DevelopmentEducation.ie

Evaluation: 2013-2015 Executive Summary

'An essential feature of the development education landscape'

2013 – 2015 Evaluation:
Executive Summary

DevelopmentEducation.ie

An evaluation of the partnership-based project developmenteducation.ie was commissioned by the programme's Management Committee in 2015 as part of the completion of its 3-year phase. The objective of the MC was to undertake a review of the programme against its overall programme goal of contributing to the building of:

'An informed, targeted constituency in Ireland who are empowered to engage with and take action on global development and human rights issues and the broader citizenship agenda.'

Through a systematic and evidence-based assessment of the programme and its activities, including their design, implementation and results as well as qualitative feedback from those involved in impact agreed targets and outcomes the evaluation assessed the lessons from the past, the current state of the programme and looks to the future in terms of strategic planning.

This summary document is based on a larger review conducted by Áine Fortune (March 2016).

Note: this summary evaluation is based on DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance. For more visit *www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork*

Contents

Evaluation…in their own words…

A sample of the of views gathered during the evaluation on **DevelopmentEducation.ie**

On the website, in general

'**Well done to deved.ie for doing all of this great work on a very limited budget. It's an absolutely essential feature of the Irish DE landscape.'**

'….. this is an excellent website – there is no other equivalent in the Irish context – and it should be fully supported going forward.'

'**The website is very visually appealing, easy to navigate, frequently updated with interesting material, and engaged with live, current topics.'**

'The new 'Doing DE Starter Guide' is a really positive step as it provides a clear set of activities while also providing some accessible background information for teachers so that they can contextualise their activities.'

On challenges and emerging needs

'**The way the site is pitched generally is good rather than specifying a particular group. The site doesn't box things off to a particular group. The reader can decide where they want to go. There is entry level content and then the reader can pick e.g. s/he might want a small bit to kick-start a discussion but equally, there is greater depth there to have a well-rounded discussion and come to good, reasoned decisions. Research and analytical skills need to be developed and the website gives space for this.'**

'Information has never been more freely available and yet inaccessible and paralysing by its infinite expanse and diversity.'

On content and outreach work

'*It is very clearly about human development and rights*'

'Education at its best.'

'*It functions very well, is easily accessed (searches are easy), you get what you need and it is attractive.*'

'It captures the work of the DE Sector in Ireland like no other programme or project….DE in Action gives substance.'

'**That core content is solid and bulky and forms the spine that holds everything together.'** [responding to the challenge of social media]

On audience

'**The site needs a wide reach – not just one sector but broader than that. It needs to get to the man /woman in the street. It needs to strike a balance between academic excellence and being useful for the less educated. This is challenging.'**
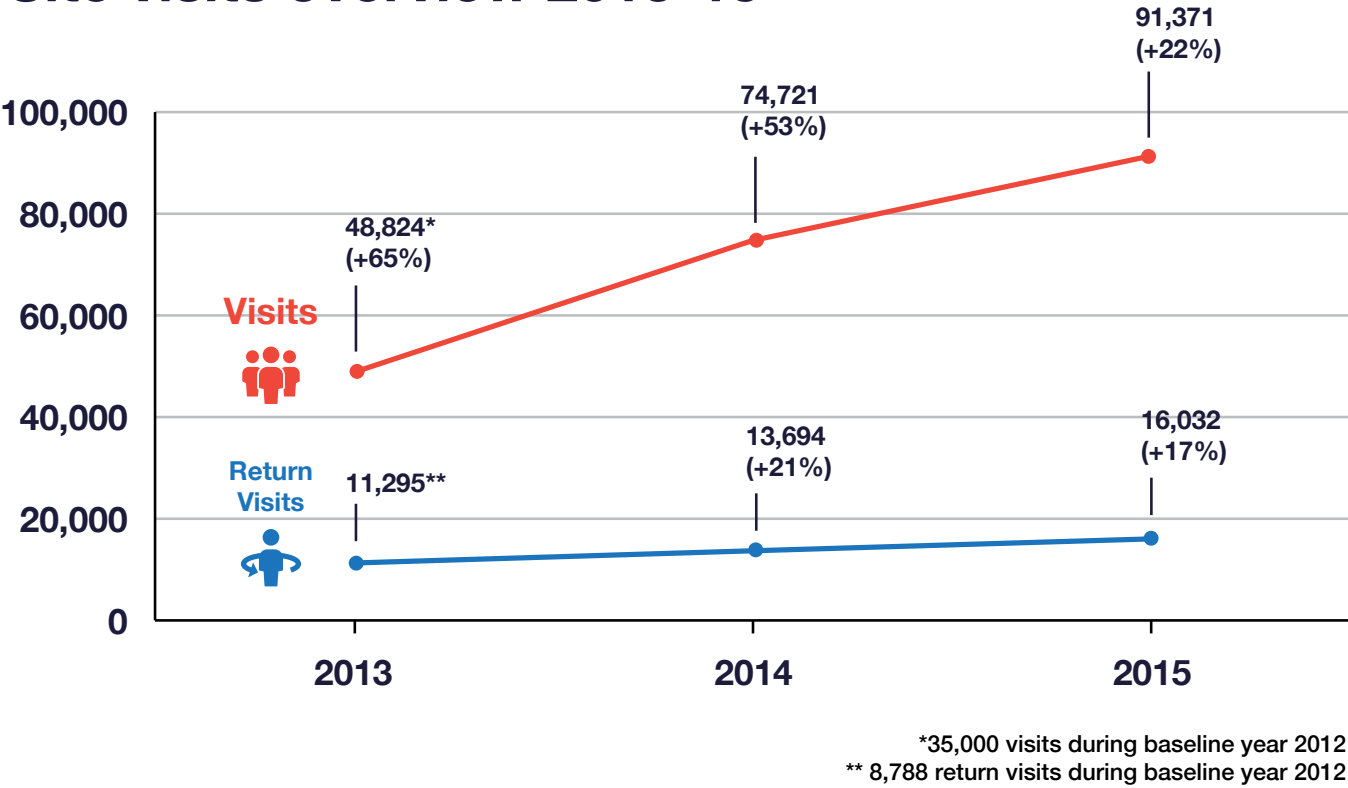
'The current audience is teachers and third level students. It would be good to get a wider audience.'

