

Africa Centre: Development Education Programme

Mid-Term Review

Submitted by Aoife Titley: 24th January, 2011

Contents Page

Section 1: Background and Context	3
1.1 The Africa Centre	4
1.2 The Africa Centre’s Development Education Programme	5
1.3 The Africa Centre’s Development Education Strategic Plan (2008 – 2011)	5
1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Mid-Term Review	6
1.5 Methodology	7
Section 2: Provision of Training	9
2.1 Training for Trainers	10
2.2 Working with the Media	19
Section 3: Other Development Education Activities	22
3.1 Conference	23
3.2 Moonlight Talks	26
3.3. Annual Public Lectures	27
3.4 Exploring Africa Course	28
3.5 Africa Also Smiles	30
Section 4: Emerging Issues for Future Direction of DE programme	34
4.1 Unique position of the Africa Centre in DE sector	35
4.2 The Africa Centre’s Development Education Team	36
4.3 Resource Development	39
4.4 The Challenge of Impact Assessment in the DE sector	40
Section 5: Conclusion and Recommendations	43
5.1 Conclusion	44
5.2 Recommendations	45
Section 6: Appendices	47
Appendix 1: List of Research Participants	48
Appendix 2: Overview of Training for Trainers Course Content	48
Appendix 3: List of Organisations involved in Africa Centre’s DE Programme (2008-2010)	48

Section 1

Context and Background

Section 1: Context and Background

1.1. The Africa Centre

Africa Centre was established in 2000 by a group of activists in the African immigrant community in Ireland, with a view to increasing active participation in Irish life and the representation of diverse voices in civic society. The Africa Centre is a membership organisation made up of people from many different countries.

Vision: The Vision of the Africa Centre is of an Ireland that enables and is transformed by the sharing and relationships between Africa and Ireland, an Ireland where Africans are at home and participate fully with all other communities in a society that is just and inclusive, that through its diversity and interdependence leads to a sense of belonging, stability and creativity for all.

Mission: The Africa Centre advances attitudes, policies and actions that promote justice, social inclusion and meaningful participation for African communities in Ireland and encourages a more positive Africa-Ireland exchange. Based in central Dublin, the Centre works to advocate, educate and network towards a just and inclusive society in Ireland.

Values: Our Values are respect and equality, the spirit of 'ubuntu' - of our connectedness as human beings to one another and a culture that nurtures participation and interdependence. The Africa Centre also Works with the following values: Anti-racism, inclusion, learning, just society, belonging / home, stability, creativity, relationship

(AC website, 2010).

Four priorities were chosen for the Africa Centre in its overall organisational Strategic Framework document (2008 – 2011).

- Promote personal and community empowerment of Africans in Ireland
- Contribute and promote an African perspective to Development Education
- Proactively engage in policy, research and networking and encourage interaction and debate in the wider society
- Build capacity and a strong organisational structure to support the work of the Africa Centre

The strategic priority of contributing to Development Education in Ireland will be examined in greater detail for the duration of this report.

1.2. The Africa Centre's Development Education Programme

Since its establishment, an integral part of the work of the Africa Centre has focused on achieving its aims of contributing an effective 'African Perspective' to Development Education (DE) in Ireland.

The Africa Centre has undertaken significant reflection upon what is an 'African Perspective in Development Education'. Developing such a perspective involves a process of exploring African culture, seeking to identify methodologies of communication, learning, reflection and action used in different parts of Africa and adapting these as part of the methodologies of development education in Ireland today (AC website, 2010).

In more recent years, the Development Education activities of the Africa Centre have increased dramatically and their profile and reputation in the sector has also increased immensely. Their role in promoting southern voices in DE makes a unique and necessary contribution to discourse in the sector and as a result, the work of the DE team in the Africa Centre is in keeping with the objectives of the Irish Aid Strategy Plan 2007-2001 for Development Education in Ireland.

The approach to the Strategic Plan is based on the following:

- Promoting and facilitating education led by Africans who have experience of living in Africa and can bring this authentic voice to the educational experience as a southern perspective to others

- Sharing knowledge which is based on experience of some of the complex topics in relation to African development (such as African history, politics, culture) to which the Africa Centre can bring a lived experience and understanding;
- A critical perspective on the use of images of Africa, on which the Africa Centre has already carried out work and which will be further developed through the coming three years.
- Use of diverse African education methods, such as story-telling and dance, which the Africa Centre will train educators to use effectively in relation to development and promote among development educators in Ireland (Strategic Plan, 2008 – 2011).

1.3 Africa Centre Development Education Strategic Plan

Four objectives for Development Education are articulated in the Strategic Plan:

1. To promote good practice in the use of balanced images and messages on Africa by the development sector and the media in Ireland.
2. To build a group of trained development educators from within the African community to bring an Africa perspective to development education.
3. To engage the media in mobilizing informed African voices in Ireland when reporting on African issues, based on the power of the media as a key influencer on development issues.
4. To promote an African perspective to the wider Irish Society and engage with African methodologies in development education.

1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Mid-Term Review

This research report, compiled on behalf of the Africa Centre, provides a systematic assessment of the Development Education activities outlined in the Strategic Plan 2008 – 2011. It is a mid-term review, concentrating on the progress that has been made until this point; the end of Year 2 in the plan. Data was collected to explore the opinions and inputs of relevant stakeholders in the area in order to provide useful feedback about the effectiveness and value of the project and to ascertain if the Africa Centre is progressing towards its overall strategic goals as outlined in the plan.

The aims of the mid-term review were to:

- Provide the logistical framework for a meaningful mid-term review of this project which assessed the impact and quality of the activities of the Development Education Programme
- To highlight areas of success and achievement within the Development Education

- Programme of the Africa Centre and document the key learning in this regard
- To indicate areas in need of greater attention and commitment which can be incorporated into the next Strategic Plan
 - To assess the quality and impact of the training sessions and various DE events
 - To identify if the Africa Centre has met its original objectives as regards their aims for Development Education in Ireland
 - To outline realistic and relevant recommendations for future phases of the programme

1.5 Methodology

After consideration of the achievable aims of the research process, it was decided to follow a holistic methodological approach for the operational plan. This was done primarily within a qualitative framework, in order to generate rich, deep insights into the opinions and recommendations of all of the respondents. The evaluation was formative - it examined the processes, operation and success of the development education programme and was carried out in cognisance of the core objectives outlined in strategy plan.

Participants in the research process were purposively sampled, with individual members of the Africa Centre and representatives of relevant organisations in the Development Education Sector strategically targeted on the basis of their suitability to the project. In keeping with the strategic aim of promoting the southern perspective in development education, every effort was made to ensure that respondents adequately represented the heterogeneity of Africa Centre members and that the sampling net was cast as wide as possible in this regard.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

It should be noted at this early juncture that the data collection phase was characterised by immense goodwill on the part of the respondents. Despite the challenging time-frame¹, participants were very accommodating and obliging in their approach to taking part in the research. This demonstrates the high esteem in which the Africa Centre is held, more evidence of which will be presented later in this report. Desk research for the project included the review of internal project and organisational documents, reports and

¹ Time-frame challenges related to a very short data collection period, protracted holiday periods during which many respondents were uncontactable and bad weather conditions which contributed to interview cancellations and postponements.

strategies, including real-time evaluations sheets administered by the DE team. The research benefitted from excellent record keeping on the part of Africa Centre staff.

