About Suas Educational Development:
Suas is an Irish NGO that supports quality education in disadvantaged communities in Ireland and in Developing Countries. We work with partners to develop, deliver, monitor and evaluate quality education programmes. Our partnership model engages young Irish people as Volunteers at home (for example as literacy support providers) and abroad (as teaching assistants), and in the process enables the volunteers to gain a significantly greater perspective and understanding of global issues and of their own role in improving the lives of others at a local and global level. Linking in with our volunteering work, each year we deliver a multi-element non-formal education programme for Third level students, which seeks to increase students’ awareness, critical understanding and constructive engagement with global issues and build a cohort of socially committed young leaders. Suas is driven by a vision of a world where all children and young people are given the opportunity to realize their full potential in life, and to creative positive change in society.

About Amárach Research:
We are an independent market research agency, providing a full range of research services to Irish and international clients. Our team of 30 research & support staff have worked with most of Ireland’s top 200 companies. Every year we survey over 100,000 people at home and abroad, as well as running hundreds of focus groups. Our experienced team of directors and executives manage online, face-to-face and cati surveys; as well as qualitative research including focus groups, in-depths and ethnographic studies. We also offer a unique field-only service to universities and international agencies.

This survey project was supported by

Irish Aid
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

NATIONAL SURVEY OF THIRD LEVEL STUDENTS ON GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT
KEY FINDINGS
DECEMBER 2012
Acknowledgements:
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Contents

A Introduction .................................... 3
B Summary of Survey Results ........... 2
C Sample Breakdown of Results ........... 3
D Initial Reflections ............................... 3
Introduction

Background
The critical engagement and support of Irish citizens is crucial to meeting global development challenges. Development Education (DE) plays a key role in building that engagement and support by empowering people to become active citizens with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to “effect change for a more just and equal world”. While third level students seek to engage with global issues, less than 1% of the 160,000 full-time third level students in Ireland participate in Irish Aid-funded DE programmes. Yet, third level students are interested in this area - based on Suas Educational Development’s programme experience, discussions with key stakeholders and existing survey information – and there is a clear tension between the level of provision of DE and the demand by students to engage. It is in this context that in 2012 Suas commissioned Amárach Research to carry out a National Survey of Third level Students on Global Development to ensure that education providers (including Suas) have key baseline data to support them in the design, delivery and evaluation of education programmes and to support the visibility, awareness and development of DE within Third Level in Ireland. This project was supported by Irish Aid.

Key objective
The key objective of this research study was to conduct a baseline survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,000 third level students to examine their attitudes, knowledge, understanding, activism and learning on global development.

Research Approach
A draft questionnaire was prepared by Amárach Research based on discussions with Suas. Suggestions were made by various stakeholders and a number of academics in the field based on previous surveys and literature and their understanding of development issues and challenges facing third level students today. From this interaction between Suas, Amárach Research and academics and stakeholders, a final draft was composed and tested in a pilot study with members of the third level student population. This feedback was then integrated into the final questionnaire and the main fieldwork of the study commenced. Fieldwork for the research was carried out in Spring 2012 and the survey was completed online with a nationally representative sample of 1,000 third level students aged 17+. Quotas were set on gender, region and type of institution i.e. University or Institute of Technology, based on the records for college attendance in 2010/2011. Ethical approval to distribute the survey was gained from a number of colleges across the Republic of Ireland. Invitations to take part were sent out via email to students from participating third level institutions. Students were then directed to a secure website where they could take part in the survey.

Survey Results
This paper includes the survey results for the overall group of 1,000 students. In January 2013 a more detailed examination of the results will be shared including a breakdown across a number of demographics (gender; age; socio-economic group; region of study; and institution type). The January report will also consider the impact that the experience of volunteering and studying about development has on how students have answered a particular question. Finally, it will include commentaries on the results from Suas and other stakeholders, the first step in a very important sectoral wide conversation on the implications of this survey for the delivery of DE at Third Level.

