



Development
Cooperation
Ireland

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Development Education Strategy for the Voluntary Youth Sector 2004-2007



Development
Cooperation
Ireland

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Development Education Strategy for the Voluntary Youth Sector 2004-2007

Vision Statement: Every young person in Ireland involved in voluntary youth work should have access to quality development education.



1. INTRODUCTION

This strategy plan has been developed in order to provide a developmental framework for work in the area of development education in youth work. Development education has been carried out in many youth organisations since the 1980s and for some groups, even before that. From 1989 until 2002 this work was supported by the Development Education for Youth (DEFY) project which was initiated in the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI). DEFY ceased operating in 2002. Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI), commissioned Newman and Associates to carry out a consultation in 2002 to ascertain the level of development education activity in youth organisations and to establish what kind of supports were necessary for youth organisations to continue this work.

DCI's Development Education Strategy 2003-2005 commits DCI and the NYCI, in consultation with Non Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs), to develop a strategy aimed at mainstreaming development education in a sustainable way in the youth sector, including identification of an appropriate partnership model. As a first step towards the drafting of this strategy plan, consultations took place from June 2003 until September 2003 between DCI and the NYCI and a range of individuals and organisations to gather information on the needs of the various stakeholders and to identify possible strategies and mechanisms for the advancement of development education in youth work.

In 2003 the National Youth Council of Ireland and Development Cooperation Ireland jointly commissioned a consultation process with a range of agencies and organisations to identify the priorities for developing a strategic plan. The consultants met with a wide range of people with experience in the areas of development education and youth work.

These meetings included the following:

- »» Focus group meeting with Non Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs)
- »» Focus group meeting with youth organisations
- »» Focus group meeting with young people involved in programmes of development education in youth work
- »» Meeting with officials from Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI)
- »» Meeting with representatives of the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)
- »» Meetings with individual NGDOs
- »» Meetings with youth organisations
- »» Meetings with volunteer leaders in youth organisations

A postal questionnaire was also sent to a range of NGDOs and youth organisations to identify what supports were necessary in order to develop a comprehensive programme of development education in youth work.

The process was also overseen and advised by a consultative group of representatives from NGDOs and youth organisations.

This plan outlines four main areas or strategic objectives which will be developed over the three-year period. The plan is wide in scope and addresses broad tasks and the structures and mechanisms required to deliver on the tasks. An annual work plan will be produced which will detail the specific objectives and the programme content for each year.

It is important to note that a lot of high quality activity in the area of development education in youth work is taking place and the main challenge is to capture this in a real way and to ensure its integration throughout youth work in Ireland. The plan puts in place a new partnership which will be the driving force for the plan and will be representative of the key stakeholders in youth work and in development education. The plan is therefore developmental and some elements, such as mechanisms for consulting with young people and the proposal to regionalise some structures, will be developed over the lifetime of the plan. Some space needs to be provided in order to allow structures and partnerships to develop and new ideas to emerge.

We would like to acknowledge and thank all those who took part in the process of developing this plan for their contributions and their commitment to the process.

2. UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES FOR THE PLAN

In developing this plan, through our consultations with a wide variety of stakeholders, a number of principles emerged which will underpin and inform the entire plan:

2.1 Partnership

A 2002 report by Newman and Associates on Development Education in Youth Organisations concluded that "a new form of partnership will best serve the needs of all the stakeholders involved". Development Cooperation Ireland's own Strategic Plan for Development Education also recognises the value of a partnership between the NGO sector and Government Departments. This plan seeks to bring together Government Departments, NGOs and youth organisations and in order to develop a clear and shared understanding, a partnership approach is essential. There are many examples of successful partnerships such as this and there is valuable experience among the stakeholders of such partnerships.

2.2 Focus on the End User

It is essential to keep in mind throughout the life of the plan the experiences and the valuable input of the end users – young people themselves. Ensuring that the plan is applicable and accessible to all young people is a central task of the plan. We have included objectives which relate to finding a mechanism which will facilitate the real involvement of young people in implementing the plan. The energy and enthusiasm of young people who have been involved in development education needs to be harnessed and strategies need to be developed to ensure the relevance of the programme to those young people who have not had the opportunity to participate to date.

