage 2: Developing the Partnership	Stage 3: Sustaining the Partnership
<p>Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact your WWGS Education Officer for advice on planning.</li> <li>Use the 'Reasons for a Global School Partnership' questions to involve key stakeholders in your plans.</li> </ul>	<p>Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact your WWGS Education Officer for advice on planning.</li> <li>Review with your partner school how things have gone over the last year. See the suggested review template at the end of this document.</li> </ul>	<p>Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review members of the Global School Partnership team to ensure representation from key stakeholder groups in both schools.</li> <li>Once a term, hold a Global School Partnership planning and review meeting.</li> </ul>
<p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make contact with the partner school and invite them to complete the reasons for a school partnership.</li> <li>Exchange the partnership agreement and make time to discuss it.</li> </ul>	<p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get to know your partner school using some of the ideas listed in the activities section below.</li> <li>Initiate a shared learning project between two groups.</li> <li>Share your progress with the school or education setting's community. Use the WWGS Ethical Communication Guide to support your communications.</li> </ul>	<p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss shared projects to further curricular and extracurricular activities.</li> </ul>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Games (each school could teach their partner school a game from their country).</li> <li>Swapping similar stories (my family, my school, my favourite subject).</li> <li>Sharing Mission/Value Statements</li> <li>Swapping craft ideas, music, recipes, art, poetry etc.</li> <li>Sharing artefacts from each culture.</li> </ul>	<p>Activities:</p> <p>Shared projects such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A shared learning outcome based around Global Citizenship Education, for example identifying and challenging all forms of prejudice.</li> <li>Learning about aspects of culture and tradition from each partner school, for example holidays, food, traditional dress, greetings or music.</li> <li>Learning skills from the partner school, for example a craft or a musical instrument.</li> <li>A subject-based project: for example, Geography - look at farming in both countries, or English - learn about indigenous knowledge and folklore in each country.</li> </ol>	<p>Activities:</p> <p>Sharing learning on national youth projects such as Young Social Innovators or Young Scientist programmes or equivalent programmes in the partner country.</p>
<p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A joint partnership agreement is developed by both partners.</li> <li>Discussion of future areas for collaboration.</li> </ul>	<p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Partnership agreement has been reflected on and revised for another year.</li> </ul>	<p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Global School Partnership is established in both school communities.</li> <li>Self-reflection and shared evaluation take place each year via the partnership agreement.</li> </ul>

# Supporting your Global School Partnership

We suggest that you use our [WWGS Scaffolding Events Guide](#) and our [WWGS Ethical Communication Guide](#) to support your Global School Partnership. This section summarises what may be relevant to your partnership from these two guides. Please consult the full versions if you would like more information.

It is important to support adults and young people in the activities connected to a Global School Partnership. While interactions with the Global South school may be appealing, they will not guarantee a depth of understanding or critical reflection. Scaffolding these interactions is critical for a Global School Partnership.

When guiding critical reflection in the school community, check:

- Which global issues are emerging and how they can be linked and explored further, perhaps using the [Digging Deeper Tool](#)?
- That all stakeholders are involved in decision making. If not, what must be done to include them?
- That every stage of the process follows the WorldWise Global Schools Guiding Principles for GCE.
- How can the partnership be sustained?

Please contact your WorldWise Global Schools Education Officer or other GCE facilitator to seek help on exploring complex or challenging global justice themes.

When communicating with the wider school community about your Global School Partnership, be sure to reflect on the WorldWise Global Schools Guiding Principles and WorldWise Global Schools Ethical Communication Guide.

Check whether:

- the communication shows an equitable partnership that is mutually respectful
- the communication is fair and ethical to all involved; that it does not portray any stereotypes
- the communication represents all voices accurately and equally
- the dignity and privacy of all participants are respected
- the language is appropriate
- the communication evokes pity or suggests a power imbalance. If so, how can this be redressed?
- the communication promotes solidarity
- the participants agreed to the use of their images and stories.