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White Paper on Irish Aid, 2007
Irish Aid Synthesis Paper: Thematic Reviews of Development Education (July 2011)
With the confidence interval set at 95%, the margin of error for a sample of 1,000 is 3.1% which means that there is a 95% chance that results on a survey replicating this will vary upwards or downwards by 3.1 percentage points
B Summary of Survey Results

1 Introductory questions about developing countries and global poverty

Students were asked to identify the first word or thought that came to mind when they heard the term ‘development’. 42 different words were offered, the most popular of which were ‘improvement’ (mentioned by 15% of students) and ‘progress’ and ‘growth’ (both mentioned by 11%). 4% of students mentioned ‘building’ and ‘change’, and of the other words, none were mentioned by more than 3% of students.

Students were then asked to identify the first word that came to mind when they heard the term ‘developing countries’. 38 different words were provided, only five of which were mentioned by 5% of students or more: ‘Third World’ (18%), ‘Africa’ (15%), poor/poorer’ (12%), ‘improving’ (5%) and ‘poverty’ (5%).

When asked to rate the standard of living in developing countries today compared to 10 years ago:
- 47% of students felt standards of living had got better (with 9% thinking ‘a lot better’)
- 30% of students felt it was much the same as it was ten years ago
- 12% felt living standards had got worse (with 5% thinking the situation had gotten ‘a lot worse’)
- 11% of students did not know

The next question asked students to select the five most important reasons (from a list of 20) why some countries in the world are poor, ranking in order of importance. ‘War/conflict’ and ‘corruption’ received the highest number of top five mentions (59% and 55% of students), followed by ‘lack of education’ (48%) and ‘better off countries taking advantage of developing countries’ (43%).

2 Attitudes towards development issues including how well they are being addressed

When asked to describe how they feel about the levels of poverty and inequality in the world today:
- 25% of students said they were ‘very concerned’
- 48% said they were ‘fairly concerned’
- 21% had ‘no strong feelings’
- 6% said they were not at all concerned

85% of students feel it is ‘important’ (47% ‘very important’ and 38% ‘somewhat important’) to take action on global development issues. Another 9% said they didn’t think it was important and 6% said ‘neither/don’t know’.

Students were given a set of statements and asked to indicate their level of agreement:
- 84% ‘agree’ ‘sustainable development can’t happen without political, economic and cultural change’.
- 71% ‘agree’ that it is ‘important to tackle poverty in the developing world because we belong to the same community’ with only 13% of students ‘agreeing’ that ‘developing countries should be left to tackle their own problems’. However, just under half of the student group (47%) think the government ‘should focus on the economic difficulties in Ireland before addressing development issues in other countries’.
- 78% ‘agree’ ‘actions of individuals in the first world can have repercussions for the developing world’ and 68% ‘agree’ ‘actions of people in the first world are partly responsible for problems in the developing world’.
- 70% ‘agree’ that a ‘more equal world is possible’. However, 45% of students ‘agree’ that ‘social inequalities like those based on class, gender and race are inevitable’.
- Just 19% of the student group as a whole ‘agreed’ with the statement: ‘making societies better is the responsibility of governmental agencies and/or NGOs, not mine’.

Suas National Survey Bpg.indd 2
12/12/2012 14:59
Students were also asked for their opinions on the commitment levels of the Irish Government towards poverty reduction in developing countries. The response was as follows:
- 50% think the Government should do ‘more’ (14% ‘a lot more’)
- 38% say the Government is doing the ‘right amount’
- 12% said the Government is doing ‘too much’ (3% ‘far too much’)

The next question sought to gauge students’ perceptions on the impact of the aid Ireland provides.
- 14% think it has a ‘large impact’
- 68%, ‘some impact’
- 6% ‘no impact’ and 12% ‘do not know’

In an attempt to analyse students’ views on this issue in more detail, students were asked to rate the effectiveness of eight different activities. ‘Sending out skilled people to share expertise’ was rated the most effective action to take (82% believing it to be ‘effective’). Next were ‘providing emergency relief’ (78%) and ‘paying a fair price for products even if it increases price of goods’ (70%). While 61% of students believe financial aid is ‘effective’, 21% do not, and 18% either ‘do not know’ or do not have an opinion.