A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted until saturation point was reached. Nine face-to-face interviews were conducted initially and then supplemented with six phone interviews as well. Early findings from the research indicated a real appetite among members for participation in Africa Centre events and as a direct result, a public focus group was added as an extra research method. This meeting took place towards the end of the data collection phase and this method of data triangulation was used to enhance the data, to ensure credibility and to test validity.

The Interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed in their entirety and following reading and re-reading of the transcripts, a concept indicator model was developed. This model enabled post-coding of the data during analysis.

Section 2

Provision of Training

Section 2 – Provision of Training

Data collection on the topic of the provision of training courses was extremely wide-ranging, as many of the facilitators and participants were eager to take part in the research and to share their positive experiences. Training was viewed as a crucial tool for the Africa Centre to utilise effectively, in order to survive and prosper in the challenging working environment which lies ahead for the sector. The time spent by the Africa Centre developing the capabilities of its members was considered an essential commitment, not just to the strategic aims of the DE programme, but also to their broader aim of facilitating personal and community empowerment for Africans in Ireland. It was felt that the training programmes motivated the members very well and provided them with a stepping stone to achieving future success in the area.

2.1 Training for Trainers

In order to further progress on the strategic goal of contributing and promoting an African perspective to development education, three ‘Training for Trainers’ courses were run between 2009-2010 in Dublin, Cork and Galway². The end goal of these courses was to build a database of proficient and confident development educators who could represent the African perspective in the wider development sector. ‘This course equips participants with

² The ‘Training for Trainers’ course held in Galway was in collaboration with the Galway One World Centre.

the knowledge and the tools to engage groups in education on global development, local and global inequality, and social justice issues in a friendly, informal group environment' (AC Website, 2010).

The need for such training courses were identified by the Africa Centre as far back as 2004. It was felt that while many African migrants were very well-educated, they may lack the skills or confidence to express themselves effectively in the DE sector. Moreover, the Development Education sector in Ireland was considered to be fairly homogenous in terms of its practitioners and calls for better representation of southern voices were commonplace. Therefore, the introduction of a 'Training for Trainers' course with its 'multiplier effect' was considered an ideal starting point to address both of these issues. The courses were open to all Africans with an interest in development education and those who wished to promote the good practice in use of balanced images and messages on Africa and Africans in Ireland.

2.1.1 Content of the course

The content of the 'Training for Trainers' course was designed in order to provide participants with practical information on Development Education as well as the skills to disseminate this information.

During the course development issues are raised, however the focus is on participatory methodologies and how to adapt them to any group setting. It will enable participants to work more effectively and creatively with groups when exploring intercultural and development issues (AC website, 2010).

A significant module on the course was 'Introduction to Development Education'. This primarily involved enabling participants to understand how development education is distinct from other educations, to examine its value system and the principles behind it. The facilitation was interactive, using Freirian concepts of learning and utilising creative exercises to assist with problem solving. Another module focused on facilitation skills:

It was about taking up the role of being facilitative and strengthening their facilitative capacities. To recognise their capacities and strengthen them. It was also about recognising the difference between facilitating discovery and facilitating

delivery, not mixing them up and not replacing discovery with delivery (Research participant, 2011).

Feedback about the facilitation sessions were very encouraging. It was felt that there can be a lack of clarity among people in the sector about what facilitation actually is, whether it is about presentation or advocating positions and this workshop gave them the opportunity to unpack such issues.

(Facilitation) can't be like a press conference where you throw out your knowledge and then get the feedback. Participation should not be a elongated question and answer session. Participatory processes are so important, they must be really well thought through (Research participant, 2011).

Other sessions which scored highly on evaluation sheets were ones which related to more issue-based themes. While the balance between the methodology and the information modules to be met, it was felt by both facilitators and participants that there was a real appetite for more issue-based workshops when designing the training content.

The session on trade and aid, very factual and very real (AC evaluation, 2010).

Those ones with information are very empowering. Creates good awareness and one cannot act without being aware (Research participant, 2011).

The idea of including more practical inputs was stressed as an area that the Africa Centre could concentrate on for the future. Having African trainers trained to confidently deliver issue-based workshops was seen as a benefit to the sector overall.

To encourage people to be confident in having an analysis of some of those global things. I think people can sometimes be anxious because they feel they do not know enough in order to have an opinion in this area. People should be confident in having discussion and debates in issue surrounding debt, aid, trade (Research participant, 2011).

This advantage of finding the balance was echoed by one participant:

For the future I would recommend very good issues in development education, I feel it is good to handle them side by side with the skills. Unless we know how to train them, knowledge of content is not enough, we have to have the know-how as well (Research participant, 2011).

2.1.2 Participant engagement

The 'Training for Trainers' courses were met with a very good response and they were all fully subscribed. The reasons participants gave for wanting to take part related to their desire to learn more about development education and to increase their own training skills with a view to working in the DE sector in the future.

Saw advert on the training, from the content, it would be very useful for me to develop some skills and pass on the message (Research participant, 2011).

The energy, the capabilities and the dedication of the participants on the training course really stood out for the numerous facilitators who took part in the research.

They were excellent, the quality of them, the competence of them, the interest of them. The vast majority of them I would say that if the opportunities were there for them they would be really good development educators (Research participant, 2011).

Absolutely brilliant. They engaged very well. I was very impressed with the quality of them as a group (Research participant, 2011).

Real sense of team with them as well. The difference between them on the first day and the last day was amazing. People liking each other and getting on with each other (Research participant, 2011).

Really active and opinionated group and there were lots of good debates in the session. They had many strong political views (Research participant, 2011).

Respectful, but passionate exchanges (Research participant, 2011).

Data in relation to the training courses revealed a potent appetite to learn about DE among the participants, as well as a desire to engage as often as possible with the opportunities that were being presented to them. This theme will be re-visited in other sections of the report.

They were there to learn. To pick up anything and everything they could (Research participant, 2011).

Very positive feedback from the group directly, they indicated they wanted more workshops on issue-based topics. There was a thirst for actual information, the facts etc. Getting down to the nitty gritty about what is causing under-development in Africa (Research participant, 2011).

This was echoed in the feedback of the participants as well:

Everything is about enhancing my skills. Increase my skills. Anything that I can do. Anything. Saw it was something to add to what I already have. It taught you how to understand the approach that you take to training when you eventually train people and I thought that that was good (Research participant, 2011).

I would sit there all week if there was something to learn (Research participant, 2011).

2.1.3 Participant feedback

As mentioned already, the majority of the participants were not well established in the DE sector and were using the training as a way to get introduced to the sector.

I was happy to take part, it was very enjoyable, nice to find like-minded people in the world we live today, to find people who are like-minded is a gem....You find you are able to express yourself among people who understand how you are feeling. There was one presentation given by one of the participants, actually brought tears to a few people's eyes. Very touching. Powerful (Research participant, 2011).

An added bonus of the training was how it also began to fulfil a broader aim of the Africa Centre, namely the process of empowering the African community. This came through very clearly in interviews with participants:

It challenged me. It forced me... basically getting up in front of people to talk about things. Found it challenging but knew I needed to do it to get over things. If it is not challenging, it is not worthwhile (Research participant, 2011).

It increased my confidence, I have big ideas (Research participant, 2011).

Watch this space (AC evaluation, 2010).

Every day was an eye-opener (AC evaluation, 2010).

The development education can be a very good approach to challenge stereotypes and bring positivity. Sessions also taught participants to keep an open mind and to have consideration for other perspectives (AC evaluation, 2010).

