

Desk Review

Approaches to **Measuring the Impact** of Global Citizenship Education in Ireland

November 2023 | An **IDEA** Publication

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Executive Summary

This document presents findings from a desk review conducted by consultants McCreanor Murray Rose to support IDEA's exploration of existing impact measurement tools used in Global Citizenship Education (GCE). The review involved critically appraising and synthesizing key documents to identify common themes, strengths/weaknesses of different tools, and examples from Ireland and beyond.

Key themes that emerged include:

- Impact stories are multifaceted — change can be complex and measurement provides only part of the story.
- There is no one right approach to measurement — organisations have unique contexts.
- Blended evaluation approaches help balance proving results with learning and growth.
- Who and what is measured spans individuals, educators, institutions and broader leadership/policy levels. Most changes were reported at the individual learner level concerning knowledge, attitudes, values, and actions.
- Timeframes often face constraints from funding cycles while change frequently happens over longer terms exceeding project timelines.
- Don't expect quick technical fixes — measurement often requires longer social and political processes.

The five most prevalent measurement tools used by Irish GCE practitioners are:

1. Surveys and self-assessments
2. Case studies and observable participant actions
3. Group activities/discussions and facilitator observations
4. Social media and creative output analysis
5. Event/training reports, evaluations, evidence records

The report stresses that impact measurement requires a combination of quantitative data and qualitative methods to provide a complete picture. Examples of international tools and methods from complementary sectors are also shared for consideration.

"The challenges associated with evaluating the impacts of Global Citizenship Education remain significant despite an increased focus on the topic in recent years..."

While the use of experimental and quasi-experimental evaluation designs to measure causal impact are essential, they must also be complimented with in-depth qualitative techniques capable of exploring how impacts were achieved and what unexpected outcomes emerged across varied contexts."

Global Education Monitoring Report 2020/21, 2021, p.12)

Methodology and Outputs

The methodology used for this desk review included:

CRITICAL APPRAISAL Critical review and evaluation of the documents provided by IDEA which involved assessing document strengths and limitations in line with the desk review criteria. Additional documents were also added to the review by the consultants.	DATA EXTRACTION Relevant information, themes, and examples were extracted from the documents to allow for synthesis and analysis. This included extracting information on specific impact tools used, how impact is defined, key evaluation approaches etc.
SYNTHESIS Findings and insights extracted from the documents were brought together and synthesized to identify commonalities, differences, strengths, and weaknesses across tools, develop the themes and summaries, and inform the overall analysis.	ANALYSIS Analysis of the synthesized data to develop the conclusions, and outputs of the review, including the identified top tools used, key themes, and examples of any international tools worthy of further consideration.

The review was intended to support an upcoming member workshop to further explore impact measurement approaches in the GCE sector. The methodology provided an overview of the current state of practice based on existing literature, which could then inform discussions at the workshop. A combination of critical appraisal, data extraction, synthesis and analysis allowed for a rigorous approach to reviewing the available evidence on GCE impact tools in the desk review.

“Impact measurement informs stakeholders about the effectiveness of an organisation’s work and is essential for understanding what difference you are making.”

Collins, 2017, p.5

Distinctions between *Measuring Impact* and *Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)*

Measuring impact focuses on assessing the long-term changes or effects that result from a program or intervention. It looks at outcomes and whether the desired social or wider context goals have been achieved. Monitoring and evaluation refers to the ongoing tracking of a program's implementation and outputs. It involves collecting data on program activities, participant satisfaction, outputs delivered, etc. to determine if things are on track.

While monitoring and evaluation tracks if a program is being implemented as intended, impact measurement aims to determine if the program is making the desired difference and creating its intended impact. Effectively — measuring impact is about assessing the lasting changes, while monitoring and evaluation is about tracking ongoing implementation and progress.

Here are a few examples of impact in global citizenship education¹:

- **Increased awareness and action around global issues like climate change, poverty, and human rights. Participants gain a broader perspective and may get involved in advocacy or service projects.**
 - An example of monitoring and evaluation tools that could be used to measure this impact: survey participants on their knowledge of and concern about various issues before and after a global citizenship course; track participation in related campaigns/projects.
- **Development of skills like critical thinking, perspective taking, and analyzing complex systems. Participants are better able to understand different viewpoints and the interconnectedness of global challenges.**
 - An example of monitoring and evaluation tools that could be used to measure this impact: using rubrics to assess work that requires perspective taking, systems analysis, etc. Have participants self-assess their growth.

