

## CHALLENGES TO PRACTISING DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS (INGOs)

Over the past year, Children in Crossfire (CiC) has been involved in a strategic planning process to focus the overall work of the organisation, from the international context to local fundraising campaigns. During this process, the development education team recognised that it had not adequately collaborated with the fundraising and international departments, and had been operating within a ‘silo culture’. They identified an opportunity to reflect as an organisation, and to reconsider the approach to development education to ensure it is ‘rooted in and informed by the overseas development programme...and to seek coherence across the work of CiC through ongoing coordination among the development education, fundraising and international teams’ (Children in Crossfire, 2010:1). In this article, **Helen Henderson** and **Grainne O’Neill**, two development educators working in Children in Crossfire, examine the importance and benefits of working collaboratively across departments within INGOs and the relevance for development education specifically.

### Introduction

Children in Crossfire’s understanding of development education has moved beyond raising awareness for overseas projects, towards an education that promotes critical thinking and action for change. This involves challenging structures that have maintained inequalities between the global North and global South. Irish Aid defines development education as:

“...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” (Irish Aid, 2007).

The strategic review process that Children in Crossfire (CiC) underwent in 2010 highlighted the benefits of working more collaboratively with the other departments within the organisation, but the authors also

recognised the implications for development education. For example, there was a danger that their practice could become increasingly embedded within a traditional development charity framework. This would limit focus of the development education work to raising awareness of the overseas projects and encouraging actions that only involve fundraising, rather than a practice that strives to ‘focus attention on the need for structural change, based on a reformulation of the global North’s political-economic relationship with so-called developing nations’ (Bryan, 2008:75). It should be noted that the authors are not claiming that their current development education practice can provide clear evidence of its impact on structural change. Nevertheless, there have been attempts to engage in a practice that ‘challenges the perception that the developing world is continually in need of saving or intervention, and that we in the global North have all the solutions’ (Andreotti, 2006, quoted in Bryan, 2008:76).

Due to the aforementioned concern, and indeed the wider challenge of government cuts in development education funding, the authors decided to engage with practitioners working within development education and fundraising. The aim was to better understand the relationship between development education and the wider CiC departments, and to help clarify if, and how, to maintain a critical perspective on the structural causes of poverty whilst working within the context of an NGO with respect to the international programmes and fundraising departments. A further aim was to address how the current economic climate and government cuts to development education might impact on the practice of development education in general.

## **Interviewees**

Four conversations were conducted: the first with an INGO fundraiser; the second with a development education practitioner (both of whom will remain anonymous and will be referred to as NGO1 and NGO2, respectively); meanwhile, the two remaining conversations were with people working outside an INGO; Seamus Farrell (freelance educator) and Nora McQuaid (Global Dimension in Schools Co-ordinator for Northern Ireland). Each interviewee was known to the authors, and was specifically selected based on experience. The authors believed that not being directly located within development NGOs, Farrell and McQuaid might bring more objective voices to this paper. NGO1 and NGO2 were selected because they were located in the development arena; and the authors wished to explore whether they had experienced similar challenges within their respective organisations, and to engage them on

questions of how they addressed these issues. Although the authors consider Farrell and McQuaid as objective voices, they do not consider NGO1 and NGO2 to be solely subjective. This article is not intended to compare findings from both sets of participants. Only one of the four interviewees is from a fundraising background, which limits this article in drawing conclusions about the sector in general, particularly regarding an adequate exploration of the possible relationship between development education and fundraising within an INGO. The analysis is not claiming to be in any way representative of development INGO practice overall, but is merely intended to include a range of voices contributing to the arguments raised throughout and reflections from the four participants and the authors in order to kick start the debate on development education within the context of INGOs.

## **Conversations**

In our conversations we focused on two main themes. These are:

- The relationship, if any, between development education and the wider work of the INGO;
- Current wider challenges for development education.

The authors used the method of semi-structured interviews to help inform the investigation. Semi-structured interviews introduce a variety of topics, and employ a flexible and conversational approach to allow for any other data to emerge outside initially identified topics. However, no other data emerged, other than that which related to the topics outlined above.

## **Relationship between development education and the wider work of the INGO**

Throughout the CiC strategic planning sessions, the authors engaged with the wider staff around the issue of collaborative work between development education, the community fundraising team and the international department. Ultimately:

“...CiC exists in order to implement its programme of support to children and communities living in the crossfire of poverty in Africa. The primary area of the organisation’s work is operating this overseas

programme. This is supported and enabled by the organisation's fundraising work" (Children in Crossfire, 2010:2).