2.3 Building on Strengths

This plan will learn from and build on the many existing strengths of the provision of programmes to young people in development education. There is much evidence of successful programmes and innovative projects being undertaken in the area and many organisations have successfully integrated development education into their core structures and programmes.

2.4 Experiential

It is clear that successful development education programmes are based in experiential and "hands on" learning for young people. Young people themselves have stressed this as the single most important factor in ensuring a quality, enjoyable and informative programme. Development education in youth work must continue to be active and innovative and include large elements of participative methodology with a possibility of young people seeing real change as an outcome of their actions.

2.5 Quality

The plan seeks to put in place mechanisms and practical strategies which will ensure that consistently high quality programmes are provided. Ensuring a high standard of information, good links between the development education and youth work sectors, quality training programmes and guidelines for good practice will all help to embed quality into the programme. In order to ensure quality in the development and delivery of a national programme such as this, it is important that there are adequate systems for regular monitoring and evaluation. This is built into the plan and opportunities will be provided for reviewing and adapting the plan over its lifetime.

2.6 Adequate Supports

The Newman and Associates report identifies a number of supports which need to be put in place to ensure an effective and quality programme. This plan identifies structures, staffing and funding which are required to put in place a coherent and integrated programme of development education in youth work and build the capacity of the sector.

2.7 Allowing Space to Develop

It is clear that there are many examples of on-going, high quality work in the area of development education and youth work. This plan helps to put a framework on that and develop it in a strategic direction. There are many aspects of the plan, however, which are developmental in nature and will need space and time to develop. Dialogue between the Development Education and youth work sectors will allow for new ideas to emerge and for the further development of the structures and mechanisms identified in the plan.

3. CONTEXT FOR THE PLAN

This Strategy Plan for development education in Youth Work is influenced by a number of factors. The changing nature of Irish society, the history and current issues in development education and the nature of Irish youth work all bring different influences to bear on the strategy.

3.1 Changing Nature of Irish Society

There have been many changes in Irish society over the past ten years which influence how the non-formal sector operates. Voluntary organisations and NGOs are currently experiencing difficulties in sustaining their high levels of activity and in ensuring adequate structural support for their work. In addition, the rapid economic growth has not necessarily benefited everyone and high levels of economic and social disadvantage remain. This will impact on the programmes and services to be delivered to young people.

At a political level, one of the aims of the Good Friday Agreement is to enhance cooperation and development between Northern Ireland and the rest of the country, and the area of education has been highlighted as a priority area. Many youth organisations and NGOs operate on an all-Ireland basis.

Perhaps the most relevant change in Irish society over the past ten years has been the change to the make-up of the population and the increasing diversity of cultures in Ireland. Including a stronger development education perspective in the work of youth organisations, which would identify the interconnections and interdependence between people in Ireland and people in other parts of the world, would significantly impact on young people's understanding of the issues surrounding a multicultural society.

3.2 Development Education in Ireland

Development education has more than a 30-year history in Ireland, beginning with the voluntary sector in the 1970s. The Irish Government, through the Department of Foreign Affairs, has provided funding for development education work since the 1970s.

The profile of development education has increased steadily. This is evident in increased public awareness on a range of issues including human rights, debt relief and globalisation. Recent research carried out by Dóchas, the association of NGOs, details the high level of development education activity. The Dóchas report highlights challenges in developing professional and in-service training, models of excellence and career development for staff. Despite these challenges however, it is clear that there are many examples of innovation and good practice and the programmes and supports which are being delivered are helping to inform and change public opinion.

3.3 Youth Work

The youth work sector in Ireland is primarily run by voluntary organisations with a large number of professional staff and volunteers. The National Youth Council of Ireland is the recognised representative body for youth organisations in Ireland and has a membership of nearly 50 organisations. The Department of Education and Science, through its Youth Affairs Section, funds over 30 youth organisations and has a responsibility for policy development in the area of youth work. While that Department provides the core funding for many youth organisations, funding is also provided by a range of other Government Departments and by the European Union.

The Youth Work Act 2001 provides a new legal framework for cooperation between official authorities in education and youth organisations. A National Youth Work Advisory Committee comprising representatives of the youth work sector (through the NYCI) and

representatives of the relevant Government Departments, has been established to advise the Minister on programme and policy issues in youth work. Under the new legislation, the Vocational Educational Committees (VECs) will have responsibility for developing three-year plans for youth work in their areas and for providing funding for these programmes.