Training is very important, if you want to make a change, you have to train people. Unless people are trained, they cannot do any efficient work. I would like to advise Africa Centre to focus on training because it gives basic skills. Africans have come here, they do not live isolated, they are part and parcel of whole society. Training gives very important principles, rules and regulations for what is going on. Very important to enlighten people in reality (Research participant, 2011).

Most importantly, with the exception of the music module which it was felt needed to be thought through a bit more clearly, there was little criticism of the facilitators and the resources:

All very good. Still got the materials, well presented, all very good, nice presentation, good slides (Research participant, 2011).

Excellent facilitation, hugely informative, energetic, passionate, empowering, clear and positive (AC evaluation, 2010).

Interest in the content of the course was very high and as a result, several participants suggested some materials being made available to them prior to the start of the course.

It would be very effective if content is given to participants at least one week before. Then if I am talking about something, I can refer. So we can involve more then, in that activity. Then I can come with full knowledge (Research participant, 2011).

Can prepare our minds and create more interest in it (Research participant, 2011).

More time within certain modules was also recommended:

For me, everything was included in the content. But what would be great if they included more time. When we did the practise session, we were given opportunity to make presentation. Just 15 minutes presentation. It was too short to discover if the participants really understood what the issues are or what the skills area. More time should be given (Research participant, 2011).

In terms of the content and organisation of the course, there were also a few constructive recommendations that emerged from the research. Respondents cited management skills, human right issues, civic education, general intercultural awareness and Irish politics as potential module areas which would strengthen their capabilities within a DE context.

2.1.4 Impact Assessment of Training

While overall feedback about the training; in the research, in the evaluation and informally to the facilitators was very positive, the need for more tangible impact assessment of the training courses was a particular talking point among research respondents. The challenges of impact assessment in the wider development education sector will be discussed in greater detail in a later section of this report, however, some initial observations are introduced here to set the context.

Impact assessment can be as simple as tracking people. Track what has happened them before and after the training. If they are in an organisation, you can check organisational evaluations in terms of impact. I think we all have to find ways, no matter how difficult it is of looking at the impact (Research participant, 2011).

This is certainly an achievable aim for the Africa Centre. The personal relationship they have built up with many of their members has ensured they are able to 'track people' after the training and can show the impact that the learning has had on their future activities. For example, some participants have organised workshops for schools and delivered lectures on climate change to community groups. Furthermore, some participants have engaged in further study and secured places in Kimmage Development Studies Centre. However, research indicated that the Africa Centre should still investigate how to formally build data collection into any future initiatives that they are promoting. While real-time evaluations were carried out very well by the DE team, it was suggested more attention needed to be given about how to track members further down the line.

In terms of fulfilling requests for more quantitative-based data, questionnaires with closed answer sets were suggested as a potentially suitable data collection method. However, to ensure validity and reliability, it was recommended that AC members themselves are involved in the process of deciding the ranking options on the questions themselves. In this sense, they can assess their learning at the training against the criteria they have set themselves.

It should be noted that quantitative data is not always relevant in the context of Development Education as the personal impact of the training on the individual is often more significant. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that future examination is needed to assess how relevant indicators in relation to narratives³ can be developed to assist the Africa Centre with their work in this regard. Respondents felt it was imperative that charting the impact the training has had on the skills, knowledge, confidence and self-belief of the participant will reflect the real success of the project.

2.1.5 Future Development of Training for Trainers

³ 'Whereas large parts of discourse about minorities are generalisations about ethnic minority groups or ethnic relations, personal stories provide concrete information, which can be used as supporting evidence for a more general conclusion. The weight of the evidence is epistemological' (Van Dijk, 1993: 126).

Three main areas of development emerged from the research in relation to the 'Training for Trainers' Programmes:

i. Participant follow-up

The investment of time and resources on the part of the Africa Centre into the 'Training for Trainers' programme is very evident. However, many participants felt that without as much attention being given to a follow-up with participants on the course, it could potentially be a wasted opportunity.

I feel African centre is doing a noble job. Just to consolidate its activity I would like to advise the Africa Centre if they can invest in training and then follow up is essential. If there is no follow up, all the work was for nothing (Research participant, 2011).

Follow up is important because these are people that had not really been working in the area already and were using it as a way of getting into DE. We can't let them down we must give them opportunities as well (Research participant, 2011).

I think it is important to build up a network of development educators but I also think we have to ask for what? Are we creating expectations of trainees that we can't meet? ...Is there money for them become a development educator? It is a nice learning experience, but are they better off at the end of it? I think we need to focus more on the outcome, not just the fact it is being put on (Research participant, 2011).

Facilitators in particular, felt that the passion and engagement present in the workshops should be harnessed and structured follow-ups with participants should be an integral part of the training commitments of the Africa Centre. Suggestions of ways to keep people involved included the establishment of a monthly campaign group that members could join, the development of an online group for graduates of the training where they can share their progress and learning and gain advice, the introduction of work placements or internships with partner NGO's as part of the training, bringing people together for seminars, the development of a database on the website where names of the trainers and their areas of interest/ speciality are displayed clearly, a follow-up newsletter or blog and the use of the Africa Centre as a broker to assist graduates to engaging with volunteer organisations who may not provide development education elements to their own volunteers.

The training gave me a nice little network of people who have other experiences who you know can call on and say, now I am doing this, what do you think, do you have any other ideas? A larger and more structured network of people should be

developed if possible. Because it definitely is all about numbers. Sometimes in community work, you have passion, but it feels like an individual passion and when you know there are other people like you as well, it really empowers you to do your work (Research participant, 2011).

In relation to the ongoing debate about impact assessment, it was felt that all of these methods of follow-up could in turn act as tangible ways of proving the impact of the training courses as well. Finally, it is important to note that the Africa Centre are already engaged in many methods of follow-up with their members, the recommendation here is merely to formalise these endeavours in a more structured way.

ii. Different levels of Training

As outlined earlier, the timing and emphasis of some of the modules of the course were questioned by research respondents:

Not enough time for some of the topics (AC evaluation, 2010).

I would liked to have seen the key elements of Dev Ed highlighted clearly because I was a little lost during the session (AC evaluation, 2010).

Sometimes the training was pitched at too basic a level. To do facilitation skills in a day is impossible. You just can't do facilitation skills in one day. These are people with no experience in the area and it is not sufficient for people (Research participant, 2011).

It was therefore suggested that in the future, rather than advertising a general 'Training for Trainers' course, that more tailored levels of training would be developed and offered instead. So for example, courses could be offered at an introductory level, in order to focus on basic information and preliminary facilitation skills. This could be supplemented with more advanced levels of training, which could be targeted either at graduates of previous courses, or at DE practitioners already working in the area. This would also enable a re-design of the course content, allowing for example, time for more substantive, issue-based workshops, for which there had been a proven appetite. It was felt that some of the more advanced training courses could act as catalysts for employment opportunities, with either work placements or structured volunteering options being offered as part of the package.

iii. **Partnerships**

It is important to mention that the Africa Centre consistently work in many capacities with their colleagues⁴ in the DE sector. However, it was still a recommendation from respondents that in the context of training, these partnerships should continue to be developed in a structured way. Facilitators working in other NGO's spoke of the interest they noticed among participants for specific campaigns they were working on. A closer partnership which aided the participants get more involved in such campaigns would be appreciated by these groups and other stakeholders in the area spoke of their willingness to work on joint events or co-branded initiatives. It was felt that there is a lot of similar work going on in the sector at the moment, a lot of groups are offering training, a lot of groups are writing resources and organising awareness raising events. Rather than operating in a vacuum, a well-organised training course with expert buy-in from several organisations in the sector, could be very beneficial to all those involved. It was hoped that this would also encourage the constituency of the Africa Centre to engage more with other traditional groups in the DE sector. It was also recommended that it could be advantageous for the Africa Centre to look outside of the development sector for potential partnerships. This could broaden their horizons and enable them to work with organisations working in diverse areas, for example on Traveller, or disability issues.