'**There is a question mark over whether to tackle third level. This could be a core group for Deved.ie because they're the people looking for resources etc.'**

'**We underestimate the challenges in schools. It is about making it easier for teachers and valuing them as educators.'**

Statistical summary trends on DevelopmentEducation.ie 2013-15

Site visits overview 2013-15

100,000
80,000
60,000
40,000
20,000
0

Visits

48,824*
(+65%)

74,721
(+53%)

91,371
(+22%)

Return Visits

11,295**

13,694
(+21%)

16,032
(+17%)

2013   2014   2015

*35,000 visits during baseline year 2012
** 8,788 return visits during baseline year 2012

Top 10 countries visiting the website

Canada
Ireland
United Kingdom
Germany
Malta
United States
India
Philippines
South Africa
Australia

Stats at a glance

520,015 pageviews

214,916 visits

160% increase* in site users
82% increase** in return visits

Visitors from 88 towns &
cities across Ireland

40 individuals and
organisations participated in
consultation on Guidelines for
Producing DE Resources

40 projects shared in the DE
in Action case studies section

170 blogs published

19 outreach events and
workshops

2,971 people engaged with the
website via monitoring and
evaluation processes such as
survey work, queries & review
groups

Funding sources:
30% from non-governmental
organisations and 70% from
Irish Aid

225 development education
resources added to resource
library

19 issue-based learning
resources published

16 site review group meetings

18 organisation collaborations
and partnerships

Top 10 search terms entered by users

Climate change **Poverty** **100 People** **Jobs** **Aid**
Water **Child labour** **Consumption** **Jobs**
Human Rights **FGM** **Aid**

Social Media

445 Facebook likes

859 Twitter followers

311 eZine subscribers

Type of device

79% Desktop

15% Mobile

6% Tablet

This summary page was produced in the external evaluation of developmenteducation.ie conducted by Áine
Fortune (2016) and has been prepared as a statistical overview of the three-year period 2013-2015 based on
annual reports and management committee monitoring & evaluation reports.

Background to the project

DevelopmentEducation.ie is a development and human rights education project driven by a broad range of interests and organisations that work in development education (DE); the management committee is responsible for the governance, strategic oversight and financing of the website and contribute financially and/or 'in kind' to the project.

From its origins as a partnership project on a CD resource in 1997, Aidlink and 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World envisaged a website as a portal or hub for DE information and resources. Originally, developmenteducation.ie was set up with 3 core objectives:

- To service the needs of teachers and students broadly defined
- To pool resources
- To publish support materials relevant to DE and development in action

From the outset, the project strove to establish a shared web space for those interested in DE in Ireland so as to avoid duplication via multiple websites on the same topic. Concern Worldwide extended the partnership base from 1998 and bringing the project online.

Subsequently, new members joined developmenteducation.ie and used it as a platform for educational action projects, learning and reflection, such as: Exploring Genocide (2004); study visits to Cameroon, Ghana; ecological footprinting in schools (Sion Hill,

Ballyfermot Institute of Further Education Tallaght); Millennium Development Goals education campaign (2007/2008), among others. From 2013-2015 management committee members included Aidlink, Concern Worldwide, Gorta-Self Help Africa, the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) the National Youth Council of Ireland, Trócaire and 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World.

Irish Aid has been a major supporter through a mix of annual and multiannual funding through the then extant National Committee for Development Education, part-financing the project for three years from the outset. From the inception of the project, 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World has been the lead agency, managing the website on behalf of the Consortium and being responsible for associated legal and financial matters.

Strategic support under Irish Aid Development Education scheme

The 2013-15 multiannual phase of support from Irish Aid to strategic partners, as the main supporter of developmenteducation.ie, followed submission of a concept paper in 2012 and a proposal prepared by the management committee setting out the three year programme of work and an accompanying Programme Results Framework (PRF).

This PRF defines an overall Programme Goal, with related outcomes and objectives as well as targets and

indicators to assess the achievement of those objectives. The relevant result area identified by the programme in the Irish Aid PMF for the period 2013-2015 that deveolopmenteducation.ie concentrated on was:

'High quality DE resources with clear links to curriculum, accessible and used by educators and learners.'

Over the course of the three year programme phase (2013 – 2015), the Programme Results Framework adopted by the Management Committee:

- tracked 10 objectives with 24 indicators against 27 targets on an annual basis.
- tested robustness of indicators and targets annually to strengthen the monitoring and reporting of programme activities in an effort to capture the depth and richness of the project rather than simply stating achieved target outputs.
- adjusted targets only if they were of perceived benefit in achieving agreed outcomes and based on learning from programme activities.

Key documents related to this phase of work include: The Irish Aid Development Education Strategy (2007-2011); Synthesis Paper: Thematic Reviews of Development Education within primary, post-primary, higher education, youth, adult and community sectors (2011); Irish Aid Revised approach to support for Development Education (2012). Following the synthesis paper review Irish Aid extended the 2007-2011 DE strategy to 2015 by setting out a results-based approach through the introduction of The Performance Measurement Framework (PMF).

Methodology

Undertaken between January and March 2016, the evaluation covered both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the programme, including:

1. Review of project documentation: annual reports; Programme Results Framework; Management Committee reports; Monitoring and Evaluation reports; Governance Policy and memoranda; meeting minutes records and range of additional documents

2. Semi-structured, one-to-one interviews with key players in the programme to determine their views and perceptions, their needs in relation to the programme and their hopes for the future of the programme.

3. Interviews with all seven members of the Management Committee and the Liaison Officer to 80:20 with Irish Aid as a key donor as part of the qualitative process. Programme staff (80:20 staff and five contractors employed in the project) were also interviewed. Four members of website user groups responded to an email questionnaire and one by phone interview.

Members of the Management Committee and programme staff responded to two levels of questioning: (a) the programme as a project i.e. the consortium / partnership nature of the venture and (b) the output of the programme i.e. the website.

The three key outcomes which the evaluation was assessed against were the following

1. **Content & Functionality**
2. **Consortium Effectiveness**
3. **End-User Engagement**

Three years of practice: key outputs and achievements 2013-15

As the team engaged in conversations and activities with users and educators through responding to feedback and building on practice, the evaluation noted a range of achievements:

1. Making an original contribution to the DE sector via a strong 'resource agenda'

Building the resources base has extended beyond what was planned and has emerged from feedback and research. This has included:

The **Audit of Irish Development Education Resources** (2013) added analysis and insight for everyone involved in DE in Ireland in a unique scoping study of DE resources covering the period 2000-2012.

