

Perspectives on Change: the Development Cooperation Ireland Development Education Strategy Plan 2003-2005

As the Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI) development education strategy plan comes to an end, and in light of the White Paper process on overseas development policy, it is an appropriate time to assess progress and to reflect on future planning. In this report, **Catherine Roche** presents DCI's view of the gains made through their strategy in the development education sector in Ireland.

'For Development Cooperation Ireland, development education is an educational process aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of the rapidly changing, interdependent and unequal world in which we live. It seeks to engage people in analysis, reflection and action for local and global citizenship and participation. It is about supporting people in understanding, and in acting to transform the social, cultural, political and economic structures which affect their lives and the lives of others at personal, community, national and international levels.' (DCI 2003:12)

Introduction

'Deepening Public Understanding of International Development', the Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI) development education strategy plan 2003-2005 defined, for DCI, the overarching issues in development education and outlined a programme of work. Underpinning the strategy plan is a conviction that development education has a crucial role to play in enlarging public understanding of development issues and that an effective development education system stimulates greater public interest in such issues, thereby contributing to an enhanced understanding of the underlying causes of poverty and underdevelopment. While it is neither the core of development education nor the focus of the strategy plan, DCI acknowledges that a by-product from this process could be greater public

awareness of, and support for, the Government's official aid programme. As the strategy plan comes to an end, it is apposite to review work to date and to incorporate that learning into the planning process around the next strategy plan. This is also a timely opportunity to examine the perceived impact of the plan and to explore potential influence of any new plan on development education in Ireland.

1.1 Review and overview.

Fundamental to the formulation of the strategy plan is the conviction of DCI that our efforts to tackle poverty, inequality and injustice, to promote peace and to safeguard human rights require action at local and global levels. People in Ireland can contribute to global poverty reduction and promote development. To achieve such change, it is necessary to increase knowledge and understanding of development issues among the Irish public and this is the central tenet of the strategy plan for development education. From this mainstay and through consultation, the objectives of the plan emerged as did the strategic priority areas.

In drawing up the plan, DCI drew extensively on reviews, research and evaluations undertaken by key stakeholders in development education in Ireland. It was informed by developments and changes in education policy in Ireland and is situated within the context of the overarching priorities and objectives of the DCI programme. It is within this context and framework that the success or otherwise of the plan to date will be discussed. In order to establish to what extent the plan has been delivered and to what degree the aims, as outlined above, have been achieved, it is necessary to examine the work done to date on the key areas of the plan.

1.2 Objective 1: To integrate a development education perspective in relevant education policies.

Significant progress has been made in several dimensions of this objective. As proposed in the plan, DCI has established structured dialogue with the Department of Education and Science (DES) and with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). Representatives from both organisations are members of both the Development Education Advisory Committee (DEAC) and the development education grants committee. Dialogue has also been initiated with other Government Departments, as appropriate. Specifically, there has been discussion with Department of the Environment and Local Government around the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). However,

it has not proved feasible to open channels of communication with all of the various Government departments listed under this objective.

At an international level, contact with the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) has been maintained and DCI continues to be involved at European level, most usually with the Council of Europe, through the North-South Centre. As opportunities emerged, submissions were made on relevant educational policy issues, including written submissions on the role of development education to the OECD review of Higher Education in Ireland, the NCCA Framework for Early Learning and the Department of Education and Science review of second level senior cycle education. It is often difficult to assess the impact of such submissions in terms of policy change but in terms of raising awareness of development education, DCI is confident that it has been successful. There is also some empirical evidence of achievement in influencing proposals for the reform of second level senior cycle, currently before the Minister for Education and Science. Supplementing this is the forthcoming publication of a mapping of development education opportunities at second level senior cycle, conducted by NCCA for DCI. This publication outlines the opportunities for development education as they currently exist in Transition Year, Leaving Certificate (Established) and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. This will be a valuable resource for those engaged in education at this level, across a wide variety of subjects.

1.3 Objective 2: To integrate and support the delivery of development education in selected areas in the formal and non-formal education sectors.

Given the substantial number of strategic priority areas included under this objective, progress in each will be delineated below.

(a) Teacher Education

Throughout the lifetime of the strategy plan, support for the integration of a development education perspective in initial teacher education at primary level has been provided through the Development and Intercultural Education (DICE) project and through targeted support for Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. Through these initiatives, DCI supports development education at initial teacher education in all five colleges of education. Progress in initial teacher education at second level has been more measured, due to the more diverse nature of such education provision but is certainly evident. Given the variety and location of institutions

engaged in the provision of initial teacher education for second level, the DICE model was considered inappropriate. Therefore, DCI has embraced alternative approaches in this regard and is currently supporting the piloting of a project to support development education in initial teacher education at second level. While the work will begin with Education Departments in three Universities and one Institute of Technology, it is envisaged that by 2008, a national platform for development education in initial teacher education at this level, will be achieved. DCI also supports in-service training in development education, which is provided by a number of agencies, including development education organisations and university departments.