The organisation is committed to a minimum of one full-time post for development education with or without external funding sources. For CiC, the development education team should be willing to:

"engage CiC supporters and the wider community in the North West of Ireland in examining the issues affecting children in the countries where CiC operates and explore what the programme is doing to tackle these issues" (Children in Crossfire, 2010:2-3).

The premise here is to raise awareness of CiC's overseas initiatives whilst drawing on case studies from the projects to explore the underlying causes of poverty, highlighting the need for such CiC projects, and inspiring action, including that which might be fundraising-focused. Development education aims to empower people to take action to challenge injustice; however the fundraising approach presents a risk particularly if people feel that it is the only action they can take. Fundraising is the life blood of the organisation, but there are dangers when mixed with development education as it could reinforce the charity model of development 'which is negatively related to concern for the developing world constructed around *servicing out help*' (see Heerde & Hudson: 2010:397). For instance, the messages used by fundraising initiatives are short, simple and attention grabbing to maximise donor response from a short intervention, and the images used often reinforce the idea that the problem is located in the developing world rather than here in the 'developed' world. Hence, such an approach runs counter to development education as it 'tends to blame the victim - that is, it places the problem with the poor themselves, rather than on the structure that forces them to live a particular way: the growth of poverty is dependent on the growth of wealth' (Renner, et al., 2010:45). Development education, on the other hand, utilises a questioning approach intended to enhance critical thinking skills and subsequent actions that challenge the wider structural causes of poverty. Here two questions are raised: the first looks at whether development education can collaborate with the wider work of CiC whilst ensuring that its practice does not become embedded within a charity model of development; the second examines whether the opportunities outweigh the drawbacks in this collaborative approach.

NGO2 recommended that the fundraising aspect of CiC should have a strong development educational element, and that management be supportive

of the partnership in this context. In other words, management should support development education as a process. This is intended to ensure critical understanding, so fundraisers such as ‘young people know what they are fundraising for and why, so they have a more critical approach to aid and understanding it’ (NGO2, 2010). Similarly, Farrell states that:

“Fundraising provides a real opportunity to do development education - provided that it is this way round. Very often it gets turned round the other way; development education is used as a means to do fundraising. When it is made to serve fundraising it can severely limit its authenticity and its capacity to engage with critical issues” (2010).

Indeed, the authors were concerned that collaborating with the fundraising team would limit the capacity of development education to engage with critical issues, such as locating the problems of poverty within the context of policies and practices in the global North that need to be challenged through specific actions, rather than simply highlighting why CiC needs to work overseas, and how it depends on fundraising actions to support its overall work. As Farrell puts it:

“Children in Crossfire are responding to an unjust reality. Development education within CiC is about working for systemic change - which must begin with a change of mindset in this part of the world. The problem is located here, not overseas. The issues being addressed in our overseas programme have their origins on this side of the planet...and people here need to know that aid by itself is inadequate while global systems, structures and policies remain unfair/unjust” (2010).

When talking about international development Farrell refers to Einstein, and states that ‘the problems that we now face, cannot be solved by the same kind of thinking that existed when we created the problems’. He highlights the need for ‘getting a different conversation going about the world that confronts us about the legacy of colonialism and racism’, and challenging the patronising attitudes towards poor people and poor countries.

Fundraising is an essential part of an INGO and yet the agenda to raise money can have implications in terms of portraying people from the developing world as needing our financial assistance and as being dependent on our charity. Subsequently, this positions the developing world as ‘basically bystanders in their own affairs, [and] depending on our beneficence as benign

aiding dispensing Westerners...this situation amounts to a continuation of colonial ideologies of the Black Other' (see Dodd, 2005, quoted in Mahadeo & McKinney, 2007:18). However, the earlier statement by Farrell highlights the possibility for the fundraising and development education relationship to be viewed as an opportunity for both sides to rethink existing approaches and do things differently.

A challenge for NGO2 is that 'development education is too complex to be integrated into fundraising. So often fundraising is about communicating with the public in short, simple messages'. NGO2 referred to the paradoxical equation of 5:50:500 that highlights the fact that rich countries take more money than they give in aid, through unfair trade, debt repayments (see [www.developmenteducation.ie](http://www.developmenteducation.ie)). The statistics below highlights this disparity:

- \$5 billion has been given to the developing world by non-governmental agencies (voluntary aid) every year for the past 10 years;
- \$50 billion has been given to the developing world by governments (official aid) every year for the past 10 years;
- \$500 billion is what the developing world has lost every year for the past 10 years as a result of the operation of the current unjust international economic system (this includes interest on debt, trade barriers and brain drain).