- **Greater intercultural understanding and exchange through connections with peers from other countries and cultures. Participants communicate and collaborate across borders.**
 - An example of monitoring and evaluation tools that could be used to measure this impact: measure frequency and depth of intercultural interactions through surveys and interviews; assess cultural sensitivity via role play scenarios or scenario analysis activities.
- **Growth in civic engagement. Participants see themselves as active citizens and contributors to an equitable, sustainable world. They participate in democratic processes.**
 - An example of monitoring and evaluation tools that could be used to measure this impact: document voter registration, participation in governance, volunteerism, etc; survey students on their sense of civic duty.
- **Changes in daily habits and choices that consider social and environmental impacts. Students make more responsible decisions as consumers, community members, etc.**
 - An example of monitoring and evaluation tools that could be used to measure this impact: Evaluate behaviour changes via self-reports or observation. Audit project activities, for example, for environmental projects audit waste production and consumption changes.

¹ Examples taken from GCE expertise of consultants and also informed by desk review materials.

continued...

→ **Expanded worldviews and sense of identity.** Students see themselves as global citizens, connected to those around the world. This impacts their goals, relationships, and life directions.

- An example of monitoring and evaluation tools that could be used to measure this impact: use pre/post surveys to measure global identity, a sense of connection to those who are different, assess any changes in motivation or life goals.

Figure 1. table below illustrates the authors understanding of the main differences between measuring impact and M&E.

FIGURE 1. *The main differences between measuring impact and M&E are²:*

IMPACT MEASUREMENT IS...	MONITORING & EVALUATION IS...
Impact measurement focuses on the long-term effects of an intervention.	M&E is more concerned with looking at ongoing implementation and short-term results
Impact measurement aims to determine the change attributable to INGO/NGO actions.	M&E is more focused on progress towards predetermined targets or outcomes.
Impact measurement requires more advanced methods like experimental or unconventional design to isolate an intervention's effects.	M&E is more focused on performance monitoring indicators.
Impact measurement is not being used in an ongoing or continuous way, it usually occurs periodically, most often at the commencement and end of programme or project.	M&E occurs continuously during the lifecycle of a programme or project.
Impact measurement often needs to include a counterfactual ³ to gauge what would have or might have happened without the programme or project intervention.	M&E does not require any counterfactuals.

² Main differences informed by Bester, 2016 and Kusek & Rist, 2004

³ A counterfactual is a comparison point that represents what would have happened had no intervention occurred. It is a tool used to help isolate the impact of the intervention itself. Some examples of counterfactuals are randomized control trials; pre-post comparisons (comparing baseline data and post-intervention data); comparison groups; and theory-based (estimating the counterfactual based on existing research) and theoretical understandings.

Common Themes

There were a number of common overarching themes that emerged from the desk review. Unsurprisingly, the largest number of changes measured, shared or described were at the level of the individual learner — measuring critical understanding, changes in attitudes and values and actions (or increased confidence to act/work with others to act)⁴.

NOTE

Before providing the results of the desk review it is important to recognise the inherent difficulties of measuring the impact of GCE as acknowledged in the “DICE Literature Review: The Impact and Evaluation of Development Education in Primary Schools”, where Bourn is referred to as cautioning “against approaches which ignore both the individualised nature of learning and the assumptions made as to how learners may employ knowledge and skills” (Mallon, 2018, p.20).

In “Teachers as agents of Social Change” Bourn further expands on inherent impact measurement challenges and highlights that there are conceptual complexity and context specificity challenges when seeking to evaluate the impacts of GCE⁴. It should be with the above in mind that both the desk review’s findings and subsequent workshop report should be considered.

The following are the 6 most common considerations, or themes, with regard to measuring impact that were found in the desk review:

1. Stories of impact are multifaceted

- In some cases, it is quantifiable (new policies and procedures etc), in others it is subjective.
- Change can be complex — any data collected is likely to only tell part of the story.
- Participants are on their own journey and therefore there is a need to focus on the process of GCE as closely as we focus on the outcome.

2. There is no one right path

- Each organisation is an expert in their own practice.

