

INTO Submission to the Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid.

Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) has had a long a dedicated involvement with education in the developing world. For many decades, of members, both working & retired, have travelled annually to Africa (Uganda, Kenya, Sierra Leone, etc.), to India, Central & South America & many other parts of the world. Their work includes assistance with teaching in local schools, development and implementation of teacher training projects and giving guidance & assistance in school management.

Report after report from these volunteers highlights the appetite for learning demonstrated by the children they encounter, the lengths their parents/guardians will go to have their children educated and the critical lack of trained teachers and material resources available.

This voluntary work has been sustained with the support of the INTO Solidarity Fund. Furthermore, through the fund, schools have received supplies, teachers have been recruited and paid, classrooms and libraries built and many other ancillary structural works at a variety of schools have received funding. These are all small grants, from a small but significantly important percentage of overall union subscriptions. To echo the Millennium Goals requirement for national governments, even with the recent reduction in union subscriptions, the Solidarity Fund continues to exceed 0.7% annually. Currently it is 1.24% of members' subscriptions.

INTO understands this work is essentially dealing with the symptoms of the problem and the great challenge in facing the provision of education in the developing world and, therefore, fully supports the work of Irish Aid and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this review. In doing so, INTO believes the Education agenda must be raised to a much more significant level of prominence. The union welcomes the statements on education within the Irish Aid Report, noting that: *"like health, education is necessary to sustain life. It provides people with more economic opportunities, empowers them to make informed decisions and equips them with the skills to live secure and healthy lives."*

Education and Equality can work hand in hand, gender equality is largely accepted as a major priority for Irish Aid and satisfactory results are noted within the report in certain areas, however, in keeping with the submission from ICTU, equality in access to "decent work" must be another primary objective. Through education, both INTO & ICTU believe the necessary incremental steps can be taken to ensure a move from poverty & underdevelopment is achieved for a significantly greater number of people in the developing world, and a transition to more stable economies based on the provision of decent work for a better educated & working population. The Irish Aid report goes on to state that: *"Apart from the challenges that surround equity of access, the quality of education continues to be a major challenge. Recent estimates put the number of children in school but unable to read a full sentence at 200 million. If the life enhancing benefits of education are to be realised, the quality of education must improve."*

Within these two statements alone, taken from the Irish Aid report, it is clear that the power of education is a vital component in the struggle to move from the potential dependences outlined in

detail in other reports and through the raising of the education agenda within Irish Aid programmes, INTO believes significant outcomes can be achieved. Working with the education ministries in more partner countries and, beginning with enrolment, success such as that highlighted in Zambia could be replicated and, furthermore, in broad principles, by working through the educational needs of those countries, a more holistic strategy is potentially feasible.

INTO supports & endorses the submission of the Irish Coalition of Global Campaign for Education, of which INTO is a member. The Coalition's submission also outlines the grave need to include the education objectives as a more prominent activity within the Irish Aid programme.

It highlights the fact that political will must be combined with targeted investment to achieve the 6 Education for All Goals. Ireland can demonstrate this political will by making education a central policy area in its future aid policy. This would send a strong message to both the programme countries and to the broader international community of the importance of investing in education as a means of achieving other development goals. Ireland can also demonstrate its support for education by continued support for the Global Partnership for Education.

It is accepted that since it is essential to focus on results, that each commitment to education should have clear targets, expected outcomes, indicators and an allocated budget.

INTO and the Irish Coalition for the Global Campaign for Education have a clear understanding that it is essential that civil society organisations, both at national and local level in developing countries, are involved in advocating for implementation of the national education strategies for "Education for All". Their role is, for example, formally incorporated into the Global Partnership for Education three-year strategy. Support to Local Education Groups through partnership with Civil Society organisation is essential to ensure local ownership and participative development of Education plans.

On the home front, INTO believes it crucial that Irish Aid continues to give strong emphasis to development education, taking into consideration the recommendations arising from its two internal reviews. This is necessary not just to engage public support for overseas aid, but more fundamentally, to ensure that Irish citizens are empowered to understand our inter-connected world. Development Education is ultimately about education for empowerment: as such it is fundamental to the concepts of solidarity, of justice and universal human rights which are germane to human development. For its own part, INTO has fully engaged with the ICTU Global Solidarity education programme. It now has 5 Global Solidarity Champions, having had both lay members and full time officials attend the courses provided with the assistance and funding of Irish Aid. The union now supports an internal Global Solidarity Network of members who are interested in and/or actively involved in volunteer work. INTO also supports the annual ICTU Global Solidarity Summer School programme.

Ends.