Students were also asked to rate the effectiveness of a number of actions that Irish people can take to support developing countries. Volunteering, whether abroad or at home, is deemed to be the most effective action. 81% of students rate volunteering abroad as ‘effective’. 77% contend that working/volunteering in Ireland is ‘effective’. Of the remaining actions, all were deemed ‘effective’ by roughly 60-70% of students except for ‘lobbying the Irish Government and ‘public meetings/demonstrations’, which received ratings of 31% and 37% respectively.

The students’ own role and confidence to take action

Students were asked to indicate how important a number of values were to them. 83% feel it is important to do something to improve the world (41% stating it is ‘very important’); and 81% think it is important to be involved in activities that help others (36% stating that it is ‘very important’).

When asked if they agree or disagree with the statement ‘I want to bring about positive change’, 84% said they ‘agreed’ with 36% doing so strongly. However, students’ confidence in their ability to bring about change is low. 45% of students ‘agree’ that they ‘feel helpless in bringing about positive change’, while only 35% ‘agree’ that they are confident in their ability to influence decisions affecting their local area, 34% decisions affecting their society, and 20% decisions affecting other parts of the world.

Despite 68% of students agreeing that ‘actions of people in the first world are partly responsible for developing world problems’, nearly half of respondents (46%) ‘agreed’ that their ‘day to day actions don’t really affect people’s lives in other parts of the world’.

49% of students also ‘agreed’ that ‘it is difficult to find opportunities to take action for positive change’.

When asked what activities they had undertaken in the last 12 months, the activities that received the highest ratings from the student group were:
- One off donations to charity (64%)
- Informing oneself about development issues (59%)
- Making a lifestyle decision, e.g. buying fair trade products (53%)

Although students felt that volunteering either in Ireland or overseas was the most effective way to help developing countries, only 13% of students have done so in Ireland and 3% abroad.

This was to be read in its broadest sense to include both the Irish Government and Irish people/NGOs contribution.
‘Making a lifestyle choice’ (38%), ‘making a one off donation to charity’ (32%) and ‘informing yourself about development issues’ (30%) were the activities students indicated they were most likely to undertake in the next 12 months. ‘Becoming involved with a church group/NGO’ and ‘organising a fundraising activity’ were activities that received the lowest ratings, with only 6% of the student group indicating that they were ‘very likely’ to undertake them.

Students were also asked to consider a number of factors and rate how important they were in motivating them to take action on development issues. The highest rated factors were:

- ‘believing the action to be worthwhile’ (83% said this was an ‘important’ factor)
- the level of passion about the cause (79% said this was an ‘important’ factor)

The final question in this section asked students ‘how regularly, if at all, do you volunteer in Ireland’:

- 19% of students volunteer at least once a month
- 20% volunteer a few times a year, and 24% less often
- 37% of students do not volunteer

### 4 Learning about development issues

The first question in this section asked students if they had ever taken part in a development education course/programme. 18% of students said they had. The 181 students were then asked to identify the reasons they took their course and also their primary reason for doing so. To ‘develop my awareness/understanding of development issues’ was the primary reason for 33% of students, double that of the next highest reason - ‘for personal development’ - which was the primary reason for 15% of the 181 students.

Students were also asked to identify the reason why they had not taken part in any course/programme and to specify their main reason for not doing so. 41% said their main reason was a lack of awareness about courses, 25% that they do not have the time to take part, 16% that they were not interested and 7% that they did not have access to courses/programmes.

61% of students said the Internet was their preferred channel through which to receive information about development issues and 41% said that it currently provides them with the most information.

Not far behind for preferred channel for information were ‘TV news’ (52%) and ‘Newspapers’ (48%).

