

**19th June 2009**

# A vision for an inclusive, equal, sustainable Ireland

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The crisis in national and global financial and economic systems, combined with grave weaknesses in the Irish political project and the chosen model of development, is creating hardship for many individuals, families and communities in Ireland.

The most disadvantaged and marginalised groups in society, who gained least during the economic boom, are bearing a disproportionate burden of poverty and inequality as a result of policies in place to manage and address this crisis. Organisations at community and national levels, which have been at the forefront of combating poverty and inequality, are being silenced and dismantled.

There is an urgent need for an alternative model of development with a capacity to create a more equal Ireland which also breaks free of enduring injustices such as socio-economic and gendered inequalities. In more equal societies everybody does better. Economic and social restructuring can only make sense in the short term if the recovery programme contributes in the medium and long term to a better, more equal and more sustainable society and economy.

*Is Féidir Linn* is an ad hoc grouping of individuals with a commitment to or involvement in community work, social inclusion, anti-poverty, human rights and equality issues. We want to be part of a sustained movement committed to bringing about a better society. We believe now is the time to develop an alternative political, economic and social model of development for Ireland.

This document outlines the values and goals of what that alternative model of development could look like. In preparing this document the aim of *Is Féidir Linn* is to stimulate discussion and understanding of the need for and content of such an alternative model. The next step is to build consensus, momentum, solidarity and alliances among those interested in this vision and these goals, with a view to working towards an inclusive, equal and sustainable Ireland.

# POLICY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## 1. Sustainability

**Goal:** A model of development that ensures economic and social security, eliminates environmental risk, accommodates a variety of different economic structures and forms of ownership and recognises global interdependence.

### Policy Objectives:

- ◆ Policies and programmes should seek to achieve full employment where everyone can exercise their right to freely chosen, decently paid work and where employment standards are fully enforced.
  - ◆ Profit from economic activity and human work and endeavour should be fairly shared across generations through universal pensions and child income support.
  - ◆ Employment, income support and public policy should interact to guarantee security for all in a flexible labour market.
  - ◆ Policy and programmes should reflect an understanding of work that includes care work and should ensure that all work, paid and unpaid, is shared so that everyone has the right to work and care.
  - ◆ Policies and programmes should support social economy employment that produces social gain.
  - ◆ Industrial policy should promote indigenous industry and localised production, both being central to a sustainable economy.
  - ◆ The state should regulate to protect society from unsustainable economic activity which exploits workers, destroys the environment, adds to global injustice or damages work life balance.
  - ◆ International commitments should support the greater global distribution of wealth, fair trade with 'developing world' countries and highest levels of international aid to 'developing world' countries.
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## 2. Income, Taxation, Wealth

**Goal:** A model of development where income and resources are distributed more equally so as to avoid poverty, inequality and excesses of wealth. This requires high levels of taxation and social expenditure and high quality public services.

### Policy Objectives :

- ◆ Tax and incomes policy should ensure minimum and maximum income standards. Highest income earners should have no more than ten times the income of the lowest earners.
  - ◆ The level of taxation should be that required to achieve the highest standards of efficient and effective public services of the four best performing countries in EU.
  - ◆ The tax system should be progressive and the tax base should include all forms of wealth with full compliance.
  - ◆ Wages, taxation and income support policy should ensure incentives to take up quality employment that pays sufficiently to prevent or eliminate poverty.
  - ◆ The minimum income level should be adequate to allow people to live a dignified life and to ensure that no one has an income less than 60% of the national median income.
  - ◆ Economic policy should seek to eliminate income, pay and employment gaps between groups, paying particular attention to women and members of minority ethnic groups.
  - ◆ There should be no tax shelters. Tax reliefs should be minimal and used only for employment creation, social gain and to promote environmentally, economically and socially sustainable behaviour.
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## 3. Public Services:

**Goal:** A model of development which prioritises, invests in and develops high quality, efficient and effective public services for all.

### Policy objectives:

- ◆ All public services should be of high quality with clear legally enforced minimum standards.
  - ◆ There should be publicly funded universal access to education, health and care services. There should be no public support for private enhancement of these core rights.
  - ◆ Broader public services should enable participation in public, social and economic life through rights that secure access to decent housing and accommodation, a range of culture, sports and recreation and transport.
  - ◆ Services of general interest such as water, refuse and transport should be kept in, or returned to, public control.
  - ◆ Public services should be developed in ways that promote equality, provide for diversity, are non-discriminatory and meet peoples' needs in an integrated and accountable manner.
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## 4. Equal status:

**Goal:** A model of development where society and its institutions appropriately and adequately value the diversity that makes up society, and eliminate all forms of discrimination.

### Policy objectives:

- ◆ Require public and private sector organisations to be proactive in taking action to promote equality through improved equality legislation.
  - ◆ Introduce a new ground of 'socio-economic status' into the equality legislation.
  - ◆ Ensure independent adequately resourced statutory agencies to effectively implement and monitor equality legislation.
  - ◆ Adequately support programmes that enable people to exercise their rights under equality legislation.
  - ◆ Enhance policy and programmes in place to eliminate violence and abuse targeted at specific groups in society.
  - ◆ Establish policy, standards and programmes to eliminate stereotyping, in particular in all forms of media and advertising.
  - ◆ Ensure effective assessment of all policies for their impact on equality and social cohesion.
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## 5. Democracy

**Goal:** A model of development that enables greater diversity of influence through an enhanced system of representative democracy and a more inclusive, participatory and active democracy including an autonomous and critical civil society.

### Policy objectives:

- ◆ Establish an independent electoral commission which, through such mechanisms as gender and minority electoral quotas, ensures that political representatives reflect the diversity of society.
  - ◆ Reform local government to devolve greater powers to local level, to develop local funding sources and to more effectively coordinate and integrate public services.
  - ◆ Develop models of participatory democracy and specific supports for those experiencing poverty and inequality to participate in and influence decision-making.
  - ◆ Implement policy and programmes to support wider and more diverse participation in decision making in workplaces, public sector services and educational establishments.
  - ◆ Ensure private and state funding respects and protects the independence of community sector organisations and affirms and supports their advocacy role.
  - ◆ Increase public sector accountability through enhanced freedom of information.
  - ◆ Ensure competent and diverse representation on state boards by making all state board appointments through the Public Appointments Commission.
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# VALUES

## **Balance**

This model of development balances economic, social and environmental objectives and can sustain itself into the future through: an economy that is productive and promotes full employment and well-being; a society that is cohesive, caring and inclusive of all; an environment that is cared for and well managed.

## **Participation**

This model of development is governed in a way that enables all in society to have a real say in decisions that impact on them.

## **Equality**

This model of development contributes to equality for all groups and individuals in society in terms of: the distribution of resources and services: the recognition of diversity: the exercise of influence.

## **Global Solidarity**

This model of development contributes to independence, equality and development for the disadvantaged regions of the world.

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Further information on ‘A vision for an inclusive, equal, sustainable Ireland’ is available on the Community Platform website: [www.communityplatform.ie](http://www.communityplatform.ie)