In addition to the legislation, the Minister of State for Youth Affairs has recently produced a five-year Development Plan for Youth Work which outlines the priorities for development in terms of both structures and programmes up to the year 2007, including a Development Unit for Youth Work which will examine guidelines for best practice, manage and coordinate research and pilot innovation.

These recent developments provide opportunities for a more strategic integration of development education into youth work and a more coherent approach to it.

3.4 Development Education in Youth Work

There has been an active programme of development education in youth work since the beginning of the DEFY project within the National Youth Council of Ireland in 1989. DEFY was made up of a coalition of youth organisations, non-governmental development organisations and the NYCI. The DEFY project grew out of One World Week. Over a period of time the project grew and gradually took on a wider range of activities including research and links with developing countries. The central plank of the work, however, was a programme to integrate development education into youth organisations through providing support, both programme and financial. In 1998 the structure of DEFY changed and it became an independent NGO which worked in a planned way over a period of time with 23 youth organisations.

In 2002 the Newman and Associates report on development education in the youth sector states that 'there is palpable energy, drive and animation when youth workers/leaders describe and tell the story of development education in practice'. This

energy and commitment was also clearly evident in the consultations in the preparation of this strategy document. The report also states that 'the practice of development education varies considerably across youth organisations. This varies from development education being embedded in policy, structures, staffing and work methods to development education associated with a named activity within the organisation calendar, this activity usually being issue-based and often linked to One World Week'.

The type of activity developed appears to vary greatly and the structures of the organisations themselves have an impact of the type of programmes developed. Some organisations have strong international links and programmes which may evolve from a world coordinating body. This can provide good access to groups and organisations abroad and provide opportunities for young people to meet other young people from developing countries. For organisations with a clear structured programme, it is often easier to integrate the development education work into an existing module or award.

The report by Newman and Associates lists the supports which youth organisations and the NGOs have cited as being important in promoting development education in youth work. These supports are: collaboration and partnership; one to one support; resource materials; training; links with the developing world; consultation; One World Week and funding. These supports were again identified in consultations around the development of this strategy plan.

Since the closure of DEFY, youth organisations have continued to operate programmes of development education. However both NGOs and youth organisations found it difficult to maintain contact between organisations in the two sectors in the absence of an alternative structure for development education in the youth sector.

Since 2002, NYCI have run One World Week with financial assistance from Development Cooperation Ireland, Trócaire and Concern.

3.5 Youth Work as an Ideal Setting for Development Education

While development education takes place in many different settings, the youth work setting is particularly ideal in what it can offer. Youth work, as defined in the Youth Work Act 2001 'means a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is –

- (a) complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and
- (b) provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.'

This definition puts a key emphasis on the personal and social development of the young person and it is clear that development education has a large part to play in this development also. In addition, the definition's statement that youth work is a 'planned programme of education' and promotes voluntary participation also highlights links with the key elements of development education.

For DCI, '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's Strategic Plan for development education goes on to identify key components of development education as;

- » being concerned with knowledge, ideas and understanding of issues that relate to global poverty and underdevelopment
- » being an educational process based on learner centred and interactive methodologies
- » having a strong values dimension based on a commitment to social justice and human rights and as
- » being oriented towards action to effect change for a more just and equal world.

The key components listed above, clearly have links with the youth work definition. The emphasis on education, social development and being learner-centred are all central to youth work methodologies too. In consultations, the possibility of getting involved in actions which can effect real change, were seen as being very important aspects of development education.

The fact that the youth work environment is less formal and structured than that of formal education and that many young people themselves are involved in designing and delivering programmes in the club/centre, means that development education is ideally suited to this environment. The youth work setting allows for young people to choose their own topics in development education and to develop their own learning programme and actions with the support of those with expertise in the area.

The recently published Youth Work Development Plan highlights the crucial focus on **process** in youth work and on the active and critical participation of young people.

Taking all the above into account, this Strategy Plan outlines a working definition of development education in a youth work setting:

Development education in youth work aims to support young people in increasing their awareness and understanding of the interdependent and unequal world in which we live, through a process of interactive learning, debate, action and reflection. It challenges perceptions of the world and encourages young people to act for a more just and equal society at a national and an international level.



4. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Development education has an important part to play in the youth sector. There is a commitment and dedication to do this work, providing many opportunities for the future.

4.1 Understanding Development Education in Youth Work

Whilst it is clear that there is no single definition of development education adhered to within the youth sector, this has not caused insurmountable problems. Youth organisations have developed distinctive visions for their own work providing a level of shared vision and allowing for good programmes to develop. The challenge will continue – to create a definition that sits easily with all organisations involved in development education and Youth Work.

4.2 Commitment by Partners

The successful implementation of the strategic plan will depend on the commitment of the partners involved. The partners will identify the needs to be addressed and develop a clear understanding of priorities. Space needs to be created within the partnership to allow for unforeseen opportunities to be fully expressed. The partnership needs to be in a position to build on lessons from the past and to exploit the huge amount of knowledge that has been gathered over the years.

4.3 Learning from Others

It is clear that many projects have developed in isolation from others and this has not allowed for cross-fertilisation of ideas and experiences. The challenge remains to build a network that not only provides opportunities to share ideas but also a support to groups working in this area. It is important therefore that a common language is developed with a common set of objectives towards which to work.

4.4 Developing Appropriate Support

Another area to be addressed is how the support is to be delivered to those on the ground. There is a belief that personal support and someone to sit down with a group and go through their programme is the most valuable resource for a group. In the past, many decisions have been made centrally in the Dublin area, yet a lot of the work takes place locally and regionally. There is a need for this to be recognised in the three-year strategic plan and for some support to be delivered at a regional level in addition to the central staffing.

4.5 Strategic Development

It would appear that much success has been achieved integrating development education into existing structures and programmes in some youth organisations. This needs to happen in a more strategic way across a wide range of organisations. Development education should not be "sold" as an add-on activity for groups but in terms of something which will enhance existing programmes in their organisations and help address some of the fundamental issues of youth work such as self-esteem, political education, social education etc. Youth work provides an ideal setting for young people to learn about global issues and to learn in an experiential and hands on way. Young people should be kept at the centre of the programme and an appropriate system for on-going consultation and participation must be developed.

4.6 Development Education and Other Related Areas

The issues of the relationship between development education, anti-racism, interculturalism etc all need to be discussed within the implementation of this strategic plan. Many organisations have successfully addressed the issue of anti-racism but how this relates to development education needs to be addressed and demonstrated. It appears to be acknowledged that anti-racism and development education have their own distinct specialisms but there is also a significant area of overlap and commonality. This plan needs to embrace this discussion and assist youth organisations in understanding the relationship between the different areas of work and the potential for a more integrated approach.

4.7 Funding

In order to exploit all the opportunities listed above, the issue of funding needs to be carefully examined. Funding will need to be provided not only a yearly basis but on a three- to five-year basis for many projects allowing for planning and implementation of programmes. The funding application process needs to be user friendly with support put in place for groups that are not familiar with the process. Regional as well as central funds would allow smaller projects to access seed funding or small once-off grants.

4.8 Developing Sustainable Structures for the Programme

Building up mechanisms for providing support in the form of advice, capacity building, establishing and developing resources is as important as funding. This three-year plan provides some of the building blocks for putting new structures in place. The plan will also have a developmental aspect to it which will allow for appropriate structures and mechanisms to emerge over the three-year period as a result of research, dialogue and consultation.

5. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim

To mainstream quality development education into the programmes of youth organisations through a strategic partnership of the relevant agencies and organisations

Strategic Objectives

Objective 1: To promote cooperation and collaboration between the youth and development education sectors

At a policy level:

- » Agencies involved in policy making and co-ordination to work in partnership on creating a shared vision of youth work in development education and to create the appropriate structures to ensure this cooperation.
- » Those agencies to work in partnership with the Youth Affairs Section of the Department of Education and Science.
- » To make inputs at a policy level on relevant issues. The forum of practitioners should feed its findings into the Development Education Advisory Committee on an annual basis. Inputs should also be made to the National Youth Work Advisory Committee where appropriate

At a programme level:

- » At national and regional level, to develop fora to bring practitioners and experts together to share their experiences and their expertise and therefore contribute to the strategic advancement of development education in youth work.
- » To establish a central 'clearing house' to collate and disseminate information from the relevant agencies and organisations to those involved in development education with young people. This should also help individuals and organisations to make links with other relevant agencies and organisations, either at home or abroad.