It was this equation that eventually gave the authors and Children in Crossfire clarity in terms of how the fundraising, international programmes and the development education could co-exist within the same organisation and with the same purpose. Children in Crossfire is committed to challenging poverty and injustice and each part of the organisation has a different role to play. The first part of the equation is necessary because the \$5 billion in aid that NGOs fundraise and coordinate is vital in this hugely unequal world and makes a real difference to people's lives. It is also important that NGOs hold governments accountable in terms of the promises contained within the \$50 billion donated in official aid. However, it is imperative at the same time to address the \$500 billion that is taken back as this is where there is most potential to challenge the structural causes of poverty. Within Children in Crossfire, all the staff do not have to do the same work; development education does not have to be fundraiser-fuelled and vice versa, but development education and fundraising need to co-exist, communicate and work with a knowledge and appreciation of the other's role.

NGO2 uses this equation in his or her development education work but said that:

“It is complex, we would be getting them to explore the 5:50:500 which is so complicated. NGOs are bringing this debate to the fore. A fundraiser maybe wouldn’t want you doing this session as it might make people think what is the point? Therefore NGOs should be putting more effort in pressurising and lobbying for the 500 bit. Development education could let the public know about this aspect?” (2010)

However, the authors have not experienced pressure from the CiC fundraising department to avoid the issues raised in 5:50:500 for fear it might create apathy and discourage donations. Furthermore, despite the complexities of presenting this equation to the public, the authors argue that it is important for development education to work towards making these topics accessible, in order for the public to grasp the extent to which aid actually addresses the issue of poverty, or rather, the extent to which aid might disguise the fact that wider global North policies and practices actually perpetuate poverty. Nevertheless, NGO2 further highlights that ‘by putting them [development education and fundraising] together you are telling them that the action you want them to take is fundraising. You are limiting the actions that they can take’.

NGO1, a fundraiser, mentioned that fundraising is the priority for INGOs and ‘whatever education we offer is always tied to a fundraising ask’. For NGO1, development education could enhance such fundraising work by highlighting the stories behind the development work carried out by the wider NGO, since ‘sometimes the message people are hearing is just give us money but they do not hear the story behind it’ (NGO1). This statement is familiar to the authors, who are encouraged by CiC to tell ‘the story behind’ the overseas projects, and highlight why these projects are necessary by drawing on individual case studies. This approach, however, perhaps views ‘development education as a means to do fundraising’, which as Farrell puts it, ‘can severely limit its authenticity and its capacity to engage with critical issues’ (Farrell, 2010).

However, McQuaid mentions that the relationship building between fundraising and development education is an:

“opportunity to...demonstrate why [CiC overseas work] needs to be done in the first place. I think that the promotion of the organisation itself and education could go hand in hand”.

In this respect, perhaps it might be possible to present CiC overseas work as a starting point to highlight why development NGOs exist in the first instance, the extent to which such NGOs can actually affect change, and perhaps, most importantly, exploring the potential for affecting wider structural change in the global North.

McQuaid also mentioned that ‘international NGOs are obviously going to want to fundraise with the public and for global educators that can be a challenge’. Perhaps, however, the above discussion highlights how development educators might address such a challenge.

### **Current wider challenges for development education**

Recently, development educators have noticed increasing challenges to the development education sector coming from wider financial pressures and a political shift to the right. The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA), in the 2009 position paper on the overseas development aid (ODA) cuts, outlines how development education in Ireland is currently facing many challenges, particularly in regard to funding and the strategic and changing nature of the priorities within the main funding bodies such as Irish Aid. On the island of Ireland, the funding available for overseas development assistance (ODA) has been reduced, which has meant a subsequent reduction in development education funding. In Northern Ireland, changes in the criteria for funding from the Department for International Development (DfID), has impacted upon access to resources for development education projects. Andrew Mitchell (Secretary of State for International Development) stated that certain DFID-sponsored development education projects ‘risked the credibility of international aid by not showing a clear link between funding and poverty reduction’ (DfID, July 2010). Funding policy has now moved closer to awareness-raising of DfID-sponsored projects overseas, with development education supported through a percentage of the aid budget. This might have implications for development education in relation to challenging the charity model of development, since it highlights that ‘there is a tendency by DfID to frame development assistance to the poor in the language of *both* self-interest *and* morality’ (Heerde & Hudson, 2010:390). Consequently, this will frame



development assistance to the poor in terms of delivering aid, as opposed to challenging the structures which create poverty and injustice in the first instance.