2.2 Working with the Media

A need to train and develop a database of speakers who felt comfortable with the media was identified by the Africa Centre in their Development Education Strategic Plan 2008-2011. To that end, a series of media training sessions were also organised by the Africa Centre, with two being held in conjunction with Dtalk. It was felt this was a positive step towards achieving the aim to 'engage the media in mobilizing informed African voices in Ireland when reporting on African issues, based on the power of the media as a key influencer on development issues' (AC website, 2010).

⁴ For a list of organisations involved in some element of the Africa Centre's DE programme, please see Appendix 3.

2.2.1 Description of course content

In order to facilitate enabling participants to understand more about how media works in Ireland, the following course content was devised:

Press Release Skills	The Radio Interview
Getting the Most from the Media	What makes a good interview?
What makes a 'story' worthy for news	Conducting and reviewing interviews
Editorial conference	Responding to interview requests
Review and writing Press Release	How radio interviews differ from TV interviews

The practical and skills-based nature of the course was praised and appreciated by participants:

Very practical, they actually put equipment in your hand, make you go through the experience, get to do fake interviews, they are really challenging, show you your strengths and what you can improve upon (Research participant, 2011).

However, it was felt by some participants, that more of an introduction to internet-based media would have been welcomed, given the prevalence of social networking media forms in society today.

2.2.2 Participant feedback

The 'Working with the Media' course received very positive feedback across the board. In particular, the motivation for the course was praised and the need for such training identified.

Media is your voice, you can have all the training in the world but if you are not given access to the media it is like a toothless tiger basically (Research participant, 2011).

However, in keeping with some of the observations about the 'Training for Trainers' course, it was felt that more attention could be given to the timing of the course. 'It was very short, but very intense. Personally, I could have gone on with it for longer' (Research participant, 2011).

However, unlike with the 'Training for Trainers', participants praised the follow-up opportunities the course had provided them, especially the close links to Near FM and the partnership that has developed there as a result. It is strongly recommended that this partnership be continued and that more members of the Africa Centre are afforded the opportunity to improve their media skills.

As a consequence of doing the course I'm involved in local station Near FM. I didn't know it even existed before that. It was directly presented to me through the Africa Centre (Research participant, 2011).

It is important to note that the 'Working with the Media' course is a great start to achieving the strategic aim 'to engage the media in mobilising informed African voices in Ireland when reporting on African issues, recognising the important role of the media in informing the public's understanding of African issues' (Strategic Plan, Objective 3). However, it will need to attract a greater number of participants, before any noticeable impact is made on positive media representations in Ireland.

Conclusion

The provision of various training courses in the DE programme has been very well-received and it should no longer be seen as a supplementary activity undertaken by the Africa Centre but as a central action to invest in for the future of the organisation. The training can be seen to be one of the most important activities that the centre provides, as a result of its engagement of members, the quality of its content and its potential for community empowerment. However, there is a real need to strategise about the future delivery of training programmes, in order to ensure that support and resources are available for graduates in the future.

Section 3

Development Education Activities

Section 3: Development Education Activities

Since 2007, the Development Education programme of the Africa Centre has been very productive in their approach to their events calendar. Central to this productivity has been the impressive amount of activities held in a relatively short space of time. In this section, these occasions are looked at in greater detail.

3.1 Conference: 'The Use of Images and Message – A Human Rights Issue'

A conference on 'The Use of Images and Messages – A Human Rights Issue', was held in Dublin Castle in July 2010. The selection of the theme as a worthwhile and timely topic was a common finding of the research. The Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages is a fundamental part of the DE work and as a result, it was felt that it was very beneficial to have a conference dedicated to this theme to learn more about how people felt about it.

3.1.1 Speakers and Workshops

The variety and quality of speakers at the Africa Centre conference were two areas that immediately emerged in the data analysis for this mid-term review.

The variety of workshops was excellent along with the diversity of viewpoints (AC evaluation, 2010).

Good to listen to many different perspectives across the day (AC Evaluation, 2010).

Speakers were excellent, provided some really interesting perspectives (AC Evaluation, 2010).

A real talking point among some of the respondents related to the presence of so many representatives of the diplomatic corps at the event.

Great to see the Ambassadors involved (AC Evaluation, 2010).

I met some high quality people. Nice to be able to interact with people and be able to talk to them freely (Research participant, 2011).

The Kenyan Ambassador was a good chairperson. It struck a good balance between the traditional African ambassador types and a radical new young energy (Research participant, 2011).

However, there was also some interesting feedback about the choice of speakers:

To be honest, I felt there were too many speakers invited from the diplomatic corps, it seemed like there were not enough from the coalface if you like, from the African Activist community (Research participant, 2011).

Greater involvement of minority communities would have been good, not just African, but more activists. If we are talking about images, there could have been more involvement from image makers, creators, like designers etc. This issue is more than just about the development sector, it should involve the media and the people behind the images like photographers. It should reach out to the people who use the images and manipulate them (Research participant, 2011).

In addition to the speakers, the venue, food and atmosphere were all praised. The conference was well-attended and it was felt it had opened up the development education sector to a whole new group of people. Two seasoned development educators even commented about how they did not know a lot of people at the conference, which would be an unusual occurrence having worked in the sector for so long.

3.1.3 Critical Reflection

The conference gave the delegates the opportunity to critically question many of the images of the developing world they receive on a daily basis. This space for critical reflection is one which respondents identified as being very important in the context of the development education sector.

There is a broader debate in dev ed. There is a certain idea that it is more advocacy than enquiry at the moment and sometimes the advocacy can tip over into almost of form of propaganda. There can be a pushing of ideological positions, without recognising that they are ideological positions (Research participant, 2011).

I think that too little thought has gone into how change actually happens. There has been a lot of thinking about how do people learn, how can you get education

processes going, we have been very good at that. But what hasn't been thought about is how can individual learning relate to organisational or societal change. Change comes from very different processes. It's not just about learning it's about emotional development and political power play and how you communicate. Most development education groups should be getting better at putting themselves in a bigger picture. It's not realistic to think change will happen straightaway (Research participant, 2011).

..to be challenged in my think of the code (AC Evaluation, 2010).

Provided a space for exchange, reflection and new conclusions (AC Evaluation, 2010).

It is was felt that any opportunities for learning and greater debate about such issues in our society was providing a useful service to the members of the Africa Centre. Furthermore, Elaine Mahon noted in her feedback⁵ from the group work that the point was raised by Africans and other minority communities in Ireland that the conference was an important acknowledgement of their frustration, i.e. when they see negative images and messages relating to their communities or countries of origin and this conference was a good outlet for them to air their views

3.1.4 Participant Feedback

The conference represented a turning point for many members of the Africa Centre who commented about how it was the first time that they had been given the opportunity to be brought together with others and really dedicate time to reflecting on a single issue. However, a few logistical issues were also raised, namely relating to timekeeping and a desire for more emphasis on networking. As a result of some of the speeches going over-time, this had a knock-on effect on some of the later scheduled events. As networking and participation is a real area of interest for many members, this is also something they would like to see prioritised in future conferences. There was a suggestion that it could be helpful to provide a list of the names of all the attendees at the conference, so the other delegates would know who was there and could benefit from this type of networking as well. In terms of the content of the conference, observations were relayed that the focus of the message was in terms of the how the images are used and the effects of this, but not as much about

⁵ Africa Centre Conference – 'The Use of Images and Messages – A Human Rights Issue' (Lizzie Downes, Conference Report).

reading images and how images are perceived, which could have been interesting. Finally, a desire for a follow-up to the conference was also shared during the research.

