



Position Paper: The Role of Development Education in Development Beyond 2015

IDEA, December 2012

“Take every penny you have set aside in aid for Tanzania, and spend it in the UK explaining to people the facts and causes of poverty.” Julius Nyerere, former Tanzanian president

1. Purpose of this Paper

This paper sets out the position of the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) in relation to the debate on a post-2015 framework for global development and the role that public engagement, particularly development education, plays in this important process.

2. Introduction

IDEA understands development education (DE) as an educational process that supports people to understand and act to transform the social, cultural, political and economic structures which affect their lives and others at personal, community, national and international levels. We see it as essential to creating a more just and sustainable world. In the Irish context, development education plays a vital role in giving Irish people a critical understanding of the complex interdependence of our world and of their rights and responsibilities as citizens affected by and able to affect global forces. Development education is an entitlement of all Irish people. It is also needed now more than ever; we need to understand the deeper causes of our economic, social and environmental crises if we are to build a secure future for generations to come.

With this multi-dimensional crisis in mind, questions of development are of immediate relevance to all people. Assumptions about progress and growth are being more frequently questioned at all levels, the very nature of how we think about development is under heavy scrutiny¹. (IDEA 2011) The 2008 global financial crisis and the approaching deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015 has opened a space for debate about alternative models of development. This must be expanded to become a participatory global conversation about the kind of world we want for today’s and future generations. Citizens of all countries, North and South, have a stake in the decisions that will be made by world leaders in the lead-up to and aftermath of 2015. Massive mobilization of the public is required in all countries of the world to allow the voices of those most affected by these decisions to be heard. The emotional words of the Philippine delegation leader at the recent climate change conference in Doha illustrate this need:

“ The outcome of our work is not about what our political masters want. It is about what is demanded of us by 7 billion people. Please- no more delays, no more excuses... Let 2012 be remembered as the year when we found the courage to take responsibility for the future we want”.²

¹ **Thinking at the Fault Line: Development as shared responsibility.** Matthias Fiedler, Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) September 2011 http://www.ideaonline.ie/sites/default/files/EADI_paper_Matthias_Fiedler_IDEA_final_Version.pdf

² Plea by Naderev M. Sano of the Phillipines in AWG-KP final session COP 18 Doha <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OjAv4aBiqY>

3. Development education and development after 2015

3.1 Development is about justice and human rights, not charity.

IDEA believes that the original aspirations of the Millennium Declaration and the missions of many development NGOs to “eradicate poverty” cannot be achieved without tackling poverty’s root causes. Discussions about a post-MDG development framework that do not include issues of power, structural inequality and injustice, or that ignore the historical context for development are unlikely to result in an effective new framework. Furthermore, new global agreements that are contradicted or undermined by the ongoing implementation of unjust policies in other areas (e.g. trade and debt) are unlikely to significantly address the underlying causes of social and economic inequality around the world. IDEA supports Dóchas’ call for an ambitious, rights-based framework to succeed the MDGs, which better addresses structural causes of poverty and inequality³. As Oxfams’ Martin Kirk puts it:

“As long as Northern states dominate the G7, the G8 and the Bretton Woods institutions; dictate many of the terms of international trade; and consume far more than an equitable share of global resources, the social norms of these countries will directly inform global efforts against mass poverty”.⁴

In Ireland we rightly take great pride in our reputation for charity and generosity. But we are also capable of being engaged in more nuanced debate and action about development. A report published in Britain in 2011⁵ found most people connected aid and development very strongly with charity. This presents a major challenge to those who advocate deep systemic transformation of society. Charity perpetuates a “powerful giver- grateful receiver” dynamic that disempowers and distances poor people. Furthermore it “operates within an understanding of the world as it currently is and does not reach into realms of radical or systemic change.” (Kirk, 2012) The alternative is to generate a new discourse with the public, a discourse that deals with the root causes of poverty, that is grounded in ideas of justice and equality, that acknowledges the complexity and interdependence of the world we live in (Ibid). DE has a long tradition and expertise in doing exactly that and therefore needs to become a central part of any discussion on development beyond the charity model. DE empowers people to explore and critique the structural causes of poverty and to identify ways that, individually and collectively, they can change these structures. Put simply, DE enables us to understand and treat the underlying disease, rather than its symptoms with our development and aid efforts.

3.2 Development is a Shared Responsibility

IDEA agrees with CONCORD in its assertion that development is a shared responsibility⁶, requiring the involvement of people and nations from all parts of the world, North and South, developed and developing. In fact, the traditional dichotomies of rich and poor countries, developed and developing

³ DRAFT NGO Manifesto for Ireland’s Presidency of the EU, Dóchas, Dec 2012

⁴ Martin Kirk (2012) Beyond Charity: Helping NGOs lead a Transformative New Public Discourse on Global Poverty and Social Justice, Ethics and International Affairs, 26, no. 2 (2012) pp. 245- 263

⁵ Andrew Darnton with Martin Kirk, Finding Frames: New Ways to Engage the UK Public in Global Poverty (London: BOND, 2011)

⁶ **Development needs Citizens: The place of Development Education and Awareness Raising in the Development Discourse.** Summary of a CONCORD DARE Forum position paper, May 2011.

countries are no longer appropriate labels in development discourse. The world is now acknowledged to be more complex and “multi-polar⁷” with increasing income inequality in countries of both the North and South. China, previously labeled “developing” will soon take over from the United States of America (USA) as the largest economy in the world, and yet 60million of its citizens still live in poverty.

DE provides people with the critical understanding of our complex world that is needed for them to participate in affecting change. It is explicitly values-based and encourages learners, with its participatory and democratic learning methods to question their own values and those that underpin the society in which we live. It enables people to acknowledge their own involvement in global issues such as poverty and climate change and to take responsibility with informed action, based on this critical, values-based understanding. It also, most importantly, enables them to act collectively and with NGOs to ensure their political leaders take responsibility on the global stage for promises made.

3.3 Development Needs Citizens

“ Without an informed electorate, politicians will continue to use the bottom billion merely for photo opportunities, rather than promoting real transformation”.⁸

Paul Collier

Engaged citizens are the foundation of an active and effective civil society that can truly achieve systemic change. A recent position paper by the European Development and Awareness Raising Education Forum⁹ provides three key reasons for engaging citizens:

- **Public support provides legitimacy** for NGOs and governments to take well informed, wise and decisive political action on poverty and global justice;
- **Engaged individuals make a difference** through their daily activities (e.g. as a fair trade consumer, volunteer, online activist or voter);
- **Public support opens a space for debate** on the root causes of global poverty, as discussed above.

“Enhanced and sustained investment by Irish Aid is needed to deepen the engagement with the public around global justice issues as we believe that the people of Ireland – as engaged global citizens – can be change-makers” IDEA.¹

This is echoed in an OECD policy briefing paper: “An engaged and supportive citizenry could be the impetus for the successful reform of development co-operation in OECD countries... In order to win public support and to follow informed public opinion about aid and development both government and non-governmental actors need to better educate citizens about the reform agenda.”¹⁰ This message is reinforced by Trócaire, who in their 2011 *Leading Edge* report¹¹, listed “Ten things INGOs need to do”. Among them was to “Engage more with their own societies” with education being seen as key.

⁷ **Leading Edge 2020: Critical Thinking on the Future of International Development**, Trócaire, 2011. P 21

⁸ Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing And What Can Be Done About It*, 2007, Oxford University Press.

⁹ **Development needs Citizens: The place of Development Education and Awareness Raising in the Development Discourse.** Summary of a CONCORD DARE Forum position paper, May 2011.

<http://www.deeep.org/images/stories/DARE/PositionPaper2011/development%20needs%20citizens%20flyer.pdf>

¹⁰ *OECD POLICY BRIEF* No. 35, 2003, pg 11

¹¹ **Leading Edge 2020: Critical Thinking on the Future of International Development**, Trócaire, 2011. P 15

To take the example of one key global issue, the latest round of climate talks in Doha was, like Copenhagen in 2009, largely described as disappointing by civil society actors.¹² It did agree on a funding mechanism to compensate countries for loss and damage caused by climate change. It also paved the way towards a global, legally binding agreement that will involve all nations, developed and developing, together in a bid to reduce emissions and keep within a two degree increase in global temperatures to be agreed in 2015. The role of the public in influencing the outcome of this agreement will be enormous as national leaders feel the pressure of their domestic constituencies, their cares and concerns. “Countries make international commitments only when they are ready to do so at home”¹³ Failure to agree on legal measures to halt runaway climate change could be catastrophic. Engaged citizens will be key to ensuring that national leaders push for change on the global stage.

4. Conclusion

“We cannot address today's challenges with yesterday's perspectives. We need new visions of what is possible. We need new models to learn how to learn at multiple levels of scale, from the personal to the global. Increasing our capacity to learn (individually and collectively) is taking on a special urgency if we see ourselves caught, as I believe we are, in a race between learning and the possibility of self-destruction”.¹⁴

Etienne Wenger

In 2015 major global decisions about how we manage the future development of humanity will be taken and given the challenges confronting policy-makers the task seems overwhelming. How will the policy framework that follows the MDGs integrate sustainable development goals and a legally binding climate agreement? How will it truly reflect the aspirations of peoples and nations of all countries? What values will underpin it? How will these values be reflected in measurable action? How will it effectively tackle the structural causes that perpetuate poverty and injustice?

IDEA believes that development education should be central in achieving a new development framework that really seeks to effect systemic change, that reflects our complex, interdependent world, that recognises our different responsibilities and that truly engages all people and all nations. Such a development framework will be owned by the people that contribute to it and are affected by it- because they have helped to shape its creation. Governments, development NGOs and civil society need to begin a long term investment in the public's capacity to take part in this global conversation and to continue to ensure that promises made after 2015 are kept.

¹² 9/12/2012 Media Coop <http://www.mediacoop.ca/story/civil-society-condemns-final-outcomes-un-climate-n/14989> See also Guardian, 10/12/2012 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/dec/10/doha-climate-gateway-reaction>

¹³ Guardian 10/12/12 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/dec/10/doha-climate-talks-global-warming>

¹⁴ Etienne Wenger, Learning for a Small Planet: A Research Agenda www.ewenger.com