The **Guidelines for Producing Development Education Resources** (2014), provides strategic support to the Sector in the form of good practice guidelines for resource writers following on from a recommendation of the resources audit. This was conducted in consultation with the DE Sector and in direct partnership with Dóchas and the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) with co-funding support from Irish Aid.

Actively responding to resource queries, including the increased number of requests from the Sector to include their resources in the Resources Library. This approach supports a culture of sharing on a digital platform and has included a historical dimension by saving old and 'lost' resources, such as Banúlacht resources and out of print resources such as Trócaire's *Fala Favela*.

The DE.ie resources agenda has huge potential (if it can be managed well) and provides a service not only to the Sector but to all those seeking DE-related resources.

2. Building DE engagement with hot topics - refugee and migration crisis series

Keeping up-to-date and staying relevant is an ongoing challenge and one that DE.ie has responded to in a practical and timely manner. **The Refugee Crisis in the Mediterranean Blog Series** explored the issue from multiple perspectives and learning points: as an art-based lesson plan; a background infographic; through a collection of poetry on the topic of refugees; an annotated guide to resources on the migration and refugee crisis; students sharing an extra-curricular project on the topic; a written response to media reports etc. The series involved MC members, project staff and DE.ie network members.

3. Adding value to the DE sector by sharing project learning

Using the DE.ie M&E methodology has seen a significant increase in data availability and DE.ie actively sought to share this in appropriate formats with others. One of these approaches was in an annual *'things we learned'* blog post (which elicited many favourable comments). Another was in sharing popular downloaded resources and popular blogs, and in engaging in strategy developments such as the consultations on an *Education for Sustainable Development* strategy.

The popularity of the '10(8) things we learned' from the website on an annual basis (such as a map of where the website was accessed from across Ireland) clearly illustrates how the site can identify issues, patterns and trends across the Sector, as an important and unique DE platform which can then be shared. This is a 'service' others are unlikely to be in a position to provide and along with the resources audit and publication guidelines illustrates added value.

4. Sustaining Partnership

In the past 2/3 years, DE.ie has agreed a 'lead role' for each MC member as follows:

- Gorta-Self Help Africa supported by Aidlink: taking a lead role on a learning guide on study visits (set for publication 2016) and Aidlink also supporting the drafting of governance policy (2014-15)
- Concern Worldwide: building the 'debates' section (2014); contributing photos (ongoing) and offering outreach opportunities
- Gorta-Self Help Africa: joint responsibility with Aidlink for a learning guide on study visits
- IDEA: co-building the *DE in Action* section (2014); organising the consultation event on the resource guidelines and co-producing it (2014); participation in M&E subcommittee;
- workshops on using resources with IDEA members
- NYCI: co-drafting the Youth Sector and DE Guide (underway in 2015, set for publication in 2016)
- Trócaire: participation in M&E; sharing early learning and human rights education resources (2015); direct support for the *Doing DE Starter Guide* (2015)

In addition, all MC members contributed blogs and content on practitioner reflections, event reports and DE case studies – now becoming standard practice. Sustaining partnership was also demonstrated by the consistency of membership of the consortium during the period.

5. Showcasing DE practice

The DE.ie action section has, for the first time, established and promoted a template for Sector organisations to summarise and present their work, highlighting the lessons and learning arising. Project staff have worked in partnership with IDEA on this and directly supported organisations in their delivery of this element, discussing their work at IDEA Working Group meetings. Since the launch of the DE in Action case studies section at the IDEA national conference in June 2014 uptake has grown and, as more case studies appear on the site (30+ at present) more practitioners become interested – the section is set for expansion.

6. Building an introductory guide to Development Education

The Doing Development Education: ideas and resources – a starter guide (2015) – this resource emerged directly from responding to a range of user demands and feedback at outreach events, queries received and suggestions from MC members (Trócaire and Concern). Preparing a basic learning guide with other members of the MC not only builds partnership and responds to users, it also illustrates a common approach to the basics of DE. It illustrates the value of the site to users and members alike, alongside its ability to respond.

7. Adding value to the public engagement work of others

As the European Year for Development (2015) was coordinated by Dóchas, DE.ie contacted them to discuss overlap areas and how DE.ie could add value to the project. This led to the infographic Which kind of activist are you?, which sought to engage the idea of activism to coincide with the publication World's Best News in September 2015. The infographic was made exclusively available on broadcasting news website Newstalk.ie and was included by MC member NYCI as part of 2015 One World Week youth workers' activity resource. This illustrates the capacity of the website to generate materials of value to the Sector and to DE more broadly.

8. Data gathering and sharing

The introduction of a specific opt-in survey in the resources library in autumn 2014 came about in response to a question that arose at MC meetings and across the wider DE Sector: Once a resource has been downloaded, what can we reasonably say about the educational impact of the resource? Survey responses on intended resource use and sector context provide valuable feedback in relation to this question. Hence, the results of 2,243 completed surveys will be collated and shared across the membership and the sector. This is an example of the role DE.ie can play in supporting members and the sector.

9. Participation in Sector events

The increase in requests for project staff to participate in external events (especially as regards the resources element) or delivering resource-based workshops etc., illustrates the fact that DE.ie has responded to a growing need. The broad resources role of the website illustrates a particular service required by the DE sector and many others in education which is not served elsewhere. Over the past 5 years, this dimension of the site has grown significantly.

10. Building the Debates section

One member organisation, Concern, has made debating a cornerstone of its work since 1984. Concern initiated a discussion on how DE.ie might support the debates and vice-versa and now much in the debates section has arisen from that conversation. Exploring the use of the debate format has now become a standard methodology for the site. Another recent example is the forthcoming 'Debating Fairtrade' strand developed to support Fairtrade Week.

11. Engaging a community on the website: educational support to TCD in developing critical writing skills and experiences for students and creative use of DE.ie

The TCD initiative began in September 2015 when lecturer Michelle D'Arcy contacted the project staff enquiring about a possible mini-project with third year Democracy & Development students, having recognised a blog online from one of her past pupils, Grace McManus. Following a meeting, staff worked with the TCD class by using the blog as a mechanism to explore development issues. It was agreed all 91 students would receive feedback from DE.ie on their drafts (all project staff contributed to this) and 3 blogs were finally published as agreed. As part of this project, DE.ie prepared a 'guide to blogging', presented it to the class and undertook a Q&A session. Subsequently staff gave a feedback session in TCD.