NGO 1 referred to how, in the recent challenges to fundraising for NGOs, resources have been diverted from development education projects towards public information and fundraising. This is not the case in Children in Crossfire as the organisation has committed at least one full-time post to development education. NGO1 states that ‘the current recession has meant that the priority has been fundraising and bringing in money for the overseas projects resulting in the development education work being squeezed out of some areas.’ McQuaid confirms this further in her statement:

“...a lot of the actual agencies and organisations have cut education departments because of the recession...obviously they are maybe getting pressured by the public and they are holding on to the overseas work” (McQuaid, 2010).

Farrell further elaborates:

“...in recessionary times, the slogan ‘charity begins at home’ tends to get louder; what about the poor people living here? There is something of a paradox here in that the people who are most generous towards the poor, whether at home or abroad, are more likely to be those who are themselves struggling to make ends meet. How much do the rich people here help the poor here? The challenge to be addressed requires a different slogan, poverty at home as well as abroad; the focus of development education is a fairer world. It is not either/or, it is all together” (Farrell, 2010).

Perhaps such concerns highlight the possibility that the timing of writing this article is significant and appropriate to reflect on the purpose and role of development education in the current context of the economic crisis. It might be argued that the limits to unending economic growth have been exposed, and with it an acknowledgment of the unsustainable nature of the way in which we presently live our lives. As Farrell puts it:

“I find it paradoxical that while we in this part of the world are flooded with news and information we seem increasingly ignorant about global realities. The period of affluence that we came through was a bubble, and inside that bubble there was little understanding of what life was like

for the vast majority of the human race beyond the exotic images of tourist brochures or images created through patronising approaches to fundraising. We need, for our own sake, to understand how life is for all the passengers on spaceship earth. The problems which affect the poorest of the world have their origin here rather than there. They are dependent on this part of the world coming to its senses so that we can work together to address those problems”.

From this perspective, it might be argued that rather than development education becoming embedded into the wider work of the overall INGOs, there is actually a need for development education to move away from raising awareness of overseas projects, and move towards highlighting that ‘the problems which affect the poorest of the world have their origin here rather than there’ (Farrell, 2010). Thus, the authors believe that there is an urgent need to empower people locally to recognise the existing global interdependence, understand the structures of the world that have created excessive wealth - and with it continued poverty - and to make sense of our role in making changes. In fact, the general public has a desire to understand the structures that have created the current financial crisis in their efforts to answer questions that concern the economy, governance, accountability and power. Development education needs to harness the public desire to understand the issues; to transform this into a deeper understanding of the underlying structural causes of poverty; and to recognise the roles we can play individually and collectively in global justice issues. As Farrell says,

“Following a period of affluenza people in this part of the world are now experiencing grim realities - of a kind that offers the possibility to connect people here with what has been the persistently grim reality for people in other parts of the world for all of their lives. International NGOs need to connect with issues of poverty at home, and use this as an opportunity. The realities of the developing world are coming into view here in this part of the world. This is a key context for development education work in our time” (Farrell, 2010).

## **Conclusion**

This article examined the challenges for conducting development education within the context of INGOs and the current economic and political context. The difficulties of embedding development education within the context of fundraising and international programmes have been addressed, and it has been

pointed out that this may result in locating the problems in the global South, rather than emphasising that the causes of poverty are located here in the global North. Despite the difficulties, development education has the potential to make connections to the international and fundraising aspects of the INGO. In this respect, the authors argue that this would ensure that their development education practices can maintain a critical edge, while working within the context of an INGO. NGO2 recommends that ‘senior staff and board members need to be engaged in debates and discussions about what exactly development education is about. While not everyone in an INGO needs to deliver development education it is important to know that it is more than just awareness raising’. In this respect, NGO2 suggests that wider INGOs are not clear as to the purpose of development education, and should be informed that its focus is wider than just awareness raising.