Everyone in the sector struggles with what role things like conferences play in our overall strategy. It's easy to tick a box saying it is good, but in terms of the impact it's important that it is built into a succession of events or that there is a follow up. Something like that should be built into the conference planning. There need to be action points developed that people can follow up on. It is a good sector for interesting conferences, not always good for following up. It's the thing that comes afterwards that is important (Research participant, 2011).

3.2 Moonlight Talks

In order to advance progress on promoting an African perspective to wider society as well as providing opportunities to highlight diverse African methodologies, a series of 'Moonlight Talks' have been organised by the Africa Centre over the last eighteen months. The rationale behind these events centres on the significance of the oral tradition in African heritage and the powerful role that this plays in facilitating both personal and professional expression. The 'Moonlight Talks' present an ideal forum for creativity, dialogue and cultural expression and remain a powerful and original part of the DE strategy in the Africa Centre.

Overview of Moonlight Talks

17 th September, 2009	17 th November, 2009	9 th April, 2010
<u>Storytellers:</u> Ify Onwneme, Eloho Egwuteria, Maureen Onejeme	<u>Storyteller:</u> Margaret Auma Comedian: Fabu D	<u>Storyteller:</u> Adedotun Adekeye
<u>Music:</u> Rapper Precious John and DJ Timi Martins	<u>Music:</u> DJ Innocent, African Harp - Paul	<u>Music:</u> Singers – The Spirit of David
<u>Dance:</u> Rwandan dancers	<u>Dance:</u> Rwandan dancers	

Feedback from research participants about the 'Moonlight Talks' was overwhelmingly positive as it afforded them the opportunity to engage with their fellow Africa Centre members while also enjoying the diversity of culture on show.

The Moonlight Talks are a great example of how African educational methodologies have been incorporated into the development education work of the Africa Centre. They really were a great idea (Research participant, 2011).

3.3. Annual Public Lectures

Public lectures have become key annual events and have contributed to Irish African dialogue and to the education of mixed African and Irish audiences. Lectures also have presented an image of Africa by Africans not often heard in mainstream Irish debates and have featured prominent African speakers (AC website, 2010). Annual lectures in the last two years have been chosen on themes which focus on illustrating a southern perspective in development education. The Annual lecture was regarded by respondents as an excellent way of generating debate about global issues and informing both the African and Irish community about current discourse on such topics.

Year	Guest Speaker	Keynote Address
2009	Massa Washington, Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia. Title: 'The Negative Effects of Economic Crime to Africa's development - A Liberian perspective'	Dr. Sheila Killian Lecturer at the University of Limerick. Title: 'The way in which Ireland's competition for multinational investment has unintended consequences for developing countries and how this contrasts with our general overseas aid policy'.
2010	Florence Ayisi, an award-winning filmmaker and University lecturer. Sport as a Catalyst for Development in Africa.	Keynote address delivered by Don Mullan, Former Director of AFRI

Areas of commendation that stood out for participants related to the quality of speakers and the diversity of topics that are chosen.

The Annual Lecture always has top class speakers. They are always cutting edge and very well known. There is always a good draw of the a crowd and good support from across the sector. I always look forward to it (Research participant, 2011).

Organisation of the event and the social nature of the lecture was also something which participants appreciated:

The Annual Lecture is well formulated, there are questions and answers and a debate and there is always time afterwards to chat informally (Research participant, 2011).

As a result of the quality and calibre of the speakers, it was felt by some participants that greater use of their presence in the Africa Centre could be considered. For example, instead of them delivering only one session at the Annual Lecture, it was suggested that organisers could consider inviting them to take part in another smaller-scale seminar during the day. This could enable a select group of development educators to avail of the Guest Speaker's knowledge in a more informal setting. They felt that while it was obviously not desirable to over-stretch or over-advertise the Guest Speaker, if the event linked in more with some of the other education activities it could be valuable to the broader work of the Africa Centre.

3.4 Exploring Africa Course

As part of a commitment to 'promote an African perspective to the wider Irish society and engage African education methodologies in DE'⁶, The Africa Centre, in collaboration with Dtalk organised three 'Exploring Africa' courses. The pilot took place over three days in Kimmage Development Studies Centre and was followed by two more in 2010, including one in NASC, The Irish Immigrant Support Centre in Cork. The aim of the course was to provide an opportunity for participants to explore issues of peace and conflict within a global and political framework. Course content included an overview of how Africa has contributed to human civilization and other modules highlighted the richness of the culture of the continent and the colonial impact on life today. In keeping with another key issue for the Africa Centre, the course also examined the image of Africa and how negative portrayals of the continent have impacted on people's perceptions of what it is like. It is important to note that this is the only course of its kind in Ireland at the moment to be facilitated by Africans and it is this authenticity and credibility that made the course a great success.

⁶ Objective 4: Africa Centre's Development Education Strategic Plan (2008 – 2011).

3.4.1 Objectives of the Exploring Africa Course

By the end of this course participants were able to:

- Introduce the continent's contribution to human civilization, how its image is portrayed, peace and conflict, colonial impact, political and cultural connection with the world.
- Explore political implications which affect the continent and its interconnected relationship with foreign policy and global relations.
- Deepen understanding of how to challenge negative perceptions that are portrayed of Africa and Africans (e.g. language, stereotypes, critical thinking, images, and messages).
- Network and share their knowledge, skills, and experiences.
- Reflect upon how the arts are an integral part of African society. This will be delivered through exhibition and discussion. (AC website, 2010).

3.4.2 Feedback

In general, feedback for the 'Exploring Africa' course was very complimentary. The participants drew attention to the informative and academic nature of the course, which made it stand apart from similar courses or training in the area. 'They all shared valuable and realistic information based on facts as well as related history', 'Very informative and academic', 'All the sessions were interesting and attractive, all have positive information', 'I learned lots about African culture, history and the value of this to our world today' (AC evaluation, 2010). The sessions on Africa's politics and global connections and on Africa's contribution to human civilisation were particularly well received. '(I learnt) that Africa has hugely contributed to human civilisation and nobody even Africa acknowledges it'. Another admirable benefit of the course was the space it afforded participants to challenge their own assumptions and ideas on global issues – 'It made me think about the things I take for granted'.

While the content and the facilitation of the course was widely commended, it was felt certain logistical details could be improved upon for the future. For example, that the overloaded curriculum be addressed for future courses – 'Too much information in a limited time' (AC evaluation). As has been seen in other areas of this report, there was also evidence of a real appetite for further knowledge in this area as well. Participants revealed a

desire to cement their knowledge of the course with more reading on the subject. As a result, it is suggested that certain readings could be made available to class members in advance of the course starting, so that their familiarity with the material can enhance the learning experience. Furthermore, the Africa Centre could consider generating a reading list for their membership as whole, based on the feedback from the 'Exploring Africa Course'. Books could be divided into academic and fiction categories and could be posted on the DE section of the website.