Benefits included: a 'new' active higher education dimension; blogging as a learning tool; promoting DE and DE.ie. The project is set to continue.
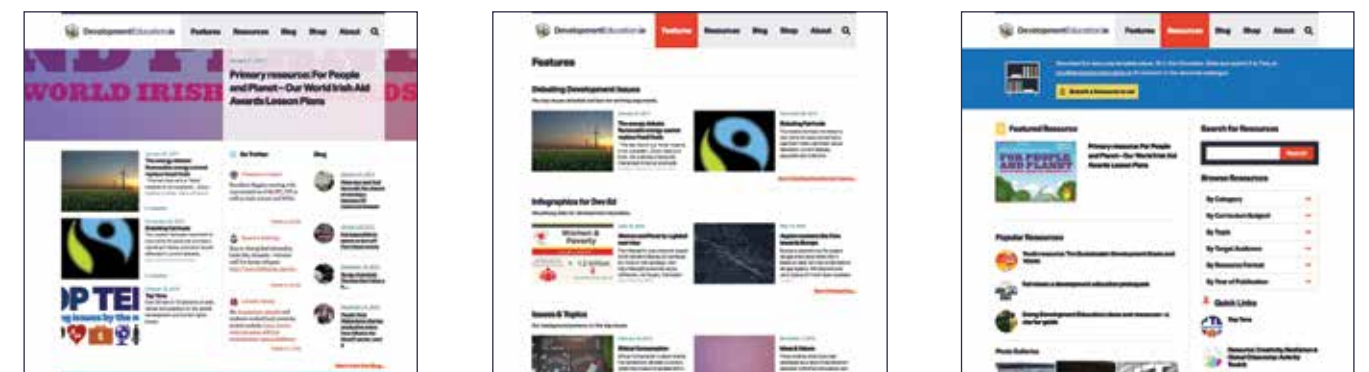
Key findings and challenges of the review

1. Relevance

1.1 Positive experience: the experience of those involved in the project, from MC members to end-users is very positive. The fact that members and partners have been engaged for so long with the project, providing continued support (financial and other) despite highly constrained circumstances in the DE sector, is testament to the regard in which the project is held. Irish Aid, a main funder of the project, views it as 'a job well done' and would like to see it continue in the same manner.

1.2 Content and Functionality:

- DE.ie is seen to provide high quality, diverse content and good functionality in terms of accessibility
- Functionality especially, has improved since the recently completed overhaul of the site - viewed as a major achievement by all concerned
- The website is valued by many as a powerful DE tool, offering as it does, a 'one-stop-shop' for all that is DE-related
- Content is developed on the website via a three-point framework, agreed by the management committee in 2014:

> *'Based on the findings from the M&E process, programme activities will be prioritised on balancing the following demands:*
>
> *a. Development issues and debates*
> *b. Education and curriculum needs*
> *c. Sector events, issues, needs and gaps*
>
> *Development of specific programme activities, such as specific educational guides, throughout the current phase of the programme will consider feedback from user-groups, statistical data, etc., as outlined above and the thematic priorities/campaigns of consortium members and partners as a shared agenda for greater impact and consistency.'*

- DE.ie is regarded as being an up-to-date site with consistently strong, quality content, which provides information and debate on a cross-section of topics and is not afraid to approach any relevant issues. The volume and diversity of content provide both a backdrop to and the potential for an in-depth dive into Development Education in Ireland
- Though some may see the site as a resource hub and predominantly use it as such, it is for many, much more than this - not to detract from the resource function. This website provides the central library of resources for DE, an output, which should not

be underestimated. It also goes one step further and offers suggestions on the use of those resources.

- It is, however, a perceived strength of the site that it contains a wide range of materials and does not rely too much on one dimension. The use and variety of content and methodologies, including debates, videos, cartoons, blogs, case studies, articles etc., make it more attractive to a wider audience and more engaging generally. The content reflects well what people say they need rather than what partners want to give them and this is key to the success of the website not least because it provides a diversity of voices and in some cases, a dissenting voice, which is critical in an educational environment.

1.3 Ownership: The website is an independent project 'owned' by development-focused NGOs, which means it is not subject to changes in trends and priorities as government policies change. The fact that the project is not solely focused on curriculum and syllabus needs, assists in maintaining its independent development focus. For some interviewed during the review, this independence is vital. Indeed, bringing Irish Aid to this level of confidence in the project is viewed as a success in itself.

2. Effectiveness

2.1 Programme Results Framework: While the PRF is seen as a somewhat crude measure of project performance, there is acknowledgement that it is a useful management tool, which facilitates the project in thinking about itself, its goals and objectives as well as how best to measure effectiveness in reaching specified targets. However, it is important to state that the PRF does not always take into account process or indeed, the energy that goes into attaining targets as part of change processes. It is hoped that this review will provide the qualitative depth that is a significant omission from the PRF in measuring the effectiveness of the programme.