Over the past two years, Children in Crossfire have been proactively engaged in a process of reflection on the role of development education within the organisation. In order to better support the development education team throughout the organisation, they: trained all staff in development education over a four day intensive course; involved board members in discussions around the relationship between development education and fundraising; and are currently supporting the development education team on a logical framework of action. Fundraisers are committed to value-led fundraising, incorporating more complex aspects around the structural causes of poverty into their messages and offering a range of actions that people can take in addition to fundraising. The development education team are starting to utilise some of the fundraising contacts in business and the general public to engage new audiences in development education.

The authors aim to collaborate more with the international projects and partner communities to get information and perspectives first hand, to learn more about the wider social-economic context of the issues and tease out the interdependent aspects of these issues to connect this to people in this part of the world. However, it is important to be aware of the challenges of engaging with the international projects due to power imbalances and the ‘donor’ relationship.

This article also highlighted how the current economic and financial crisis has implications for development education, which might have been a variable in CiC’s decision to embed development education within the context of their wider work, since government funding depends on such criteria.

However, the authors have argued that due to such an economic and political climate, it is essential for development education to move away from awareness-raising of overseas projects, and move towards highlighting ‘the problems which affect the poorest of the world have their origin here rather than there’ (Farrell, 2010). This is considered essential in order to highlight the ways in which ‘the wealth of the global North has been acquired and maintained through a history of exploitation, and examine how it continues to shape contemporary discourses and institutions’, and ultimately has led to the unsustainable living standard that we find ourselves in today (Rizvi, Lingard & Lavia, 2006, quoted in Bryan, 2008:16). Thus, it is recommended that the authors also further address this issue within the organisation and highlight how this is an important aspect of development education.

The overarching question addressed by this article was how can the development education team collaborate with the wider work of CiC, enriching the respective departments and creating a good model of development education, fundraising and international development within an NGO? The outcomes of our research and the internal strategic process around development education undertaken by CiC may not be representative of the overall population of INGOs. However, it could be considered an important step to helping clarify the position of development education within CiC and other INGOs, and perhaps open wider debates around all the issues discussed. If development education is required to focus on awareness raising of overseas projects, whilst being tied to a fundraising task then this will call into question the extent to which it can maintain a critical perspective on the structural causes of poverty. Nevertheless, it might be concluded from this article that development education can collaborate with the wider work of INGOs, if it highlights what INGOs do, but most importantly, if it highlights what else can be done to evoke active citizenship amongst the general public to address these issues.

## References

Bryan, A (2008) ‘Researching, and searching for, international development in the formal curriculum: Towards a post-colonial conceptual framework’ in *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 7, Autumn 2008, pp. 62-79.

Children in Crossfire (2010) *Development Education Strategy 2009-2014*, Children in Crossfire, Derry.

Developmenteducation.ie (2011) website, accessed 14 January 2011, available: <http://www.developmenteducation.ie>.

Farrell, S (2010) Interview, conducted in Derry, 11 November 2010.

Heerde, J & Hudson, D (2010) 'The Righteous Considereth the Cause of the Poor?' Public Attitudes towards Poverty in Developing Countries' in *Political Studies*, Vol. 58, pp. 389-409.

IDEA Thinkpiece (2009) *The effects of the cuts in Irish overseas development assistance (ODA) 2008/2009 on Development Education in Ireland*, position paper prepared by the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA), Dublin.

Irish Aid (2007) Irish Aid and Development Education, Dublin.

Mahadeo, M & McKinney, J (2007) 'Media Representations of Africa: Still the same old Story?' in *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 4, Spring 2007, pp. 14-20.

McQuaid, N (2010) Interview, conducted 3 November 2010.

Mitchell, A (2010) 'Mitchell announces cost saving measures to boost help for world's poor', Department for International Development, accessed 2 July 2010, available: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Media-Room/Press-releases/2010/Mitchell-announces-cost-saving-measures-to-boost-help-for-worlds-poor/>.

NGO1 (2010) Interview, anonymous, conducted in Derry, 26 October 2010.

NGO2 (2010) Interview, anonymous, conducted in Derry, December 2010.

Renner, A, Brown, M, Stiens, G, & Burton, S (2010) 'A Reciprocal Global Education? Working towards a more Humanizing Pedagogy through Critical Literacy' in *Intercultural Education*, Vol. 21, 1, pp. 41-54.

**Helen Henderson** has been working at Children in Crossfire for five years as the development education co-ordinator running a range of education programmes in schools and the wider community.

**Gráinne O'Neill** has been working as a development education worker with Children in Crossfire for the past four years. She has

recently started to work with Comhlámh in Dublin, working with returned development workers.