

Our World, Our Future

Irish Aid

Reviewed by Susan Gallwey

Our World, Our Future is a new development education resource for Geography at senior primary level. Written for Irish Aid by primary teacher Owen McCarthy, *Our World, Our Future* is a substantial yet accessible resource. It consists of 24 lesson plans, each containing teacher information, classroom activities, web references and student worksheets. The lessons are supplemented by a set of A4 colour photocards, a wall map and a poster. The resource directly addresses the Geography strand unit 'Development and Aid' and also has relevance for many other subject areas across the curriculum. Whilst the Irish context is highlighted, much of the resource could be adapted successfully for use in the UK or elsewhere.

The resource aims to "encourage pupils to explore the meaning and importance of inequality and development in today's world from a child's perspective, in relation to local and global development issues, interdependence and self-reliance, human rights and social justice" (McCarthy, 2006, p.5). The resource also seeks to foster the skills and values necessary for active and ethical global citizenship.

To achieve these ambitious aims, this resource must tackle complex and sometimes controversial issues. Yet, if already overstretched primary teachers are to be persuaded to use such a resource, the material must be simply presented in a manageable format. *Our World, Our Future* gets the balance right, chiefly due to the clear human rights framework on which the resource is built. The resource is divided into six units: 'Interdependence', 'Rights and responsibilities', 'Local and global', 'The environment', 'Working towards a better future', and 'Children as citizens'. This structure enables pupils to begin with a consideration of their own needs, leading to an understanding of development in terms of universal and inalienable human rights.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) occupy a central place in the resource. Photographs and activities related to the MDGs provide the opportunity to actively examine the goals and to develop an understanding of their importance. Fact sheets and web references ensure that teachers can access sufficient background information in areas with which they may be unfamiliar.

A number of lessons are devoted to Irish Aid and its programme countries. The inclusion of Irish Aid's work does not cross the boundary between education and publicity, as the focus is placed firmly on underlying

development values and not on the specific achievements of the Irish Aid programme. Pupils are encouraged to critically examine aid options and to distinguish between emergency relief and long-term development co-operation. It is made clear that development is an issue at home as well as abroad; for example, one of the photo cards examines the rights of Irish Travellers.

The resource includes a variety of primary source material from the Global South, such as a Ghanaian poem and first-person narratives from a village in Uganda. These inputs hopefully will encourage teachers and pupils to seek out Southern perspectives in future class work. The photographs of everyday life are well chosen and promote positive images of Southern communities.

In terms of methodologies, the resource reflects the values of development education. Active and cooperative learning is encouraged through group discussions, role-plays, fieldwork, simulation games and photo-work. The role-plays are particularly well designed, in that they require pupils to examine all angles of an issue before specific roles are allocated by the teacher. Throughout the resource, imaginative reflection is promoted; for example, one lesson asks pupils to respond to readings about famine in different localities and eras. Multiple styles of learning are promoted generally, although some of the readings and activities are pitched at quite a high level of ability. There are opportunities for pupils to work at individual, group, class and whole-school levels.

The resource comes to an empowering conclusion by asking pupils to look ahead to 2015, when they will be reaching adulthood and the MDGs are due to be attained. Overall, *Our World, Our Future* offers a valuable opportunity to engage tomorrow's decision-makers in an informed, critical and life-long debate on development and aid.

Susan Gallwey is a Development Education Officer at the Waterford One World Centre. Her work includes the ‘Global Schools’ project for local primary schools. She co-edited Irish Aid’s *Guide to Development Education Resources 2006-2008*.

McCarthy, O (2006) *Our World, Our Future*, Dublin, Irish Aid.

Free, hard copies available from Irish Aid

Email: developmenteducation@dfa.ie

Tel: +353 (0)1 4082096.

Available in pdf format at:

www.irishaid.gov.ie/uploads/Our%20World%20Our%20Future.pdf