2.2 Monitoring and Evaluation: The framework within which the management of the M&E function takes place is conceptualised in the following logic model:
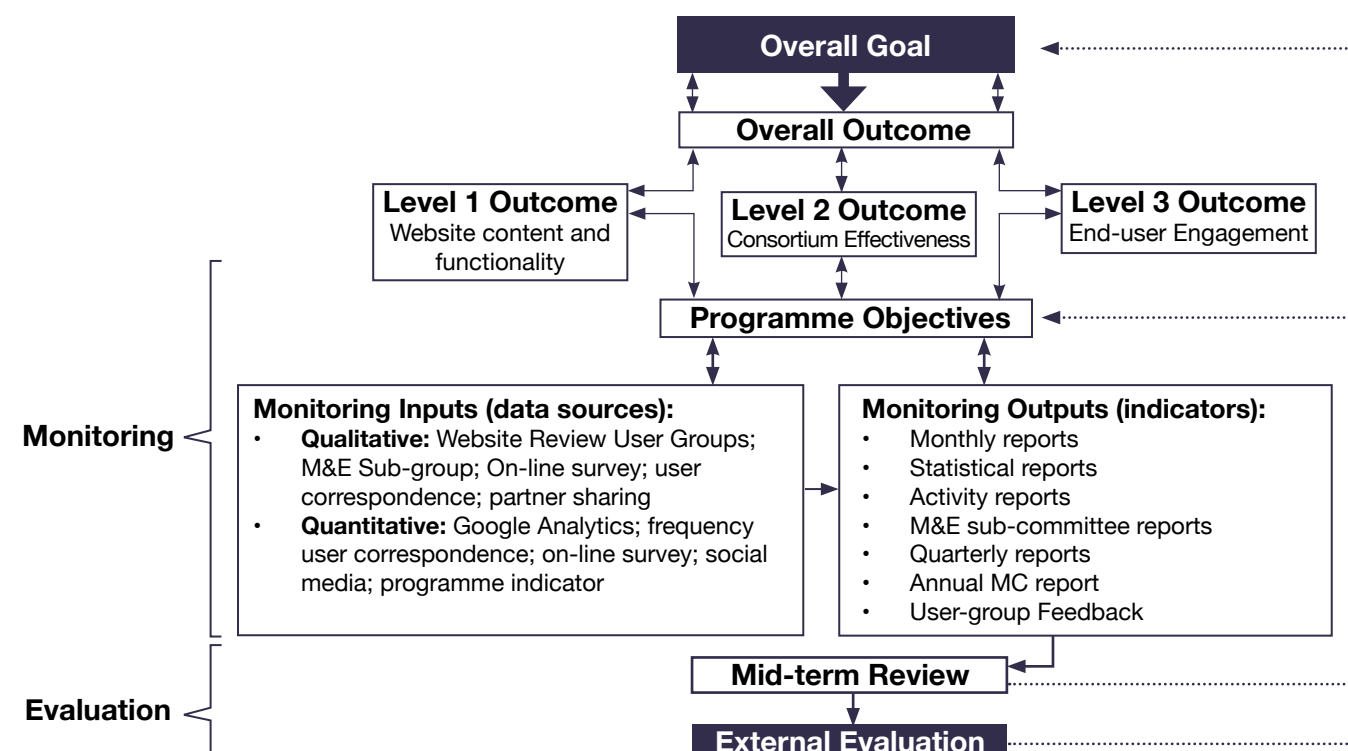
For more details see Programme Results Framework Overview on page 24

Overall Goal and Outcome: An informed targeted constituency in Ireland empowered to make public judgement on world development issues

While the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) function was not considered to be fit-for-purpose originally, it is generally viewed as being much improved now. It was also noted:

- Some members believe that there is room for further improvement and that the focus of goals and objectives must be sharpened in order to enable effective evaluation.
- The scope of the overall programme goal is perhaps too broad to measure effectively and that it might benefit from being teased out among members specifically vis-à-vis the 'targeted constituency' and the understanding of the role of 'the website' in relation to the broader project.
- It should be added that the Programme Results Framework, despite being considered a useful management tool, is also perceived as a somewhat crude measure of the depth and richness of the project, which can sometimes seem like 'an exercise in pigeon-holing.' It therefore requires narrative context to fully appreciate the scale and impact of the project rather than simple statements of targets and outcomes.

Regularly revisiting the context of the project is necessary as the environment within which the project operates has changed significantly since the beginning of the last three-year phase. Consequently, clearly answering the questions as to what the project's priorities are, where the website fits into that broader picture and who the target audience is, have become more pertinent.

2.3 Governance: A key issue arising out of the evaluation is the need for clarity in relation to a number of aspects of the project:

- The role of the MC and the role of the lead agency vis-à-vis management and day-to-day co-ordination need to be revisited and agreed anew; as does the scope of the project in terms of outputs e.g. is the output of 'the project' solely 'the site' or are other outputs such as joint consortium ventures (workshops, networking events etc.), a desirable and feasible outcome?
- Although these issues have been discussed and agreed upon at various intervals throughout the project's history, it is evident that they need to be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that all involved share a core agenda and understanding. Clearly, there are divergent views among some members of the MC and these need to be addressed by the MC as a whole.

2.4 Production challenges: Staff have found the experience of working with an increasing network of people both positive and challenging:

- Completing the work to schedule and encouraging organisations in the DE Sector to do what they say they want to do i.e. write up and showcase their own DE work, can be challenging. Significant amounts of time are spent following up with people on what they have committed to do for the site. To improve work flow, it was suggested that the MC could possibly liaise with programme staff within their own organisations to produce content for the site – specifically the 'DE in Action' section.
- Content development could be in the form of topical case studies, which could then be linked to a theme on DE.ie. For example, every time water is mentioned in resources, it could be linked to a case study on how a water programme is implemented. This would involve an in-depth annotation exercise, which could contextualise the information and take it to the next level rather than simply offering resources listing what an organisation does.
- Not all project members have multiple staff capable of undertaking such a role. Furthermore, care must be taken to observe the dividing line between an exposé on a theme and a marketing exercise for an organisation. This then relates to the challenge of agreeing on what quality development education looks like. Who decides on the marker and what is of value? This is never an easy task and the content of the site reflects what is available in the Sector. It is difficult to find the right approach to appropriately cataloguing and archiving the work of a disparate range of DE actors.
- In addition to the core work of the site, there is also the importance of responding to colleagues. The site is not just about providing resources to teachers; it also engages with the wider DE Sector at a deeper level. The increasing number of queries through the website exemplifies this function. Such engagement is rewarding but can be time-consuming.

3. Efficiency

3.1 Complementarity: DE.ie is seen to provide complementarity rather than duplication or competition and this is valued by all. There is now a large network of people that work in the development education sector that recognise the value of a common website and it is viewed as giving added visibility and credibility to the DE function within member organisations. As such, DE.ie has contributed significant 'added-value' to DE in Ireland.

3.2 Human Resources: The people involved in DE.ie are seen to be one of the great strengths of the project.

- The considerable, collective experience and expertise of those representing member organisations on the MC since the project's inception is a huge boon as are the skills, commitment and focus of project staff.
- Although the value of the human element of this project is not necessarily quantifiable in statistical terms, it is very clear throughout the evaluation that from a qualitative perspective, the people involved play a significant role in the success of the venture.
- New representatives on the MC are generally seen to be a positive, heralding a fresh approach for the project.
- Flexibility and adaptability remain core to the project's success. These attributes have allowed the project not only to retain its currency but to go to places that might not have been envisaged even by the MC (or indeed Irish Aid) at the outset.
- However, a note of caution is sounded

with regard to the up-to-now flexible working arrangements of staff and contractors insofar as this may not be sustainable in the long-term future of an expanding project.