Overall, this course was a great achievement for Africa Centre and it is strongly recommended that this course be run again and widely advertised to attract new members to the Africa Centre. In addition, respondents felt it was advisable for the course to attain some level of accreditation in order to develop it in the future. It is understood that investigations into getting FETAC accreditation have commenced by the Africa Centre and so it is also recommended that this process be continued.

3.5 Africa Also Smiles

The previous events and activities outlined in this section, for the most part, have been met with overwhelming praise and interest. However, research indicated that the initiative of 'Africa Also Smiles' divided respondents somewhat and some interesting observations about the campaign were shared during data collection.

In September 2009, the Africa Centre re-launched its 'Africa Also Smiles' poster campaign in the Irish Aid Centre in O'Connell Street. The aim of the campaign is to challenge imbalanced, negative or stereotypical views about representations of Africa and this is best illustrated in the poster's tagline; *'The dignity and resilience of Africa's people must not be disregarded despite the scars of war, poverty and disease'*. The Centre is also in the process of developing an accompanying pack to the poster, to be made available for workshops or schools looking to use the resource.

3.5.1 Concept

A central issue for the Africa Centre and for other representatives of the development sector in Ireland surrounds the ongoing negative imaging of African issues and people. As a result, 'Africa Also Smiles' was seen to be a very important area of work for the Africa Centre.

That was very good, a key, key issue. If you are part of a community of people that are constantly being told through images they are poor, they are deprived, this constant negativity coming toward you, and no positive images, there are no positive images coming through. So if you are constantly being bombarded with negativity about Africa, it is not a nice thing. Which is why the poster, Africa also smiles is really good and the Africa Centre should continue giving it out (Research participant, 2011).

There have been a litany of negative images of Africa which have been constantly presented over the last century in the media – as well as a cacophony of negative commentary from NGO's. It is not possible for a people to withstand such a barrage of negativity (Her Excellency Ambassador Kemafo Chikwe⁷, Nigerian Ambassador to Ireland).

The overall slogan and message is brilliant (Research participant, 2011).

An important part of the work of the DE programme is linking in with the Dóchas code of conduct in relation to images and messages.

The images and messages used to portray people, places and situations in the developing world can have an enormous impact on people's perceptions and attitudes. Development organisations increasingly recognise the importance of using appropriate images and messages in their communication (Guidebook on the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages, Dóchas).

3.5.2 Respondent debate

While the content and concept of the 'Africa Also Smiles' poster was generally considered to be beneficial to the work of the DE programme, there was no consensus among respondents about whether it could be considered a campaign or a resource.

Not sure what the poster is supposed to serve, other than being a presence at certain events. We have certainly used it as a good example of work, but beyond that, I'm not sure (Research participant, 2011).

⁷ Taken from The Africa Centre's Conference Report, compiled by Lizzie Downes.

Posters and leaflets are great, but what do you do with them other than bring them along to events and meetings. If it is a campaign, what is the strategy, who is going to be targeted? I'm not entirely clear what the strategy is for the campaign (Research participant, 2011).

3.5.3 Future of Africa Also Smiles

As a result, it was felt that future strategising for the Africa Also Smiles campaign was certainly needed, in order for it to fulfil its potential. In particular, a need for training and providing workshops on the resource, as well lobbying and reaching people outside of the development sector was recommended. This is a priority that was also contained in the recommendations of the Conference report as well.

Recommendation 7: In organisational promotional material there is room for greater creativity e.g. a move towards use of abstract/ symbolic messages and away from literal/human references. Briefing professional graphic designers to work alongside fundraisers and development educators could create new trends in messaging and improve the Code adherence significantly (Conference report, compiled by Lizzie Downes).

In terms of target audience, it was felt that a broad approach was best:

Africa also smiles; very, very valuable message....I think even Africans themselves can be targeted. (A lot) of Africans here in Ireland don't even believe in themselves. They don't even believe that they smile. So I think the message should go out to the Africans so that they can tell the world that they smile (Research participant, 2011).

It is certainly a resource at the moment, but the Africa Centre should try and turn it into a campaign. Strong spokespeople, multipliers who will bring the discussion forward in the media. Examples of Africans smiling in Ireland and there are so many examples that could be used. You could get people to become ambassadors of that message (Research participant, 2011).

In order for a campaign to be effective, respondents felt that in addition to identifying a target audience, there needs to be an articulation of what change is trying to be made. Is it merely about raising awareness? Feedback from stakeholders would suggest that change as a result of a campaign is more likely to occur if expectations are broken down into manageable steps. An overall goal should be selected and then a series of intermediary goals should be expressed as a way of achieving that end goal. This is complemented by

basic stakeholder mapping to see who might have an interest in the campaign and followed up with a mapping of decision making processes.

Conclusion

There has been a real interest and appetite for DE events among Africa Centre members and they have been well-attended and well-received across the board. The quality and diversity of events and participants at these events has been commended and the regularity of activities has certainly contributed to the positive reputation that the Africa Centre has developed in recent years. However, several respondents described the efforts of the DE programme as being quite 'events-heavy' and this is something that should be taken into account when designing the timetable for the final year of the Strategic Plan.

Section 4

Emerging Issues for the Future Direction of the DE Programme

Section 4: Emerging Issues for the Future Direction of the DE programme

While the majority of the data collection for this research was concerned with the DE programme within the Africa Centre, the adoption of open-ended questions within a semi-structured approach led to the generation of additional data about the wider context in which it operates. Although the brief of the research specifically concerns the DE Strategic Plan, the structure within which it functions has a direct bearing on its work. As a result, it was decided to include this broader section as part of the report, in order to contextualise some of the findings in the area. It should be noted therefore, that much of what follows does not claim to present definitive findings on the future direction for the Africa Centre in Development Education, but acts merely as an initial account of the discourse among stakeholders in the area.

4.1 Unique position of Africa Centre in DE sector

There was consensus among respondents about the unique contribution that the Africa Centre makes to the DE sector in Ireland in the way they illustrate a southern perspective to others. Their status as one of the few migrant-led development organisations also adds credibility and authenticity to their work.

I have genuine high praise for them. They have really changed the face of Development Education in Ireland. There is still a long way to go in terms of making that an absolute reality. But they have started interesting debates in the sector and are not afraid to put ideas out there even if they are not liked (Research participant, 2011).

What they do is really good. They engage at a national level and are able to deliver projects on the ground for African people with African people (Research participant, 2011).

They provide a strong programme. The Africa Centre has made a difference in providing a different perspective to DE here in Ireland (Research participant, 2011).

In a short space of time, they have become **the** representative body for Africans in Ireland, that's a major achievement (Research participant, 2011).

It is precisely because of this unique perspective and their strong potential that many participants advised future strategising on the issue of membership development is needed to be made a priority in the future. Anecdotal evidence suggests that elements of membership development are looked after by the Development Education team, even though strictly speaking, this is not part of their job description. Research indicated that the Africa Centre should clearly articulate a plan for the future mobilisation of their membership, as this will benefit the sector overall. It is important to note that respondents did not feel this was a project that was appropriate for the DE team to take on at this time, moreover it was one that should be prioritised by the management of the Africa Centre.

The Development Education programme of the Africa Centre is quite strong, but they are lacking a little bit of progress in some other areas. There is more for the Africa Centre than just development education. The DE programme dimension is the strongest one, but the added value of the other areas they do, for the sector as a whole is not as visible as it could be. For example, their work on community empowerment is not as strong. If, for example, asylum seekers were engaged more, it would have a positive knock on effect on development work. We would have a constituency of involved minorities through the sector. The lack of progress on some areas of the AC plan has impacted on their Development Education work (Research participant, 2011).