# Travel between Partner Schools

Any travel to a school in the Global South should begin with an invitation from the partner school, not be initiated solely by the Global North school. This ensures that the partnership is grounded in mutual respect and the priorities of the Global South school, rather than based on the assumptions of the visiting school. An invitation indicates genuine interest and readiness for collaboration, helping to avoid patterns of paternalism or one-sided benefit that can reinforce existing power imbalances. Careful thought should be given before any travel takes place taking into account usual privileges and power dynamics. Schools should also reflect on the environmental impact of flights and the resources spent on trips; could these resources be used in a more effective way than travel that primarily benefits students from the Global North? Consider other ways to connect, such as virtual exchanges, collaborative projects or joint research initiatives.

While many schools take part in visits to partner schools, WorldWide Global Schools only advocates trips that follow ethical and educational guidelines worthy of travel. Even well-intentioned trips can give young people a superficial understanding of complex social issues without fully engaging with broader historical, economic, and political contexts. Trips can also inadvertently reinforce power imbalances by portraying partner communities as recipients of charity rather than as equals.

If your school has carefully considered a trip to your partner school, or is planning to welcome your partner school to Ireland, please contact your Education Officer for guidance on how to scaffold and support the visit in a meaningful, ethical, and mutually beneficial way.

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## Technology in the Global School Partnership

The use of technology, where possible, can enhance a Global School Partnership. It offers opportunities of real-time communication, resource sharing and collaboration. Video conferencing can help engage both education settings by breaking down geographical barriers. Online collaborative tools can help foster joint projects that can enrich learning experiences for Global North and South education settings.



# Challenges to a Solid, Sustainable, Successful Global School Partnership

Partnerships between schools in countries in the Global South and the Global North can face significant challenges. They may not be rooted in genuine solidarity and may hold historical or current power imbalances. There can be a tendency among schools in the Global North to treat schools in the Global South as beneficiaries rather than equal partners. Sometimes schools in the Global South can have little say in decision-making, resource allocation or influence over the partnership outcomes. If partnerships are equal they can be hugely beneficial to both partners. However, if they are not rooted in solidarity they can undermine expertise and agency. Without mutual respect, open communication and shared goals, partnerships risk reinforcing inequalities rather than fostering equity where both sides contribute meaningfully to an educational exchange.

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## Ending a partnership in an ethical way

If a partnership between schools in the Global North and Global South reaches a natural conclusion, it is important to bring it to a close with care and mutual respect. An ethical ending involves open communication about the reasons for concluding the partnership, with sufficient notice for both sides to prepare and reflect. Schools should take time to celebrate what they have learned and achieved together, highlighting shared successes and growth. Expressing gratitude for the collaboration helps honour the relationship, while documenting lessons learned ensures that the experience continues to shape future practice. Agreeing on how to manage any remaining resources, projects, or commitments fosters fairness and prevents feelings of abandonment. The goal is to close the partnership in a way that acknowledges the time and effort invested, while leaving space for dignity and the possibility of future connections.

# Appendix I

## WWGS Global School Partnership Agreement Template

	Irish School	Partner School	Next Steps	Long-term Plan
What is your vision for this partnership?				
How will you communicate with your partner school?				
What language(s) will you use to communicate with your partner school?				
Is there a time difference to consider?				
What is/are the best time(s) of year to communicate with your partner school?				
How will this Global School Partnership be sustained when the people now involved move on?				
What will be the main focus for your partnership? See 'Suggested Activities' in 'Stages of a Global School Partnership' on page 14.				

## WWGS Global School Partnership Agreement Template

	Irish School	Partner School	Next Steps	Long-term Plan
What will you put in place to ensure mutual respect between partners? For example encourage curiosity; open mindedness; listening and storytelling; an antiracism workshop from an experienced facilitator; time and attention given to using respectful language; team building.				
What are your plans for conflict resolution, should a disagreement occur? We recommend that you agree on a conflict resolution procedure before the partnership begins.				
What resources are needed to sustain this partnership? (Stakeholders, time, skills, finance, other).				
Who will be involved? (One class/ year group/ a whole school or setting approach/ Educators/ Senior Leaders/ Parents).				
How will you review and reflect on the partnership? See the review template at the end of this document.				