3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation: monitoring and evaluation activities have included:

- MC receives a one-page activity monthly report on the project from the project manager. This formula for reporting to the MC is acknowledged by all members as being both appropriate and useful.
- Bi-lateral meetings between project staff and individual MC members provide another excellent forum for keeping those involved up-to-date with what is happening in the project as well as allowing for additional information-sharing and creativity with regard to added-value projects. As part of the M&E protocol, an update on developmenteducation.ie was included in the IDEA report on the *'State of the Sector'*.

3.3 Outreach and end users:

- Staff time and resources to explore this dimension to a greater extent is limited and may be seen as taking away from the core work of producing content.
- Although supporting individuals (students and others) to engage in critical analysis on a public platform such as the website is a very worthwhile endeavour, it takes a considerable amount of time and effort.
- How should resources be allocated for this strand of work? What are the expectations in this regard and how do they relate to stated targets in the *Programme Results Framework*? Can these expectations be managed well? After all, there is only so much a website can do and DE.ie is not a programme in schools. These are all questions that must be addressed by the MC in the context of the current review.
- The availability of teachers and educators to participate in DE must be seen from the perspective of a teacher's reality. Often on short term or zero hour contracts with wage and work hour disputes in a context of education reform pressures and a legacy of austerity, many teachers feel overworked and underpaid and simply do not have the time or inclination to engage in the practice of DE to the extent that they will research and critically evaluate what is offered on developmenteducation.ie. In this regard, one evaluation participant commented that *'We underestimate the challenges in schools. It is about making it easier for teachers and valuing them as educators.'*

4. Impact

4.1 A powerful DE tool: The website is viewed as being an example of good practice in DE and an impressive tool, which is both user-friendly and effective:

- It can be accessed on a number of levels, whether someone is looking for an overview of a topic or more in-depth information behind media soundbites; for workshop ideas or examples of Development Education in practice – for beginner and advanced levels.
- This adaptability to purpose is regarded as a strong feature of the site and makes it a highly cost-effective medium for anyone in Ireland looking to engage in DE or learning about key development issues such as poverty, human development, women's rights and human rights
- Rather than acting as a repository for information only, the website has become a public space for ideas, resources and practices to be viewed, shared and debated. In this regard, the website is unique as an active space created by and for development educators. As such, it offers an alternative, more critically-engaged learning environment in the context of a fast-moving information super-highway where 'education' is often lost in the rush for packaged 'facts' and data.
- While some organisations may blur the lines somewhat between educational resources and fund-raising tools, developmenteducation.ie does not engage in fund-raising per se and this is regarded as an important advantage. Although a very limited number of resources are sold through the site (and this is seen by some as inappropriate while others think it

necessary), the resources on the site are clearly educational and not fund-raising focused. This means that there is more scope for critical DE.
- Its strong educational background and good filters mean that it is not used to push the agenda of any one organisation. Consequently, it is considered to be *'Education at its best'*.
- The wide variety of content on offer has managed to attract a cross-section of educational sectors among users of the website. This allows for the exchange of ideas and information across these sectors. For example, youth workers can access resources relating to transition year experiences that may be relevant to their own work.

4.2 One Space for DE: DE.ie is seen as being the 'go to' location for DE practitioners - one space to find things DE-related. The website,

- has allowed DE actors and organisations to share resources, ideas and practices in one place online in Ireland, where previously this did not exist.
- is a space that anyone can go to for resources rather than looking to the fractured nature of multiple organisation sites.
- responds to the needs of a wide range of users with diverse needs and acts as a portal for DE in Ireland. As such, it is seen as "a good face" for what is happening in DE in Ireland.

It is also noteworthy that as the longest standing Development Education website in Ireland (founded in 1999,) it carries a responsibility in 'remembering'

the history, resource publications and actors in Development Education. This was evident in the course of the Audit Development Education Resources (2013) which led to the uploading of many resources which were out-of-date and no longer available.

4.3 Partnership Approach: perhaps the greatest success of the project is its basis in a consortium/partnership approach; there is no other consortium project of this kind in the DE sector in Ireland. As such, this venture is not only highly respected but also viewed as a potential model for partnership within the DE sector. Advantages include:

- a good outlet for information on what partner organisations are doing. This is particularly important for those organisations that do not have their own website but also important for those that do because a shared website can accomplish more in terms of promoting DE work than the site of any individual organisation.

- Duplication of content does not appear to be an issue among members. Rather, the partnership approach amplifies the work of individual organisations and their constituencies and different means of engagement are always welcome. The DE in Action hub is a case in point, whereby the work of IDEA members is highlighted through DE.ie. Other examples are included in the case studies of achievements section.

- The partnership approach allows for much wider involvement in the website and a much broader experience base, bringing in as it does, people from outside of these organisations. There is a network of people active in relation to the site outside of the

member organisations including content contributors, technical staff, cartoonists and others.

- Partnership inevitably brings with it a range of problems and challenges. Challenges include governance and management and divergent views of them; maximising ownership while maintaining efficiency and reconciling the interests and priorities of a diverse base of partners. In particular, a robust yet appropriate governance policy and practice will be crucial in the years ahead as the project grows and develops.

4.4 Monitoring & Evaluation: The project has improved considerably in recent years at assessing itself on a routine basis against stated goals and objectives:

- While the original Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) methodology was not considered to be fit-for-purpose, it is generally viewed as being much improved now. A review of documentation relating to M&E supports this perception, showing a strong Programme Results Framework, measuring change based on defined indicators, from a baseline in 2012 to the position at the end of 2015.

- The role of the project as a support for the Sector is evidenced by the increasing number of incoming queries and requests through the website. This is an example of the website feeding into a wider role for the DE.ie project. This 'soft support', dependent as it is on human interaction rather than simply on facts and data, is highly valuable and should be acknowledged as such.

- Although the relatively high number of indicators currently listed in the *Programme Results Framework* might preclude any additions, it would be worthwhile nonetheless to find some way to include this dimension (on the previous point) in the M&E protocols as it is a strong indication of success with regard to wider engagement of the DE sector.

- An M&E sub-committee was set up in 2013, which developed M&E policy and practice for the project. Meetings are held three times per year and an annual report is submitted to the Management Committee, with recommendations. A Programme Interim Monitoring Report was also produced in 2014, reviewing M&E practice, with a series of recommendations.

- With the introduction of an M&E Sub-Committee, new policy, user review groups and online surveys in the last three-year phase (2013 – 2015), the M&E function has improved dramatically. In fact, strengthening the M&E policy and practices has been a core achievement of the project in the last three years.