3. Blended approaches

- Blended approaches to evaluation, balancing the need to demonstrate results with the need to grow and learn as a community of practice should be furthered and refined — ongoing dialogue between practitioners/ donor needs to be explored.
- We need to think about using a mix of different methods and sources in order to strengthen the outcomes data that is collected.

⁴ Overview of Impact Case Studies, PowerPoint Presentation, author unknown, February 2022

⁵ Bourn, 2016

4. Timeframes

- Planning and implementation are often constrained by funding cycles. Change is often in the long term, well outside project time frames.

5. Don't expect a quick technical solution

- More often it is a long “social” and “political” process. There is a tendency to focus on immediate, observable outcomes such as student reactions, rather than longer-term outcomes such as changes in behaviour and impact on practice.
- Global Citizenship Education programmes attempted to achieve significant results in too limited a time and with insufficient resources. There is a call for an exploration of learners 'longer term engagement with GCE through longitudinal research.

6. Who and What is Being Measured ⁶

Individuals

The largest number of changes measured, shared or described were at the level of the individual learner — measuring critical understanding, changes in attitudes and values and action (or increased confidence to act/work with others to act).

Educators

Measurements were most often concerned with gauging:

- An increase in capacity in using GCE approaches to teaching;
- The building of a DE/GCE “communities of learning”. Institutions: Changes most often tracked:
 - Increased long-term school engagement with GCE topics and leadership/policy level engagement.
 - Increased number of GCE policies/practice in youth organisations.
 - Integration of GCE/ESD in DES/Government Departments and Agencies.
 - Increased awareness in HEIs of DE research and it's value.

Institutions

Changes most often tracked:

- Increased long-term school engagement with GCE topics and leadership/policy level engagement.
- Increased number of GCE policies/practice in youth organisations.
- Integration of GCE/ESD in DES/Government Departments and Agencies.
- Increased awareness in HEIs of DE research and it's value.

In addition to the major themes which emerged, there were other observations concerning the particular considerations that exist with regard to measuring impact in GCE and development education, they were:

→ Starting points and progression are different for individuals and groups

- Learners different starting points must be taken into consideration as should progression in learning development.

→ Approaches need to be balanced

- The challenge is to balance the need to prove (i.e., to demonstrate measurable results to funders) with the desire to improve to learn and grow as practitioners).

“So, how can we measure our progress? NOT just by counting activities. By observing impact — or more realistically by observing outcomes.”

Collins, 2017, p.27

⁶ Extracted directly from “Overview of IDEA's Stories of Impact” report provided by Susan Gallwey, consultant and member of the IDEA Q & I working group, February 2022

Most Common Tools being used in Ireland

The document review provided evidence of the tools that are most commonly being used to measure impact by GCE/DE practitioners in Ireland. It also provided evidence that all organisations are using multiple tools to provide monitoring, evaluation and impact measurements.

In December 2020 and January 2022, IDEA's Quality & Impact Working group developed a tool to collect stories of impact which were gathered from IDEA members by Susan Gallwey. The tool seeks to counterbalance the typically heavy quantitative data requirements of funders and to gain more clarity on how members framed impact in their individual contexts. Sixteen IDEA member organisations participated. In addition to surveys each identified additional methods of impact data collection, their methods included:

Focus groups and other reflective sessions

- Leader/Facilitator Observations
- Reflective pieces written by participants
- Video interviews
- "Most Significant Change" stories
- Self-assessed submission 'workbooks' made by participating schools/organisations
- Analysis of materials (games, resources) produced by programme participants
- Actions undertaken by participants
- Citation databases and other analytics
- Feedback captured via mechanisms built into an exhibition

The current desk review identified the following 5 tools as the most often used mechanisms for impact measurement in DE/GCE in Ireland.

The tools, listed by prevalence, are:

1. Surveys and Self Assessments
2. Case Studies and Observable Participant Actions
3. Group Activities/Discussions and Facilitator Observations
4. Social Media and Creative Output from participants
5. Event Report Forms, Evaluations and Evidence Records

Again, measuring impact of DE/GCE programmes requires multi-faceted approaches. As was consistently recognised in the desk review, it is important to remember that the most rigorous approach to impact measurement of DE/GCE requires a combination of quantitative data (surveys, reports, tracking data...) as well as qualitative methods (interviews, observation, case studies...) to provide a complete picture of impact.