The Africa Centre are doing a lot with limited capacity, but they really could be doing more to exploit the interest from the Diaspora community (Research participant, 2011).

Capitalising on the interest and appetite of their members could be realised by both a membership strategy and allowing time for critical reflection on what membership of the Africa Centre actually entails.

Similarly, many recommendations were made in relation to management structures mobilising the volunteers of the Africa Centre to a greater extent. It should be mentioned

that volunteers have played a significant role in the DE activities to date, they have been engaged into the work of the sector by being involved at events, participating in the DE working group and at focus group discussions for designing the educational pack. It should also be noted that anecdotal evidence suggests that it is quite difficult to engage volunteers in the work of the centre without offering a small monthly stipend for their work and this can present some financial challenges for the centre.

As outlined in the training section, there is also huge scope for partnerships within the DE sector to be renewed and cultivated. With so much similar work being done in the area, it would be very important not to 'double up' on specific initiatives. It is interesting to note that throughout the data collection process, representatives of NGO's in the sector were very open to working with the Africa Centre on deepening their relationship and offering support for their activities. It should be remembered that the Africa Centre are already involved in many linkages with the sector through membership of Dóchas and IDEA and in serving on its national council. They are also a member of advisory committee of the NYCI's development education programme.

In addition to their work on membership development and linkages, respondents also cited the areas of youth work⁸, politics, a code of corporate governance and campaigning more on the issue of racism as areas they would like to see the Africa Centre concentrate on in the future. Again, respondents did not feel that these are areas for the DE team to focus on, but that significant commitment from management in these related fields would benefit and strengthen the existing DE programme.

In 2011, the Africa Centre will be able to avail of relevant research which can inform future planning in the area. Firstly, Irish Aid has commissioned a review of the DE strategy, although a more in-depth sectoral review is due to take place in 2011. The review will focus on reports, information and submissions, but it is likely that there will be some liaison with the sector as well. When the outcome of this review is known, it will shape future planning and provide an indication of priorities for Irish Aid going forward. The timing of this review could be quite advantageous to the Africa Centre as they will have up to date information which can assist them in formulating strategy. Furthermore, the Africa Centre has

⁸ It is important to note that efforts to establish a youth group have already begun in the Africa Centre.

commissioned their own research on the African perspective within development education and these findings will also help shape future direction in the area.

4.2 The Africa Centre's Development Education Team

As outlined above, the Africa Centre as an organisation was commended very highly during the evaluation. However, unilateral praise was reserved for the members of the Development Education team, for their dedication, commitment and enthusiasm for the job.

I got everything I needed from them. They are very responsive, they value what you do, they deliver what they say they will and are very easy to work with. They give everything they can within their job. They work very long hours. There is no more support that anybody there could give people. Their whole persona is supportive, it values people. The staff really make the Africa centre. Top marks (Research participant, 2011).

My experience, they were super. Really good. Great support and well organised (Research participant, 2011).

I would just like to stress the high quality of the work that they do and the high regard that they are held in (Research participant, 2011).

They are very committed, both personally and professionally, to issues of global justice (Research participant, 2011).

The data also revealed the appreciation of many NGO representatives for the 'sheer energy and commitment' the DE team also bring to their organisations work, by supporting events, active participation, attending meetings and serving on national boards and working groups. However, while the data clearly showed the high regard the members of the DE team are held in, it also revealed a common finding that respondents felt they were 'over-stretched' and taking on too many responsibilities within the Africa Centre itself.

I sometimes get the impression, the DE team is sometimes engaged with activities of the Africa centre that are not just development education and this sometimes impacts on their work. The DE team has to guard itself against this (Research participant, 2011).

The DE team is very strong. But they are a victim of their strength, they take on too much and do jobs that they shouldn't do (Research participant, 2011).

While there was sympathy for the fact that the Africa Centre is a small organisation and it was common for lines to be blurred between job descriptions, it was clearly articulated by respondents that the DE team should be allotted structured time to reflect on the direction of their work. Forms of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) were suggested in order to avoid 'burn-out', a genuine concern in a programme that is considered to have become quite 'events-heavy' and 'busier and busier' in recent years.

I think they have been investing energy in development education, but not investing in their own training and capacity. Personal professional development a few times a year should be prioritised as part of their workload (Research participant, 2011).

4.3 Resource Development

As outlined above, as a migrant-led organisation the Africa Centre is well placed within the DE sector to be able to produce unique and meaningful resources for their work. In keeping with this, several respondents mentioned that they would like to see more African resources, i.e. more material published by Africans themselves. This could be accommodated through some of the following ways.

Website and Online Presence: Construction of a new website for the Africa Centre is currently underway, but as this was not known to many respondents, several recommendations were made for improvement to the current website. These can be taken into account for the new website. Firstly, it was felt that there was not enough information on the site about the specific DE work that the Africa Centre undertakes or indeed their campaigns, research or policy work. While respondents did not feel that the DE team could be expected to keep it regularly updated as a result of their heavy workload, they did feel that a volunteer with relevant expertise could have been recruited to fill this gap. Similarly, while the Africa Centre's establishment of a Facebook page was commended, this too was seen as an under-developed resource. A separate page for Development Educators was suggested where they could access resources, information and news about upcoming events. A good website and online presence would boost the profile of the centre and was

seen to be a basic pre-requisite for engaging with current information dissemination practices.

DE Pack for Schools: A specific area where respondents would like to see greater commitment is in the provision of a Development Education Pack to schools as well as a clear statement of intent as regards the services it plans to offer to teachers and students. It is important to note that the DE pack is very close to completion and when it is available it is hoped that this will clarify what supports and services the Africa Centre is able to offer schools. It is recommended that in the meantime, an invitation is extended to a current teacher to join the DE pack advisory group, in order to re-vitalise the development process which is admittedly behind schedule according to the Strategic Plan. A teacher with current knowledge of the main concerns of development and intercultural education will bring useful and practical feedback about how the pack can be utilised in the classroom. Further thinking about how the pack should be delivered in schools will also help the work of the DE team in this regard. In various internal reports it is referenced that the year group of Transition Year and the 3rd year subject of CSPE are all potential targets for the focus of the pack. It is recommended that the transversal nature of Development Education, i.e. its capacity to permeate through all subjects on the curriculum should be kept in mind when choosing such target groups. It is further recommended that a section specifically for schools, with relevant resources and links, be created on the new Africa Centre website

Additional resources: The Africa Centre hopes to investigate more creative forms of resource production over the coming year, for example, animation, documentaries and DVD's.

4.4. The Challenge of Impact Assessment in the Development Education Sector

It is clear that monitoring and evaluating processes in DE can generate significant data which is integral to capacity building and developing meaningful impact for practitioners.

However, how this monitoring and evaluation should be carried out is not always as clear. In the context of a challenging funding climate, it was felt by many NGO representatives that the issue of impact assessment and the generation of performance indicators would be a crucial one for the Development Education sector as a whole in 2011. Discourse among

research respondents on this issue was very interesting and while it is evident that further research is needed in this area, some preliminary issues are introduced here.

4.4.1 The perceived 'uniqueness' of Development Education

There was concern among many stakeholders in the research process, that any templates for performance indicators that might be developed for the sector in the future could be too generic to be of any real use to DE programmes who do not have a 'product' in the traditional sense of the word.