5. Sustainability

5.1 Human Resources: Although the project may be seen to have been driven by a more limited number of committed individuals in the past, this no longer appears to be the case:

- Staff turnover within MC member organisations has seen the baton passed on successfully with new faces and ideas on the MC. Most of those involved believe that respect has been established for the project both in member organisations and beyond and will remain regardless of who is at the helm. In this sense, the identity of the site is no longer associated with a small group of individuals or organisations. This represents a significant breakthrough for the project and one that can be built upon as the project develops.

- In effect, although the 'changing of the guard' on the MC initially engendered some concerns in relation to the sustainability of the site, the majority of those involved believe this aspect of change has been managed well. It is now seen by almost all of those interviewed as allowing an injection of 'fresh blood' and a changing emphasis, which has seen the project become better-networked and connected within the DE Sector overall.

5.2 Funding:

- The project is expanding at a considerable pace and consequently, the workload that goes with it. Current funding is inadequate to embrace the wider vision of the project in terms of added value endeavours such as outreach to the formal and non-formal sectors.

- In as much as it is feasible and practical to do so, funding sources for the project need to be diversified in the interest of sustainability. Currently, there is substantial reliance on Irish Aid for a significant percentage of the project's funding, and this portion of the finance does not always flow in tandem with the work plan for the project. This causes difficulties for project management and programme staff. Increasing the number of (paying) consortium members could be a potential solution. However, with an increased paying membership, questions arise around the issues of participation levels and workable size for the MC as well as balance between paying and non-paying members who are key for strategic purposes but who are unable to contribute financially.

- Any new funding strategy must be realistic and potentially deliverable, recognising that sources for such funds are extremely limited nationally and impractical internationally e.g. at EU level.

5.3 Strategy: In developing a new strategic plan following this review, a number of key issues arise for the project. Again, divergent views are evident in terms of who the target audience should be and whether the website should have a specific focus or remain with a broad appeal. The overall Programme Goal seeks an 'informed, targeted constituency'.

- Would the advantages of a more focused approach, allowing for greater depth and detail on a narrower range of themes, outweigh the advantages of the broader approach, which appeals to a wider audience? Would the flexibility and adaptability which has served the project well to date be undermined by such an approach? These are questions, which the Management Committee must address in order to produce a clear strategic direction for the coming years.

- It was noted on numerous occasions that developmenteducation.ie is an acknowledged asset in the DE landscape from the perspective of both development education sector and Irish Aid and that this will, to some extent, bolster its sustainability. developmenteducation.ie has always argued that its direct link to the Department of Foreign Affair's overseas aid agenda is crucial to the realisation of key aspects of International Development Cooperation, specifically as regards public education and public engagement.

Audience: It may be that the ambiguity around who the site is for is a result of its wide appeal. The divergent opinions expressed are perhaps the result of diverse DE actors seeing themselves on developmenteducation.ie and consequently believing that the site is intended, in the main, for the sector or group to which they belong. This can be seen as a positive; however, the danger of being inclusive of everyone is that the needs of all groups are met to some extent but certain groups would like to see more of a focus on their specific needs. This issue requires further debate by the MC to clarify a new position in relation to target audience.

- The MC of DE.ie and the project staff recognise the importance of working with the various sectors but they are aware that some sectors are much weaker than others. It is therefore important to play to the strengths of individual organisations and to give time to the people who work in each area.

- There is acknowledgement that at present, insufficient resources exist on the site for the Non-formal Sector - specifically Youth, Adult and Community Education. NYCI is working with the project to bridge this gap for the Youth Sector, while IDEA and the project staff are working together on Adult & Community Education.

- The general view is that *'It is very clearly about human development and rights'*, and that it should remain so, without pandering to media fads, which come and go. Blogs and Social Media posts can be used to bring immediacy and relevance to current affairs but these should always be underpinned and connected in some way to the core content, which is human development and rights. For example, gathering together of a series of blogs on the migration issue and Europe – these have come from a wide variety of sources and not just MC members and project staff.

💡 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Key points and outcomes of the review should be summarised and circulated amongst all project members (and their organisations), partners and across the Sector and related areas in addition to being made available online. Should include successes, basic project data as well as challenges and difficulties. Comment and observation on this summary should be invited.

This is in keeping with the consortium and partnership character of the project and would help increase 'broad ownership' of developmenteducation.ie. It would also serve to publicise the project and to promote key learning (something which has been successful for the project to date and which represents good practice). In turn, any comments and observations received can be summarised and shared.

Recommendation 2: The project (MC members and staff) should pro-actively search for appropriate opportunities to present progress and outcomes from the project to date and specifically, the outcomes of this review. This might be agreed by the MC as a priority 'outreach' outcome. In the first instance, the project could seek such opportunities via its member organisations (workshops, staff meetings, newsletters, publications etc.); this could assist with enhanced 'organisational buy-in'. Events and opportunities across the Sector and its diverse constituencies should also be utilised. Particular effort might be made to access educational events not specifically connected with DE or allied areas.

Recommendation 3: In preparation for the development of a new strategic plan (in 2017 leading up to a new submission to Irish Aid), the MC should convene a dedicated 'Review Day' where key issues emerging from this review can be discussed, debated and agreed (with appropriate amendments as necessary). Some of the priority issues for inclusion in such a review meeting are: The overall vision for the project and site; the scope, focus and theme(s) of the project; the primary audiences the project seeks to address and the broad parameters of the project into the future.

Such a meeting needs careful planning and structuring and should be based on a 're-reading' of some of the extant policies and practices of the project to ensure that all are engaging from the same starting point. In this context, more than one meeting might be required but some of the issues could be addressed in the routine MC meetings additionally.

Recommendation 4: Given the frequent references to governance and management issues during this review, the MC should consider circulating a summary document extracting key sections from extant documentation relating to the issue. This could form the basis for a renewal and/or re-drafting of core project policies in this regard. It might be productive for the MC to appoint a subcommittee to initiate and shape this process and its outcomes. When this process is complete, all members of the MC should 'sign off' on the process in order to signify overall agreement on these issues.

Recommendation 5: The project management committee should convene a meeting between its representatives and those of the 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World management committee to tease out any outstanding issues or confusions and to ensure that both are fully in agreement with the parameters of the partnership involved.