(b) Curriculum Support and development at primary and second level

To sustain and assist teachers in the mediation and delivery of the curriculum, DCI has, over the course of the current strategic plan, engaged in a number of key activities. At primary level, the integration of a development education perspective in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) has been promoted through the commissioning of two resources for this subject area, each targeting a different age group. In addition, work on another resource for primary level is underway.

At second level, DCI has produced a development education resource for Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE). Through the grants scheme, DCI supports curriculum support and development. In partnership with other agencies, DCI has supported the development of a dedicated website (www.developmenteducation.ie) which, as an educational resource, further complements the curriculum support provided for teachers. As mentioned above, a mapping of development education opportunities at second level senior cycle has been conducted. Further, through membership of networks, including Citizenship Education Network (CEN), DCI promotes the development education dimension in the formal curriculum.

The cessation of funding for stand-alone projects in individual schools marked a move towards support for schools in a network or cluster basis. This has resulted in an increased number of schools engaging in development education activities in a sustained way. The concept of an award scheme for schools envisaged in the strategy plan has materialised as two separate mechanisms of support. At primary level, the DCI 'Our World' media awards scheme encourages pupils who have shown an interest in and understanding of development education. For second level students, at Transition Year, their efforts to effect change by undertaking action projects in development issues are acknowledged through the provision of the DCI 'Global Citizen' Award, as part of the Young Social Innovators programme.

(c) Third Level

Considerable advancement has been made in this element of strategic priority under objective two. Prior to the strategy plan, involvement with the sector had centred largely on the colleges of education but over the lifetime of the plan, there has been a burgeoning of engagement with universities. This engagement has been facilitated by increased interest in a need for a global dimension in education and a concern with education for sustainable development as Irish society attempts to respond to the challenge of cultural pluralism. The challenge is a real one in educational institutions which now have an increasingly multi-cultural population. As Irish universities and other education institutions are multi-racial, multi-faith and multi-lingual, there is thus a clear reminder of the links between national and international concerns. In the third level sector, this context has facilitated increased interest in and willingness to engage in development education. The core values of development education are especially apposite in the current context of multi-culturalism, globalisation and internationalisation and this recognition has assisted the growth in development education at this level. DCI now has funding agreements (some on a multi-annual basis) with all Irish universities, supporting a variety of interventions, including teacher education, inter-faculty/interdisciplinary modules, a biennial Third Level conference, research and support for student groups/organisations. It is worth noting however, that while higher education institutions might acknowledge a role for development education/global education, as demonstrated above, the funding for this is offered by the Department of Foreign Affairs rather than the Department of Education and Science. This issue will be further explored in the discussion of future strategy planning.

(d) Youth Work

Building on the established tradition of development education within the youth sector and the partnership approach, DCI, in conjunction with the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) has produced a special strategy plan, specifically for this sector. The 'Development Education Strategy for the Voluntary Youth Sector 2004-2007' takes cognisance of existing work in this field, including One World Week, and provides a framework for the promotion and support of development education for youth. Arising from a meticulous consultation process, the strategy takes as its focus four main areas or strategic objectives, all aimed to integrate development education into the core programmes of youth organisations: 1. to promote cooperation and collaboration between the youth and development education sectors; 2. to build capacity of the youth work sector in development education; 3. to define and promote good practice in development education in youth work and fourthly, to ensure the relevance of the work to the end user.

(e) Further Education

Development education in community and adult education settings is supported through the grants scheme. However, the development of replicable modules of development education for adult and community education has not yet been achieved. In this regard, DCI has commissioned preliminary research in the areas of accreditation and is currently exploring pathways to accredit development education initiatives, in both the formal and non-formal sectors.

1.4 Objective 3: To provide support to civil society organisations in Ireland to increase public understanding of development issues.

DCI recognises the vital and unique contribution that civil society organisations in Ireland have made and continue to make in promoting public engagement with development issues. Civil society organisations have been central to the incorporation of a development education perspective in the education system as well, as being instrumental in creating the high level of awareness of development issues among the Irish public. The Civil Society Development Education Fund mooted in the strategy plan, has become the primary mechanism through which this objective has been achieved. This fund has provided support for an assortment of development education work, carried out by a range of civil society organisations, including solidarity groups, non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) and trade unions.