If the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem begins to look like a nail. What happens is that people have an accounting or evaluative tool and the tool comes from a way of thinking that doesn't fit, but then the tool then determines the series of activities (Research participant, 2011).

You should be allowed to follow new goals and objectives as they emerge. You can't be too linear about the way in which you monitor work (Research participant, 2011).

This concern is rooted in the fact that DE is concerned with attitudinal and behavioural change, neither of which are easily quantifiable or have tangible outputs. Moreover, real educational change happens over long periods of time and should be measured in different timeframes that donor-driven evaluation models may not be able to do justice to.

Part of the thing about evaluations is that people consider them in a punitive and not appreciative manner. Learning doesn't get rewarded. Engagement does not get rewarded. The only thing that ever seems to get rewarded are particular pre-conceived results. So, if there are emerging results, they don't seem to be as valued as the pre-determined ones (Research participant, 2011).

As a result, it was felt that organisations themselves should take the lead in ascertaining how to measure the impact of their work. While the uniqueness of the sector is certainly an issue to contend with, it was not considered a sufficient barrier to groups articulating their own performance indicators. Rather than wait for tools to be handed to them, it is strongly recommended that Africa Centre research and develop an assessment system that suits their specific requirements.

4.4.2 Preliminary recommendations

- Organisations should engage in **systematic record keeping** which could include event attendance monitoring, keeping track of resources that are sent out, hiring Rapporteurs and external researchers to cover certain events and basic internal evaluation sheets be administered, distributed and collected.
- As outlined in a previous section, organisations should examine how to make the process of **Narrative Enquiry** relevant to their everyday activities. The southern perspective is relatively new in the development education sector in Ireland so therefore narratives as a result of qualitative research enquiry should be a useful starting point for groups beginning an evaluative process.
- A seminar on **basic research methods** for Africa Centre members could be facilitated as a way of equipping members with fundamental research skills in order to assist staff with some of their work in this area. African development educators could learn data collection skills in survey and question design, interview tips and focus group organisation.
- It is important not to try and evaluate every single element of the DE programme. It is useful to choose one or two main events during a particular timeframe, develop evaluation tools for them and draw conclusions from those findings. It is essential not to fall into **the trap of 'over-researching'**. This is a pertinent concern for the Africa Centre as they have a relatively small and contained membership base who may not be interested in participating in constant evaluation procedures.
- It is necessary **to be realistic** in the aims and objectives of the evaluation, the Africa Centre is a small organisation, it is important to be pragmatic about the extent of the change that can occur within contained time periods and the level of impact that can be measured.
- While the Africa Centre should take the lead in developing their own performance indicators in the coming year, it is also important that they liaise with some of their **partner organisations** who are engaged in similar endeavours in the area. In particular, consultation with Irish Aid should be considered as they have committed to 'support efforts, national and internationally, to develop coherent benchmarks to measure the impact and effectiveness of development education interventions'

(Irish Aid – Strategy Plan 2007-2011 Development Education). Similarly, the European Network for Development Education are planning a summer school this year on ‘Evaluation and Impact’ and representation from the Africa Centre at this event would be invaluable.

Section 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

From the very beginning of the data collection, the excellent reputation of the Africa Centre and the high regard in which they are held in the sector, emerged very clearly. The positive outlook and strong commitment of staff, in particular the Development Education team was obvious throughout all phases of the research. In a very short space of time, the ambitious and innovative work of the Africa Centre to challenge and change negative stereotypes of Africa has ensured they have created a unique space for themselves within the DE sector in Ireland.

The relevance criterion assesses the extent to which the objectives and activities of the project respond to the needs of the target group and therefore the significance of the project can be assessed by the level of usage and demand for the resource from various organisations and individuals. The level of appetite, response and engagement among Africa Centre members is also a significant indicator of the importance of the services that they provide. Engagement in the activities of the Africa Centre has brought a sense of renewed confidence and capacity among many of its members, however, there is still a lot of work to be done in this regard and it is imperative that this capacity be built upon, followed up and developed in the next phase of the Strategic Plan.

The fact that the Development Education activities are part of a wider project within the Africa Centre is also significant with regard to both effectiveness and sustainability. The credibility and structural support that the Africa Centre brings to the DE programme are critical for the future success of its work, however a more distinct identity for the DE team is now needed in order for it to grow to its full potential in the medium to long-term.

Overall, while the time-frame for certain activities within the Strategic Plan may have to be slightly re-adjusted, there is substantial commitment and progress being made on the four main objectives outlined at the start of this report.

5.2 Recommendations

Section 1

- It is recommended that when future research is commissioned in relation to this programme, it should not take place between the months of December and January, as a result of the difficulties in accessing research respondents during the holiday period.

Section 2

- The Africa Centre should be supported and resourced in their efforts to continue and develop the provision of their DE training courses; 'Training for Trainers' and 'Working with the Media'.
- In relation to the 'Training for Trainers' course, future strategising is needed in order to provide structured follow-ups and opportunities for the participants, as well as re-designing the course to ensure that various levels of interest and ability are catered for.
- In relation to the 'Working with the Media' course, greater number of graduates are needed in order to begin to effect real change in media representation in Ireland.

Section 3

- The Africa Centre should be supported and resourced in continuing their other successful DE activities namely the Moonlight Talks, the Exploring Africa Course, the Annual lecture and when appropriate, the conference.
- It is recommended that a strategy be put in place for the future of the 'Africa Also Smiles' campaign, which prioritises the identification of a target audience and more in-depth involvement from members on a personal level.

- Issues relating to time-management at certain events need to be addressed, with sufficient time for debate, discussion, feedback and networking built into any future initiative.

Section 4

- A position of Membership Development Officer should be created, supported and resourced, in order to greater facilitate the effective and meaningful participation of Africa Centre members in the Development Education Sector in Ireland.
- The Africa Centre should develop an organisational policy that commits to supporting the continuous professional development of their DE staff.
- The work of the Africa Centre in relation to schools should be developed and articulated more clearly and if it becomes relevant, schools included as an additional target group in future drafts of the Strategic Plan.
- The development of a DE pack for schools should be prioritised under current work plans, as it is behind schedule according to the timeframe outlined in the Strategic Plan.
- Research into relevant resource development, including the potential diversification of mediums, needs to be undertaken.
- Further research is needed into the development of effective, relevant and context-appropriate impact-assessment tools for the work of the DE programme in Africa Centre. Furthermore, the Africa Centre should work closely with partner organisations such as Irish Aid and IDEA, both of whom are carrying out similar investigations in the coming year.

Section 6

Appendices

Appendix 1: Research Respondents

Representative(s) from the following organisations participated in the Mid-Term Review

- Africa Centre Staff
- Africa Centre Members
- Comhlámh
- Dóchas
- Debt and Development Coalition Ireland
- IDEA
- Irish Aid (*for fact-finding purposes*)
- Numerous facilitators from training courses

Appendix 2: Overview of Training for Trainers Course Content

- Introduction to Development Education
- Facilitation Skills
- Use of Music
- Campaigns and Advocacy
- Intercultural Education
- Use of Images and Messages
- Practise Session
- Workshop on Debt

Appendix 3: List of Organisations involved in Africa Centre's DE Programme (2008-2010)

- ACSONI
- Comhlámh
- Concern
- Debt and Development Coalition Ireland
- Dóchas
- Dtalk
- Galway One World Centre
- IDEA
- Kimmage Development Studies Centre
- Latin America Solidarity Centre
- NASC, The Irish Immigrant Support Centre Cork
- National Youth Council of Ireland
- Trócaire