65% of the students surveyed said they wanted to know more about development issues. These students were then asked to identify what subjects they would be interested in learning about. The top three most popular were: Education - 64%, Human rights - 59% and Sustainable development - 50%. However, all of the topics received ratings over 30%.

Students interested in further study were also asked what factors were important when choosing a course/programme. The ‘content/topic’ of the course received the most number of 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice mentions and the highest number of 1st choice preferences at 30%. Second to ‘content’, was the cost involved, with 57% of students saying this was an important factor.

The majority of students would also prefer for a course to: have a small class size (80% versus 20%), be located on campus (91% versus 9%), be open to a mix of students from different disciplines (79% versus 21%) and provide opportunities for socialising with classmates (83% versus 7%). Approximately two thirds of students would not want the course to be formally assessed.

### 5 Familiarity and engagement with development organisations

In this last section, students were asked about their awareness of various development organisations including Suas Educational Development and Irish Aid. 19% of students are familiar with Suas and its programmes. Rates of awareness of other development/development education organisations were low amongst the students surveyed. When asked: Can you identify other development/DE organisations in Ireland, 75% of students could not do so. Trócaire; Goal; Concern; Irish Aid; and Dóchas were all familiar to 1% of respondents (between 5 and 15 students respectively). Other organisations were each only mentioned by 1 or 2 students.

In the final question on the survey students were asked if they had heard of Irish aid, the Irish Government’s official development programme. 61% of students had, with 7% having heard ‘a lot about it’.
In January, Suas will publish a more detailed examination of the survey results. By way of a taster of what is to follow the analysis for question 11 is presented here.

Students were asked to rate the effectiveness of a number of actions that Irish people can take to support developing countries. Volunteering whether abroad or at home is deemed to be the most effective action. 81% of students rate volunteering abroad as ‘effective’, with 40% believing it to be ‘very effective’. 77% contend that working/volunteering in Ireland is ‘effective’, with 30% thinking it ‘very effective’. Of the remaining actions, all were deemed ‘effective’ by roughly 60-70% of students except for ‘lobbying the Irish Government’ and ‘public meetings/demonstrations’, which received ratings of 31% and 37% respectively.

Sample Breakdown of Result

Students were asked to rate the effectiveness of a number of actions that Irish people can take to support developing countries. Volunteering whether abroad or at home is deemed to be the most effective action. 81% of students rate volunteering abroad as ‘effective’, with 40% believing it to be ‘very effective’. 77% contend that working/volunteering in Ireland is ‘effective’, with 30% thinking it ‘very effective’. Of the remaining actions, all were deemed ‘effective’ by roughly 60-70% of students except for ‘lobbying the Irish Government’ and ‘public meetings/demonstrations’, which received ratings of 31% and 37% respectively.

Chart 9: Perceived effectiveness of actions Irish people can take

Given the length of the survey and volume of data, the narrative highlights some of the marked differences and then refers the reader to the tables for further information. For most questions only differences of 8-10% or more have been discussed, thereby reducing the possibility of highlighting any differences that might be interpreted as a natural variation in the data.
Breakdown of data

Across the board females were more convinced by the effectiveness of particular actions as they scored higher on all metrics. In some cases, there was as much as a 10-15% difference, for example volunteering abroad (87% vs 76%), buying fair trade products (81% vs 72%), supporting groups to raise the status of women (74% vs 60%) and organising a fundraising activity (69% vs 52%). Other differences include: 11% more students in the C2DE category believe donating money is ‘effective’ compared to ABC1 students; and students in Connaught/Ulster are 10% less likely than their peers studying in Dublin to perceive lobbying the Irish Government as ‘effective’.