1.5 Objective 4: To facilitate capacity building of the development education sector to support and promote development education.

Recognising that fortifying the capacity of the development education organisations in the community and voluntary sector is essential to the future sustainability of development education, DCI has administered a funding strand dedicated to this aim. The capacity-building fund is designed to increase and embed ability in the sector, while taking cognisance of the diversity of organisations and needs. DCI also supports and welcomes the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) as a representative structure and network for development education. The sector itself will drive this initiative and the role of DCI is one of facilitation.

1.6 Objective 5: To promote more effective use of communications to increase public understanding of development issues.

From research commissioned in advance of the strategic plan (MRBI, 2002), DCI was aware that there is a high level of awareness among the Irish public with regard to development and development issues. However, the level of understanding of the underlying causes of poverty and underdevelopment was demonstrably lower. To counteract this, DCI initiated a Media Challenge Fund, as media is the single most important source of information on development issues for the general public. Through local and national radio stations, print and new media; the fund has encouraged greater coverage by the media of development issues.

1.7 Objective 6: To identify and maximise educational opportunities for public engagement with the Development Cooperation Ireland Programme.

Central to the achievement of Ireland's development commitments is a well-informed public. Active public engagement must be based on knowledge and understanding of development issues. The strategy plan stated explicitly, but is worth reiterating, that it is not the function of development education to raise awareness of the DCI programme. However, there are natural synergies between development education and the DCI programme. Over the course of the strategy plan, educational opportunities where key development issues addressed by the DCI programme in its priority countries could be highlighted, have been identified. Reference has already been made to the production of resources, using case studies from the DCI programme.

2. Going forward: future planning for development education.

A key influence on any planning for another development education strategy plan is the preparation of the Government's first ever White Paper on overseas development policy. Strategic planning for the next few years must also take into account the proposed increased budget for development education and the allied questions around capacity that this raises. Furthermore, the existing strategic priority areas and objectives from the 2003-2005 plan will, in general, define central areas for future work. A new strategy plan will also need to take cognisance of the changing context of

development education, both in terms of Irish society and in terms of its educational developments.

2.1 White Paper on overseas development policy.

The proposed White Paper will set out Government policy for the future direction of its official aid programme of overseas development assistance (ODA). For the period 2005-2007, €1.8 billion has been earmarked by the Government for ODA. This funding is used as a contribution to international organisations, EU programmes of ODA, Irish NGO support, emergency relief and for financing longer term programmes. In the context of the budget increase, the aim of the White Paper is to set out clear, effective and sustainable policy priorities for the Government's official programme of development assistance. The Government has engaged in a process of public consultation, encompassing written submissions from individuals and organisations and a series of public meetings.

In addition, the Minister of State has consulted with key multilateral partners in New York and Geneva. Analysis of all contributions will ensure that views are reflected. The Advisory Board for Development Cooperation Ireland (ABDCI) will also take the White paper as its focus for the next Development Forum. Crafting the paper will commence in late 2005 and the documents should be ready to submit for Governmental approval in the first half of 2006, after which it will be published. This process and the resulting policy Paper will have a significant impact on DCI's development education programme and on its future directions.

DCI's development cooperation programme is taking place within this increasingly complex context. Poverty reduction is an overarching objective for the programme. The international goals towards poverty reduction, outlined in the Millennium Development Goals, provide an important framework. Priority sectors for intervention by DCI include HIV/AIDS, debt, governance, democracy and human rights, conflict prevention and resolution, global refugee flows, trade and overseas development assistance. Cross cutting issues such as gender and environment inform policy and strategies in all of the programmes. DCI's development education strategy has been informed by the international context and the approaches and strategies outlined above.

DCI recognises the value and unique contribution that development education practitioners and organisations have made, and are continuing to make, to enable people in Ireland to engage with development policies and issues. We are hopeful that this strategy plan will facilitate continued and expanded work in the years ahead.

References

Development Cooperation Ireland (2003) *Deepening Public Understanding of International Development* pg.12

MRBI/Ireland Aid/NCDE (2002) '*Attitudes Towards Development Co-Operation*'

Currently Education Officer with Young Social Innovators, an initiative to develop social awareness and activism amongst young people, **Cathy Roche** worked with Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI) from 2002 to July 2005. As Education Officer in the Development Education Unit of DCI, Cathy's work centred on development education initiatives in the formal education sector. Cathy is a seconded teacher of English, History and Civic, Social and Political Education.