

Comhlámh Annual Report 2010

Connects Informs Educates Campaigns



Comhlámh – an introduction

Comhlámh is a dynamic, independent membership organisation working together with development workers, volunteers and activists. We are committed to advocating for a just and equitable world, setting standards and promoting good practice.

Ours is the belief that people acting in solidarity can change the structures of global injustice and poverty. Through awareness raising, research, education and training we empower individuals to take effective action to address global inequality.

As the Irish Association of Development Workers, we protect the interests of people working in development and for human rights. Our work is informed by their experiences.

Comhlámh's mission is to challenge our society on the root causes of global poverty and inequality and empower people to demand equity in global relations.

Comhlámh's vision is of a just, equitable and sustainable world.

Comhlámh commits to a range of values that impact on those that we work with. We believe in partnership and solidarity with the Global South; in justice, equality and empowerment. We advocate for active citizenship and critical engagement, challenging perspectives in a spirit of partnership that respects and promotes diversity and interculturalism. Underlying principles in achieving these are to invest in people, to be accountable and to promote sustainable development and respect for human rights.

As an organisation, Comhlámh's role is to be a critical voice on development and global justice by articulating the case for global equality through challenging public understanding on the root causes of poverty and inequality. Ultimately Comhlámh strives to build the will to change the structures that cause global injustice.

Acknowledgements

Comhlámh would like to acknowledge the following funders for supporting our work in 2010;

- Irish Aid
- Trócaire
- VSO Ireland
- European Commission
- Community Foundation Ireland
- Leonardo
- IDEA

Letter from the Chairperson

2010 may have been characterised by the phrase 'going forward' but for many it was a year that resembled anything but progress. After years of unparalleled growth, prosperity, and virtual full employment, Ireland's economy ground to a shuddering halt and a history that we had thought was behind us; a history of emigration, lost opportunity and joblessness returned.

For a second year in a row the people had to endure a stringent economic budget as the country fell further into national debt. The overseas budget did not escape and after being disproportionately cut in 2009 was again hit in 2010. 'Going forward', it is likely that the situation will get worse before it will get better.

While there may seem to be very few reasons to be hopeful we must continue to be. I think in times like these we must take encouragement from those we work in solidarity with in the Global South who despite their daily challenges, whether they be economic, social or political never lose hope and endeavour regardless. As a nation, Ireland has met adversity in the past and has endured it and we have encountered challenges far greater than the ones we now face and have overcome them. Our present will not be any different.

As an agency, Comhlámh has had to remain unerring in these uncertain times and it is a credit to the dedication of the Staff and the Director that despite falling budgets they have continued to work tirelessly in making the organisation an effective and industrious agent of change, working towards our mission of challenging society on the root causes of global poverty and inequality and empowering people to demand equity in global relations. Comhlámh is a membership organisation and it is also a credit to the encouragement and assistance that it receives from its committed members and supporters that have helped ensure we remain a critical voice on development and global issues.

As we continue into the future I would like to see our current economic environment not as a constraint, but rather as an opportunity, particularly as we enter into the run up to the development of a new strategic plan. I would like to see it as an opportunity to work even closer with our constituents, our members and our supporters; an opportunity to reflect on our work and to re-imagine what we do and how we can do it better; and finally as an opportunity to appreciate what we have, what we hold dear and what we will not let go - our vision of a more just, equitable and sustainable world.

Ronan Moore
Chairperson

Letter from the Director

I vowed to myself when putting pen to paper that I would not mention the "tough economic times" that we lived through in 2010 and, are indeed, going to live through for another couple of years, however it cannot be done! The last year was a major challenge for Comhlámh, as it was across the sector. The Act Now on 2015 campaign was undoubtedly responsible for lower cuts in Official Development Assistance, a considerable relief compared to the cuts in 2009. This, however, did not mean that Comhlámh was not impacted upon. We did review our programmes in 2010; restructuring the Volunteering Options and Membership and Support Services Programmes into the Volunteering Options and Development Workers Programme. This presented a challenge to management and staff that was assumed in a very positive way.

The Development Education Team, in a multi annual funding programme, was not exposed to the same turbulence. Innovative programmes were sustained alongside the commencement of a new European Commission funded project entitled Alternatrade looking to address issues relating to EU Trade Policies and how they impact on the Global South. The Protection of Interests of Development Workers project continued to provide on-going advice and information with regard to entitlements for development workers. The Operations Team provided excellent on-going support to all staff in their areas of work.

We do need to reflect on good things that happened in 2010; this report is a testament to Comhlámh's achievements in tough times. Comhlámh also celebrated its 35th anniversary in 2010 and was delighted to be able to do so with our Honorary Patron, Mary Robinson as our keynote speaker at the annual Development Forum on Global Justice.

A very strong tribute must be paid to all staff across the organisation for their commitment to Comhlámh when we experienced turbulent times and considerable uncertainty with regard to our funding and the security of their positions. Despite the initial "trembles" at the beginning of the year with considerable delays in our funding and similar "tremors" at the end of the year, the team maintained their dedication and commitment to the organisation.

I would also like to thank the Board for their interest, support and commitment to the staff and organisation in 2010. As this has been a challenging year it has presented a number of "curve balls" to them and they have constantly risen to the challenges.

Finally, I would like to thank you, the members, for your on-going and sustained interest in making Comhlámh what it is. We are here because of you; we support you and are supported by your engagement with us as members, volunteers and activists in the work that we do.