*"Not everything that counts can be counted
and not everything that can be counted
counts"*

Albert Einstein

Strengths and Weakness of Tools Identified in the Desk Review ⁷

TABLE 1. *Surveys and Self Assessments*

SURVEYS	PROS	CONS
Surveys provide a flexible way to gather wide-ranging data from many people, but the data quality depends heavily on good survey design and implementation. They work best combined with other methods to ensure an in-depth understanding and for comparison with other data sources.	A lot of qualitative and quantitative data can be collected.	There is a risk of bias if the survey questions are not carefully worded.
	Allows for standardisation so results can be compared over time or between groups.	Data is limited to self-reported information, which can be biased or inaccurate.
	A relatively fast and cost-effective way to gather data.	They can have low response rates or high drop out rates if surveys are too long.
	Allows for the probing of attitudes, behaviours and knowledge which are often difficult areas to measure.	Results can be superficial without complementary methods like interviews.
SELF-ASSESSMENTS	PROS	CONS
Self-assessments directly capture perceived impact from participants but have limits around objectivity and potential biases. They are best used carefully in combination with empirical outcome measures to provide a participant-centred perspective on program impact. Mitigation of biases in design and interpretation is important.	Provides perceptions of impact from the beneficiaries themselves.	Prone to various biases like social desirability, acquiescence and memory errors.
	Data can be collected on subjective outcomes like wellbeing, empowerment, etc.	Hard for beneficiaries to accurately assess impact on themselves.
	It is a relatively easy and low burden for beneficiaries to complete.	Lack objectivity compared to more empirical measures of impact.
	Allows tracking of progress over time through repeated assessments.	Requires mitigating biases in questionnaire design and delivery.

⁷ Amalgamation of desk review materials and consultant expertise.

TABLE 2. *Case Studies and Observable Participant Action*

CASE STUDIES	PROS	CONS
Case studies are very useful for providing a holistic, nuanced perspective on how impact happens in context, but they lack representativeness and have limits around broader generalization. They are best combined with broader quantitative data to balance in-depth stories with understanding of overall impact.	Provide in-depth, contextualized insights into how and why impact occurs.	A very small “snapshot” sample so its findings cannot be generalised.
	Allows for the exploration of complexities of impact pathways and unexpected outcomes.	Subject to biases of the researcher.
	Offers a “human face” for impact through detailed story.	Cannot illustrate overall magnitude of impact.
	Helps explain and compliments quantitative findings and illustrates often unintended impacts.	Causal conclusions cannot be drawn from a single case.
OBSERVABLE PARTICIPANT ACTION	PROS	CONS
Observation offers objective data on tangible participant actions, but it is limited in both scale and explaining the motivations behind behaviours. It works best when combined with self-report data and qualitative context about the observed behaviours. Gaining insight that is meaningful from observation requires careful methodology and data interpretations.	Can provide an objective behavioural measure of impact.	Hard to observe medium- and long-term behaviour change.
	Allows for tracking of actions over time as progress indicators.	Difficult to ascertain reasons behind observable actions if not complimented by interviews.
	Compliments self-reported data on outcomes.	There can be biases regarding what an observer chooses to record.
	Useful for evaluating skills-building and behavioural change goals.	Behaviours can be reactive to being observed (Hawthorne Effect).

TABLE 3. *Group Activities/Discussions and Facilitator Observations*

GROUP ACTIVITIES / DISCUSSIONS	PROS	CONS
Group methods provide an engaging approach to collect qualitative insights from multiple participants but the group setting risks silencing marginalized voices and creating response biases. Careful facilitation strategies and data triangulation are important to optimize quality. One-on-one interviews may be required to understand varied perspectives.	Efficient way to gather perspectives from many participants.	Risk of group think or social desirability bias in responses.
	Group dynamics can spark ideas — and allow for participants to build on each others responses/experiences — that don't emerge in individual interviews.	Domination by some voices can silence dissenting views.
	Useful for evaluating outcomes regarding group capacity building.	Less flexibility than one-on-one discussions.
	Direct observation of group interactions provides additional data.	Analysis and interpretation requires skill in group facilitation.
FACILITATOR OBSERVATIONS	PROS	CONS
Well recorded facilitator observations can provide valuable supplemental qualitative insights, but observations are subjective, unsystematic, and should not stand alone. They work best when triangulated with participant interviews and self-reported data to balance out limitation. Standard guidance, training, and cross-checking between observers improves reliability.	Provides direct insights into participant behaviours and dynamics.	Prone to subjective biases of the facilitator.
	Useful for capturing nuances that participants may not self-report.	Varying skills of facilitators with regard to recording meaningful observations.
	Changes can be tracked over time through repeated observations.	There is the possibility of misinterpretation of behaviours without direct participant input.
	Facilitators have contextual knowledge to assist with interpretation and they can unobtrusively collect data.	Labour intensive for the facilitator and can lack a standard approach, data can vary widely between observers.