Recommendation 6: The MOU which underpins the involvement of each organisation in the MC as well as that of the lead agency needs to be re-drafted in light of this review and subsequently 'signed off' on by each member concerned.

Recommendation 7: The project MC should seek a meeting with Irish Aid to discuss the outcomes of this review in the context of Irish Aid's forthcoming Strategy for Development Education; how the project might contribute to that plan's objectives and what the implications are for the project.

Recommendation 8: Early in 2017, the MC of DE.ie should initiate the process of preparing and agreeing a new Strategic Plan for the project and the site.

Recommendation 9: As part of this strategic planning process, there are specific content development areas that should be discussed and reviewed, including: Primary Education materials; the deployment and potential of e-zines; updating the audit of resources; promoting and 'animating' the use of resources on the website and as part of events and workshops; appropriately engaging with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the Sustainable Development Goals agenda.

Recommendation 10: As part of the broader review of the site prior to developing a new Strategic Plan in 2017, the MC might consider a series of meetings with web-related staff across its membership and network (in addition to similar and parallel websites) with a view to sharing outcomes, ideas and opportunities, in addition to reviewing the future challenges facing sites such as DE.ie. A process of this nature could inform the development of this dimension of the Strategic Plan.

Recommendation 11: The accessibility of the website should be reviewed annually and processes streamlined for users to access information, in light of technology and user-trend behaviour. This could include, for example, the use of the tagging system on the website and providing a roadmap of the site in the footer.

Recommendation 12: Given the strength and value of sharing resources, agendas and knowledge at the MC level, the MC might consider developing an internal 'training and technical expertise' support strand between consortium members on key aspects of the project. This could facilitate knowledge sharing between organisations and consolidation of working groups, for example, in developing a new social media approach.

Recommendation 13: The approach taken by the programme in sharing data, trends and 'learning from the website' with the wider DE Sector should be actively pursued and supported. Combining quantitative with qualitative data (queries data in particular) as part of the monitoring and evaluation strategy is a new dimension to the website's approach to sharing data publically and offers a unique source of knowledge and learning to teachers, educators, funders and researchers working in development education or on development issues.

Programme Results Framework Overview 2013-15

Overall Programme Goal:

'An informed, targeted constituency in Ireland who are empowered to engage with and take action on global development and human rights issues and the broader citizenship agenda.'

Outcomes & Objectives

OUTCOME 1 – WEBSITE CONTENT & FUNCTIONALITY:
'Increased support to users to improve their knowledge and capacity in development issues and Development Education, through strengthening the content and usability of the site.'

OBJECTIVES: Establish an extensive online learning resource encompassing 3 core pillars:

1.1 Annotated resource library with annual updated audit of resources
1.2 Menu of quality development and education materials
1.3 A hub for exchanging good DE practice

OUTCOME 2 - CONSORTIUM EFFECTIVENESS:
'A robust, consortium-based structure that will collectively deliver an effective, high-quality programme.'

OBJECTIVES:

2.1 Increase active engagement and improve ownership
2.2 Ensure effective delivery of the project at all levels
2.3 Improve recognition of the 'added value' of consortium-based work

OUTCOME 3 – END-USER ENGAGEMENT:
'The site used more extensively and effectively by a wider range of individuals and organisations, leading to a better-informed and engaged constituency, aware of the importance and value of DE and its role in contributing directly to development co-operation more broadly.'

OBJECTIVES: Widespread use of the site across a wider range of users through the following measures:

3.1 Implement agreed M&E policy & process strategy, including a 'lead' subgroup and end-user groups
3.2 online survey instrument
3.3 Finalise and implement marketing and outreach strategy
3.4 Maintain and support the methodology and framework in place for data collection, analysis and wider impact

Summary Progress on PRF 2013 – 2015: 3 outcomes; 10 objectives; 24 indicators. 80% on track.

Management committee members during period 2013-2015

Anne Cleary/Aidlink, Michael Doorly/Concern Worldwide (chair), Valerie Duffy/National Youth Council of Ireland, Frank Geary/Irish Development Education Association, Siobhan Sleeman/Irish Development Education Association, Patsy Toland/Gorta-Self Help Africa, Lydia McCarthy/Trócaire, Eimear McNally/Irish Development Education Association, Jen Murphy/Trócaire, Colm Regan/80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World and Aoife McTernan/Trócaire.

DevelopmentEducation.ie team 2013-2015

Dan Bartley, Dylan Creane, Tony Daly, Toni Pyke, Úna McGrath, Grace McManus, Ciara Regan and Colm Regan.

With additional support from John 'Brick' Clark, Michelle D'Arcy/Trinity College Dublin, Fiona Coyle/Dóchas, Vicky Donnelly/Galway One World Centre, Susan Gallwey/Irish Development Education Association, Éimear Green/Irish Development Education Association, Mary Hanlon/Plan, Dorothy Jacob/Gorta-Self Help Africa, Noami Linehan/Dóchas, Tom McDermott, Tom O'Connor/Aidlink, Ray O'Sullivan Jr/Pixelpress, Karl O'Sulivan/Pixelpress, Fran Wallace/Aidlink.

Executive Summary

This summary review outlines the background to the **DevelopmentEducation.ie** project and presents some of the learning lessons during the three year period 2013-15 in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability. Recommendations from the evaluation are also included as well as a statistical trends summary and 11 case studies of project achievements.

Note: online version of this summary is available at **DevelopmentEducation.ie/about**

About DevelopmentEducation.ie

DevelopmentEducation.ie is an online resource focused on the unequal and unjust nature of the world today. It offers resources to stimulate debate and discussion about the issues and challenges we face and which encourage us to make decisions about the type of world we need and want to create.

It is a place for primary and post primary teachers, youth workers, students, adult and community workers and those with an interest in development, sustainability and human rights.

It is a place to find ideas, tools and materials for exploring controversial and contested issues such as human development, sustainability, fair trade, women's rights etc. It includes:

- A searchable online resource library
- Downloadable themed issue guides, development data, cartoons and photographs
- Blogs and opinion pieces from teachers, activists, development workers, students and educators
- Photo stories, 'Top 10s', resource reviews. stimulus resources, statistics, debates, viewpoints and values enquiry
- An action hub showcasing case studies of educational projects
- Teacher and educator guides
- Campaign ideas and action projects
- Details on resource centres in Ireland

DevelopmentEducation.ie is funded, supported and managed by a broad range of interests and organisations, including: