

ASTI SUBMISSION TO REVIEW OF IRISH AID WHITE PAPER

Introduction

The ASTI is the largest second-level teachers' union in Ireland, representing almost 18,000 teachers in voluntary secondary, community and comprehensive schools and colleges. It has an extensive record of engagement with policy areas which are central to the Irish Aid White Paper. These include development education in the curriculum; national education policy; teacher education; providing financial and other supports to development NGOs. The ASTI was the founder member and serves as Honorary Chairperson of the Irish Coalition for the Global Campaign for Education, arising from the ASTI's engagement with Education International – the global confederation for teachers. Through its membership of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the ASTI is actively engaged in the work of its Global Solidarity Committee, on which it serves as Chairperson, and also contributes to the wider ICTU policies on development cooperation, decent work and trade union rights. Currently, the ASTI has the privilege to serve as the Honorary Chairperson of Irish Aid's Development Education Advisory Committee.

Structure of ASTI Submission

Given the active engagement of the ASTI in the above structures, its submission should be read in conjunction with both the submissions from the Irish Coalition and the ICTU. Its submission will focus on second level education and how Irish Aid can best continue to support development education in this sector. The rest of this section contains two core comments on aspects of both submissions.

As regards the submission from the **Coalition**, the ASTI would add to its endorsement of the role of education as a catalyst for a broad range of development outcomes. Notwithstanding this fact, and despite the Education for All agenda and broader MDG goals, there has not been a significant shift towards aid for education, or to basic education specifically, at international or national donor level. Irish Aid's expenditure on education confirms this shift. The ASTI is heartened by Irish Aid's role in the Global Partnership for Education which is now the only global pooled fund for education. Aid effectiveness principles are at the heart of this Partnership. Country governments are supported by GPE to develop their own education plans, and in-country donors coordinate their support for such plans. Goals such as predictability of aid and donor alignment are greatly enhanced in this model. Irish Aid must continue to support this Partnership and to serve as a strong – and internationally respected – advocate for education, for the achievement of the MDGs and for a role for civil society organisations, including trade unions and teachers' representative bodies, in the development of national education plans.

As regards the submission from the **ICTU**, the ASTI would also underline the fundamental importance of the International Labour Organisation's Decent Work agenda to the achievement of core Irish Aid goals of poverty reduction, food security and gender empowerment. ASTI supports Congress in believing that a strong, vibrant and independent civil society – including an independent trade union movement - is essential for development, and that civil society organisations in particular have an important role to play in 'bringing the voices of the poor' to influence government policies, to challenge injustice and to hold governments to account. There is evidence that across many countries the space for civil society is under threat while the denial of fundamental rights at work in these countries, in violation of ratified ILO Conventions, is a major barrier to ending poverty and inequality.

Development Education and Irish Aid

Ireland has a distinguished record in development education. This has been confirmed in the many international reviews of Irish development cooperation and most recently, in two European Union reports, De Watch and DEAR Reports. Both have identified Ireland as a leader in terms of the support structures for, and the quality of programmes and organisations engaged in development education. Irish Aid and its predecessors have played a lead role in this development. The Irish Aid Synthesis Review provides a sound endorsement of Irish Aid's 2006 Development Education Strategy in terms of outcomes at the various sectoral levels. Similarly, the research commissioned by Irish Aid in 2011, "Mapping the Past: Charting the Future", highlights the integration of development education into the mainstream, the expertise, professionalism and engagement of people working in the sector and the increased co-ordination and cohesion of the development education sector.

It is therefore somewhat surprising that the Consultation Paper on the review did not give more prominence to this dimension of Irish Aid's work. The ASTI shares the concern that, while public support for development cooperation remains strong, as measured in Euro barometer and other surveys, this support has eroded since the onset of the economic recession. This is a worrying trend. Development education is vital to meeting the challenge of rebuilding public understanding and confidence in development cooperation. It is also essential for developing a sense of local and global citizenship in Ireland. Ireland cannot opt out of being part of the solution to global problems of hunger, inequality, climate change and poverty.

Recommendation: Irish Aid to identify development education as an important dimension of citizenship education, including global citizenship, and as a means of promoting greater public engagement with development cooperation as an important dimension of Ireland's international relations.

Responding to the Changing Context in Second Level Education

The Synthesis Report provides a comprehensive analysis of the range and capacity of development education in the second level curriculum and schools. It presents a set of future priorities for Irish Aid which the ASTI broadly endorses. The changing context in second level education provides significant opportunities for embedding development education in the curriculum, in the broader school community and in teacher education. This context is characterised by significant curriculum change at primary and second level, where the focus is on developing learners' skills, developing their critical thinking skills, learning to learn co-operatively, and managing information. Government policy for a new Junior Cycle curriculum, "*Towards a New Framework for Junior Cycle*", is explicitly based on a critique of the capacity of the current Junior Certificate curriculum to enable young people to engage with the global challenges and economic changes.

The new Junior Cycle will create space for more development education learning through reduced content in subjects in favour of an emphasis on key skills and deeper conceptual understanding and through the introduction of short courses which can be included in the qualification. These developments are already influencing senior cycle curriculum and will be consolidated by changes to the entry process to third level, as signalled in the joint 2011 HEA-NCCA report, "*Outcomes of the Conference on the Transition from Second to Third-Level Education in Ireland*". NCCA policy is to provide a continuum of learning from early childhood up to the end of second level, where students experience continuity and progression in learning, acquire the intellectual skills to engage with the exponential growth in information, but also to enable them to live in a globalised world, confronted by problems of inequality, climate change and insecurity.

Within teacher education, several policy developments are already underway which will also provide opportunities for development education to become more accessible to greater numbers of teachers over their teaching career. These include an on-going review of initial teacher education across the higher education institutions for accreditation purposes as well as the imminent development of a framework for continuing professional development. The latter will be of critical importance in opening up learning opportunities for teachers.

While initial teacher education is an important dimension of the professional formation of new teachers, there is strong evidence to suggest that their early years' experiences are more focused on core classroom/pedagogical skills. As new teachers gain in experience and confidence, they are more open and capable of engaging in the active learning methodologies, developing critical thinking skills and inter-cultural understanding skills which are intrinsic to development education. Therefore, a focus on continuing professional development for teachers is vital. It is a matter of concern that the research has demonstrated that a major source of information on development issues for second level teachers is the media. Teachers themselves need time to understand the pedagogy and content of development education before they can acquire the actual teaching methodologies to bring back to the classroom.

The findings of the meta analysis in the "*Mapping the Past*" research are particularly relevant in this regard. While teachers generally express support for bringing the social justice dimension into teaching, they also point to barriers that inhibit a deeper and more comprehensive engagement with development education. These barriers can be broadly summarized as attitudinal (*I don't feel confident enough to teach about complex and controversial issues*), structural (*I feel education for justice has a low status within the system*) and curricular (*I don't have time for this due to the pressures of time and an over-crowded curriculum*). Moreover, a further conclusion of the research, that the presence of development education within the classroom appears largely dependent upon the willingness or capacity of individual teachers underlines the necessity for a coherent strategic approach led by Irish Aid with the aforementioned agencies to ensure that the emerging opportunities across the curriculum for development education are not bypassed.

The ASTI believes that Irish Aid must proactively engage with both the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the Teaching Council, the Professional Development Service for Teachers and the Education Centre network to respond to these opportunities. Engagement with the higher education institutions will also be important not only for teacher education but also to ensure on-going research into development education, its impact on students across various domains, its impact on schools, opportunities and barriers to its integration into the curriculum.

Irish Aid must also ensure that there is relevant capacity in the development education sector to meet an expected increase in demand, especially in relation to cross-curricular approaches to development education within the new Junior Cycle curriculum; greater take up of relevant Transition Units and the availability of modules/short courses for the three Leaving Certificate programmes.

The ASTI fully endorses the revised approach to the linking and immersion scheme, Worldwise Global Schools. Apart from the core focus on integration of development education activities, a further important feature of this approach is a focus on the promotion of quality standards and the collection of data to monitor and track outcomes over time. The emphasis on school networks is equally important, especially in the context of the revised Junior Cycle curriculum. Irish Aid must be conscious to ensure that schools which have a limited tradition of development education activities should be supported to get involved with Worldwise

Recommendations: Irish Aid to continue to support development education in second level schools, based on the recommendations in the Synthesis Report, with particular attention to:

- **Proactively engaging with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the Teaching Council, the Professional Development Service for Teachers and the Education Centre network to respond to (i) opportunities within the curriculum to integrate development education and (ii) opportunities within the future Framework for Teachers' Continuing Professional Development to engage more teachers in development education learning.**
- **Irish Aid continues to work with the Higher Education Institutions to ensure that programmes in development education are provided at both initial and in-service level and to ensure high quality on-going research.**
- **Irish Aid to ensure that there is capacity in the development education sector to respond to changes in the curriculum, especially in the context of a revised Junior Cycle curriculum.**
- **Irish Aid to actively monitor the roll-out of the revised Worldwide Global Schools programme, with particular attention to integrating development education activities at school level.**