TABLE 4. *Social Media and Creative Output from Participants*

SOCIAL MEDIA	PROS	CONS
Social media provides a wealth of organic data to complement other M&E sources, but thoughtful design is needed to filter noise, address biases, and triangulate social data with other methods to gain meaningful insights and make causal connections to program activities. Targeted data collection based on clear impact questions is key.	Provides real-time, organic data on attitudes and behaviours.	Biased towards voices of social media users which may not be representative of all participants.
	Cost effective way to gather data from multiple stakeholders.	Difficult to verify authenticity and context of posts.
	Useful for tracking reach, engagement, and influence over time.	Analysis requires considerable time and specialised expertise which ensures consideration of privacy and ethical concerns around collecting identifiable data.
	Unobtrusive compared to interviews or focus groups.	Very messy data collection requiring careful filtering and it can be difficult to determine causal impact pathways from social media data alone.
CREATIVE OUTPUT FROM PARTICIPANTS	PROS	CONS
Creative outputs like artwork, videos, and performances can provide a rich qualitative window into participant experiences and developing capabilities. However, analysis is subjective and challenging to standardize. Creative data works best alongside other methods to provide examples that illustrate key impacts, rather than systematically evaluating impact. Managing permissions and privacy expectations is critical.	Provides an alternative medium for participants to express perspectives.	Still relies on self-report, so prone to similar biases.
	Allows evaluation of skills development in creative domains.	Analysis and interpretation requires creative expertise.
	Create engaging, tangible examples and stories of impact.	Difficult to draw systematic, comparable insights across varied outputs and can be logistically challenging to gather and manage creative data at scale.
	Useful for exploring complex or sensitive topics indirectly.	Outputs may reflect skills more than impact or outcomes.

TABLE 5. *Event Report Forms, Evaluations and Evidence Records*

EVENT REPORT FORMS & EVALUATIONS	PROS	CONS
Post-event reports provide a structured way to capture participant perspectives and support iterative improvements, but the data has limits in rigor and depth. The short feedback loop makes it better for monitoring implementation rather than meaningfully assessing impact. It works best paired with follow-up evaluation which is conducted later on.	Efficient way to gather data from participants after events.	Self-reported data has biases like recall error and social desirability.
	Can track key metrics like reach and satisfaction in a consistent way.	Challenging to gather credible substantial impact-related data right after events.
	Allows for both qualitative and quantitative data gathering.	Brief forms limit depth and range of feedback as well as the risk of low response rates for form completion.
	Useful for collecting time-bound impact for activities like training.	Hard to track long-term changes after the event as there are challenges to engagement as time passes.
EVIDENCE RECORDS	PROS	CONS
Thoughtfully compiled evidence records can clearly demonstrate impact, but they provide a limited perspective. Records work best when complemented by other methods to add explanations and context. The process requires balancing standards with flexibility to capture both formal and informal evidence. Prioritizing key evidence types tied to the most relevant impact questions is also something that is recommended.	Provides well-documented, verifiable examples of impact.	Depending on the type of evidence recorded it may only provide a partial view.
	Helpful for demonstrating accountability and transparency.	Labour-intensive to comprehensively gather and validate records.
	Allows for tracking patterns over time when records are consistent.	Standardization can reduce nuance and exclude informal evidence and the quality relies heavily on consistency of record keeping.
	Compilation of records from various sources (photos, reports, etc) to allow for varied evidence.	Challenging to contextualise records without additional qualitative data.

A Sampling of International Impact Measurement Tools

A wider sampling of measurement tools was also conducted as a part of this desk review. In the main, tools being used are similar to the identified tools being used in Ireland, such as surveys, self-reflection, observation and social media/public event data collection. Recognising this, there were also some useful frameworks which may help to inform existing tool usage.