- » To engage new technologies to help share information. Promote the use of web sites, bulletin boards and other new technology as appropriate.
- » To develop a newsletter to disseminate information on relevant projects and initiatives, funding opportunities.
- » Through dialogue within and between the sectors, to promote awareness of, and to develop links with, developing countries.
- » To provide personal support at a national and regional level. A staff person with expertise in the areas of youth work and development education can help to promote cooperation and create links between relevant individuals and organisations.

Objective 2: To build the capacity of the youth work sector in development education

- » To document existing good practice and to make this available to others engaged in/wishing to engage in the work.
- » To provide accessible training in development education for youth workers at a number of levels.
- » To create links with training bodies with responsibility for the professional training of youth workers.
- » To develop and pilot a module on development education in youth work in the formal education sector.
- » To investigate a "whole organisation" approach to development education in youth work, as has been developed in other sectors and to pilot this with a number of youth organisations.
- » To explore options for accreditation for training programmes.

- »» To promote cooperation and networking between workers at a regional level in order to support those who are new to the work.
- »» To provide, through staffing centrally and regionally, ongoing training, advice and support for workers and leaders involved in the work.

Objective 3: Defining and promoting good practice in development education in youth work

- »» At a national level to develop a comprehensive programme in development education to include the current work being carried out on One World Week and aspects of the work on anti-racism through the Youth Action against Racism and Discrimination (YARD) programme. An annual work programme should be developed with specific objectives and actions.
- »» Through discussion and debate at national and regional level, to develop and promote a common and shared understanding of good practice in development education in youth work.
- »» To develop high quality and innovative resource materials for use in youth organisations.
- »» To promote an integrated approach to the work and ensure that it is not seen as an "add on" but as a way of enhancing an existing programme.
- »» To develop and promote a set of guidelines/checklist for good practice.
- »» To provide a space for debate and to increase understanding of the relationship between development education, anti-racism, interculturalism, global education.
- »» To carry out research on existing good practice in development education in youth work, in Ireland and further afield.
- »» To promote and further develop experiential, "hands on" programmes for young people using new technology where possible.

Objective 4: Ensuring the relevance of the work to the end user

- »» Through consultation and networking with relevant groups, to develop a mechanism/structure for on-going consultation with young people.
- »» To establish accessible programmes and materials appropriate for use with young people who traditionally have not benefitted from youth work or development education.
- »» To provide training for young leaders so that they can deliver a programme with other young people.
- »» To facilitate young people in Ireland in making links with young people in developing countries.
- »» To support young people in undertaking campaigns/actions to highlight particular issues. The provision of high quality information and resources will contribute to this.

6. IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

The programme resulting from this strategy will be managed by the **National Youth Council of Ireland**.

Partnership has been a key component in formulating this plan and will continue to be a key element in the implementation.

An advisory group will be established to advise the National Youth Council of Ireland on the strategic direction of the programme.

The group will comprise of:

Development Cooperation Ireland

Youth Organisations

Non Governmental Development Organisations

In addition, young people themselves are seen to be important stakeholders in the project and mechanisms will be developed to ensure a real input by them into the programme.

Other partners, the involvement of which has been identified as being important are:

Northern Ireland agencies – appropriate organisations from Northern Ireland should also input into the strategy in terms of sharing expertise

Department of Education and Science – The Youth Affairs Section which has responsibility for the development of youth work Services should also be consulted.



DCI staff in Luanda, Angola

www.dci.gov.ie

www.youth.ie

Development Cooperation Ireland

Department of Foreign Affairs
Bishop's Square
Redmond's Hill
Dublin 2

Tel +353 1 408 2000
Fax +353 1 408 2880
Email dci@iveagh.gov.ie
Web www.dci.gov.ie

National Youth Council of Ireland

3 Montague Street,
Dublin 2

Tel +353 1 478 4122
Fax +353 1 478 3974
Email info@nyci.ie
Web www.youth.ie