# Appendix II

## Annual Self-Review Questions

We recommend that once a year you take the time to review the partnership. The following questions will help your review process. You are encouraged to share your reflections with your partner school and to invite them to do likewise.

<b>Vision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is the vision still the same or have your ideas changed?</li><li>• Are there differences that need to be resolved?</li></ul>
<b>Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which elements of the partnership worked best this year?</li><li>• Which elements need the most work?</li><li>• What are the main learnings from the year?</li><li>• How will those learnings help shape the partnership next year?</li></ul>
<b>Equity and Solidarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Describe how equity and solidarity were best demonstrated in the partnership this year.</li><li>• Describe how they are lacking and consider what can be done to redress this next year.</li></ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are there any changes to be made in how or when you communicate?</li></ul>
<b>Membership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are there other groups that need to be included or any who are no longer necessary?</li></ul>
<b>Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have they gone according to plan?</li><li>• Do any adjustments need to be made?</li><li>• What will you change for next year?</li></ul>
<b>Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What activities are you planning?</li><li>• Are there conflicts or issues of mutual respect that need to be resolved before next year?</li><li>• What resources are needed for next year? How will you secure them?</li><li>• What members of the school community would you like to involve next year?</li></ul>
<b>Stage of the Global School Partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reflect on which stage you feel your school is at (See Stages of Global School Partnership on Page 14 of this guide).</li><li>• Have you invited your partner school to decide what stage they feel the partnership is at?</li><li>• Are you ready to move to a new stage along with your partner school?</li><li>• What resources and support will you need?</li></ul>

## Helpful Resources

<a href="#"><u>British Council</u></a>	<p>This site has many resources and videos to guide schools in finding, establishing and maintaining a partnership with another school.</p>
<a href="#"><u>Better Care Network</u></a>	<p>This is a self-assessment tool for schools and universities to reflect on ethical and responsible student travel.</p>
<a href="#"><u>Centre for Global Education</u></a>	<p>This article by Vanessa Andreotti argues that global citizenship education should focus on critical analysis of power, history, and systemic inequalities, rather than just moral awareness, to promote justice and reflexive learning.</p>
<p><b>Comhlamh</b>  <a href="#"><u>Code of Good Practice</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Ethical Communication</u></a></p>	<p>Aimed at volunteer programmes, this code is structured on the Principles of Solidarity, Social Justice, Ecological Sustainability, Respect and Integrity.          Online course for ethical communication.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Development Education</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Reflecting on study visits and immersion programmes</u></a></p>	<p>The document explains that study visits and immersion programs in development education offer participants first-hand, transformative learning experiences by fostering reflection, cultural understanding, and global citizenship, while emphasizing careful preparation, partnership, and follow-up to maximize educational and social impact.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Oxfam: Building Successful School Partnerships</u></a></p>	<p>This guide is a useful reflection tool for schools to use when thinking about the reasons for partnering with a School in the Global South.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>See Beyond Borders</u></a></p>	<p>The Solidarity Schools programme supports schools teaching the Sustainable Development Goals through a Cambodian lens.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Dochas Ethical Guide</u></a></p>	<p>This Code from Dóchas provides a framework to help organisations when developing their communications strategy.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>An example of a jointly owned partnership between Ireland and Zambia.</u></a></p>	<p>This article showcases the successful relationship between Ballyfermot College of Further Education and Evelyn Hone College Zambia.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Digital Technologies to Advance GCE in Schools.</u></a></p>	<p>This resource focuses on the use of Digital Technologies to advance GCE in schools</p>

For more information about WorldWise  
Global Schools and the opportunities our  
programme offers to engage with Global  
Citizenship Education- visit our website  
[www.worldwiseschools.ie](http://www.worldwiseschools.ie)

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**Irish Aid**

An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha  
Department of Foreign Affairs

Irish Aid's **WWGS** is Ireland's national Global Citizenship Education (GCE) programme for post primary schools. WWGS is funded by Irish Aid and implemented through a consortium comprised of; Self Help Africa; Concern Worldwide; the City of Dublin's Education and Training Board; Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI) also representing TUI; the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) and the Ubuntu Network.