In order to highlight some of what is available, we have signposted the following four resources (full references included in the Document Review list).

- **In Educating for Global Competence: Learning Redefined for a interconnected World** DE/GCE providers may find some useful resources which include “activities and examples which are replicable in varying contexts and can be used to measure changes in participant’s global awareness, attitudes, competences and behaviours as a result of exposure to GCED.” (Box, Mansilla, Jackson, 2017). The document provides examples of DE/GCE interventions in 4 domains of learning – investigating the world, recognising perspectives, communicating ideas and taking action. It also provides practical examples and/or descriptions of student work which is then analysed to demonstrate evidence of impact.
- **The Manual for developing intercultural competencies: Story Circles** DE/GCE providers can find a practical example of using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) which is a tool that measures intercultural competence through 50 areas which are anchored in the development model of intercultural sensitivity. Guided participant story telling was not a common methodology of measuring impact in Ireland. The document provides reflection tools and examples of an experiential learning methodology which can provide the opportunity for intercultural competency impact measurement.
- **The Global Perspective Inventory (GPI): Its purpose, construction, potential uses and psychometric characteristics** DE/GCE practitioners can find a model that is framed by the concept that “global learning is a developmental process” which can be measured “through scales of cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal development.” (Braskamp, Braskamp, Engberg, 2014). The document puts forward that having a clear purpose and readiness for assessment; involving stakeholders throughout the assessment process; what and how to assess is critical; assessment is telling a story; and improvement and follow-up are all integral parts of the assessment process.
- Finally, the **Oxfam Global Citizenship Education Evaluation Framework** includes sample survey instruments to evaluate various GCE learning outcomes with example questions for assessing knowledge, skills, values and engagement. The Oxfam global Citizenship frameworks are currently used by some of the DE/GCE sector in Ireland. Many of the organisations informed by this framework share and reference the Oxfam GCE Evaluation framework when working with their stakeholders.

Complimentary Sectors Impact Measurement Tools Summary

Design and implementation of DE/GCE impact measurement tools can be informed by methods used in other sectors. A sampling of impact monitoring and evaluation tools from other sectors is provided below alongside signposted publications for further information:

- **Business/NGOs: Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis** quantifies social, economic and environmental impacts in monetary terms. It helps demonstrate the value created by an organization. *"SROI is a framework for measuring and accounting for this much broader concept of value; it seeks to reduce inequality and environmental degradation and improve wellbeing by incorporating social, environmental and economic costs and benefits."* (Nicholls et al., 2012)
 - Suggested reading: Nicholls, J., Lawlor, E., Neitzert, E., & Goodspeed, T. (2012). *'A guide to Social Return on Investment'*. The SROI Network.
- **Philanthropy: Logic models** visually map the links between program activities, outputs and intended impacts. This supports program planning, monitoring and evaluation.
 - Suggested reading: McLaughlin & Jordan (1999). *'Evaluation and program planning'*, 22(1), 65–72.
- **International development: Randomized control trials** in international development randomly assign participants to an intervention group or a control group that does not receive the intervention, allowing rigorous comparison of results to determine the impact of a programme or policy. "Randomized evaluations have proven invaluable for reliably determining the impacts of programmes which can then guide policy and resource allocation decisions." (Banerjee & Duflo, 2009).
 - Suggested reading: Duflo, E. & Kremer, M (2005). *'Use of randomization in the evaluation of development effectiveness'*. Evaluating effectiveness (pp: 205:231). World Bank Series on Evaluation and Development, Volume 7. World Bank.

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Acknowledgements

IDEA acknowledges funding received from Irish Aid at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trócaire and Concern. Irish Aid is the Government's overseas development programme which supports partners working in some of the world's poorest countries. Irish Aid also supports Global Citizenship Education in Ireland to encourage learning and public engagement with global issues. The ideas, opinions and comments herein are entirely the responsibility of IDEA and do not necessarily represent or reflect those of our funders.

This Desk Review has been compiled by the **McCreanor Murray Rose** team and reviewed by IDEA.

Thank you!

We would like to acknowledge and extend our thanks to those who made this work possible. Our consultants: The McCreanor Murray Rose team for compiling this desk review. The studio of Clare Lynch Design for the design of this Desk Review. Our donors Irish Aid, Concern and Trócaire.



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