<table>
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<td>%</td>
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<td>%</td>
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<td>87</td>
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<td>84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working/volunteering in Ireland</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buying a fair trade product</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting an NGO (not money)</td>
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<td>72</td>
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<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support to groups raising status of women</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting groups seeking political change in developing countries</td>
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<td>57</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>61</td>
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<tr>
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<td>52</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking part in meeting/demonstration</td>
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<td>40</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Data table 10: Perceived effectiveness of actions Irish people can take

*If the word ‘participated’ had been used instead of ‘organised’ there might have been a higher rating for this activity amongst men and women.*
Effectiveness figures are higher across the board for those who have been on a course. Those who have volunteered or taken a DE course are more convinced by the effectiveness of public meetings/demonstrations and lobbying the Irish Government, although the numbers are still below 45%. Volunteers also rate the effectiveness of organising fundraising activities more highly (62% of those who volunteer at least once per month and 68% of less frequent volunteers compared to 51% for those that have never volunteered).

74% of students who volunteer at least once a month believe volunteering abroad is an effective method for supporting developing countries. While still high, this is 12% lower than the figure for those who volunteer less frequently (86%) and 5% lower students who never volunteer (79%). One explanation for this is that the category of students who volunteer at least once a month may include those who have actually volunteered abroad, who are more aware of the complexities involved in working overseas. (See also question above where those who ‘volunteer more frequently’ rate ‘sending out skilled people’ as less effective than their peers, although the extent of the difference is much smaller).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish people volunteering overseas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working/volunteering in Ireland</td>
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<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buying a fair trade product</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting an NGO (other than money)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support to groups raising status of women</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting groups seeking political change in developing countries</td>
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<td>Organising a fundraising activity</td>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
Initial Reflections

The January report will include commentaries on the results from Suas and other stakeholders to initiate a very important sectoral wide conversation on the implications of these survey results. Some initial reflections are presented here.

Martin Tomlinson,
Interim CEO, Suas Educational Development

“The survey results are encouraging in many ways. The results suggest that third level students in the main are concerned about global development issues and believe in the importance of working to address these issues. In a relatively challenging economic context in Ireland, which has had negative knock-on effects for third level students (among other groups), the finding that only 13% of students ‘agree’ that ‘developing countries should be left to tackle their own problems’ is significant. Extremely encouraging is the result that students in the main perceive that they too have a role to play in addressing global development issues and, consistent with that finding, relatively large percentages of students have taken action on global development issues in the last 12 months. Students also expressed their intention to take further action, and two thirds expressed their desire to learn more about development issues.

The results above notwithstanding, the overall student response to the survey poses a challenge to Suas and the sector as a whole. Looking closely at the survey data, we can see subtle but important variations in responses, particularly when it comes to students’ attitudes towards development issues including how to address them and students’ perspectives on their own role. This suggests that there is still work to be done in terms of fostering attitudinal change and building a deeper understanding of global issues among third level students. Nevertheless, a clear finding of the survey is the impact of volunteering and development education whether in relation to how it increases levels of concern about poverty and inequality, strengthens the belief in the importance of taking action or encourages an appreciation of both individual and collective forms of action.”

Audrey Bryan,
Lecturer in Sociology, St. Patrick’s College, Drumcondra

“The survey and its results raise many important pedagogical, political, ethical and methodological questions and issues. The findings affirm what development practitioners have long felt anecdotally, i.e. that there is a large appetite for development education among third level students, with two thirds of respondents indicating that they want to know more about development issues, but less than a fifth actually having had the opportunity to undertake development-themed courses. Coincident with this high level of interest in development is a high level of commitment, theoretically speaking, to enhancing the struggle for social and global justice.

More problematically, however, are those findings which indicate that among many third level students, there is a failure to recognise or to acknowledge one’s own self-implication in the structures that produce global suffering and inequality in the first place, and a lack of understanding about the importance of connecting with wider movements which seek to transform these structures and the ideologies that support them. Rather, many third level students seem to understand development as being primarily about ‘helping’ less fortunate others, an ideological framework which does little, if anything, to counter stereotypical assumptions about the dependency of those in the global South on ‘us’ in the global North.

Methodologically, the research highlights the need to pose development-related questions differently, and in new ways, to enable us to come to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of our investments in, and our desire for, development.”
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