Deirdre Murray
Director

Development Education Programme

Comhlámh's Development Education Team is committed to development education, raising awareness and promoting critical discussions around development and global justice issues, drawing on the experience, knowledge and commitment of development workers, volunteers and activists.

We believe that their energy and enthusiasm should be channelled into public engagement to promote and advocate for a more just and equitable world. During 2010, we aimed to achieve this through the four following objectives.

1. SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT WORKERS, VOLUNTEERS AND ACTIVISTS TO ADVOCATE FOR A MORE EQUITABLE WORLD

CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT TRAINING

In 2010, the Development Education Team continued develop the development education component of *Coming Home Weekends* (CHW) and pre departure courses, and provided continuous engagement inputs into the CHWs in June and October and inputs to EIL and UCDDVO trainings for post-placement volunteers. We believe this work is vital to support people who see their involvement in development as part of a longer-term commitment, which begins before their overseas placement and does not end on returning to Ireland.

We also developed a new *What Next* course, to provide members and supporters with practical skills to support their participation in development, advocacy and campaigning from Ireland. This course was held twice in 2010 and both courses were described as *"having met and exceeded expectations"*. They covered topics such as media skills, new technologies, campaigning and messaging and had a capacity of 10 participants allowing for personalised support. Participants said the course *"increased confidence in speaking about issues in development"*; *"it helped me develop skills that will be of great use in the future"*.

Our ability to influence and generate interest in development issues and commitment to development in Ireland was also evidenced by invitations from other organisations to provide inputs and development education workshops on a range of issues to their key target groups. In partnership with organisations such as Suas, VMM, Viatores Christi, LASC, ICTU, EIL, UCDDVO and others we successfully trained 259 people by providing twenty workshops on topics including an Introduction to Development, Trade Justice, Aid and Development, Solidarity and Consumer Power, Campaign Skills and Continuous Engagement.

FIRST WEDNESDAY DEBATES SERIES

Our ever popular First Wednesday debates continued in 2010, thanks to the invaluable support of one of our committed volunteers, Arthur Gaffney. The debates enabled

attendees to examine issues such as; whether we can afford aid in this time of financial crisis; whether countries should use large dams to develop; and whether ethical gifts are patronising or positive pressures; with valuable inputs by experts from these areas and great engagement and critical discussion among participants. We also began to record elements of the debates to create an online resource which will support our online friends to think more about these issues. We hope this development will further extend our reach and in the words of one attendee, help people *"think about the issues, it's not all black and white"*.



First Wednesday Debate: We can't afford overseas aid in times of crises with Jim Power, Joan Burton and Justin Kilcullen.

CAMPAIGNS, ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS RAISING

Comhlámh recognises the vital importance of Development Education activities leading to real action and active citizenship and for this reason our campaigning and policy work is situated in our Development Education Team. 2010 was an exciting year for us in the areas of campaigning, advocacy and awareness raising for many reasons.

For many years we have worked on trade justice. We believe in the need to reform global trade rules, and Europe's trade policy, to ensure that developing countries can make their own economic choices and work towards trading their way out of poverty. In particular we have raised awareness about Europe's overall trade strategy, "Global Europe", and about free trade agreements which Europe is negotiating with some of the poorest countries in the world, known as Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs).

In 2010 we strengthened this ongoing work. We developed a new 3 year awareness raising project on EU trade policies in partnership with 4 other European organisations, Traidcraft UK, Oxfam Germany, WEED Germany and AITEC France. We also welcomed the increased support to our Development Education and Campaigning Programming from Trócaire.

These new partnerships are providing us with opportunities to share resources and maximise the impact of our trade justice work. They allowed us to research and provide our members and supporters with evidence based policy work and engaging campaign tools. This work formed the basis for our campaigning and awareness raising activities. It was also used for our significant policy and advocacy work, which involved lobbying policy makers and politicians at key moments through face to face meetings and correspondence.



Helping the farmer get to the market, Alternatrade campaign material.

TRADE JUSTICE

Throughout the year we continued to be the main organisation in Ireland which speaks out for Trade Justice. We continued to work on EPAs, raising awareness of the concerns of ACP countries and pushing for Ireland to take a strong position on the need for these agreements to promote development. Positively, there has been some critical reflection at EU level on EPAs in 2010, and a growing acknowledgement of the need for a new approach, and for alternatives. Many ACP countries are still holding out and refusing to sign up to these unfair trade deals. The solidarity and support which ACP countries and trade justice movements receive from civil society across Europe, including Ireland, has contributed to their capacity to maintain such a strong position and insist on their right to define their own economic policies.

Comhlámh also continued to look more broadly at the European trade policy known as “Global Europe” which dictates the content and aim of Europe’s trade agreements with developing countries. Through our work in the EU project, we examined an emerging area of EU trade policy, the Raw Materials Initiative. We highlighted how EU trade and investment policies are limiting the ability of countries in the Global South to use trade sustainably to lift millions out of poverty. Europe is trying to prevent countries from processing their raw materials such as leather and valuable minerals like copper, into more valuable products, or to make more money by taxing their exports, as well as limiting these countries ability to regulate investment in the public interest.

EPAS PETITION AT AFRICA DAY

In 2010, we used festivals and key public events to allow us reach new audiences. In May, we attended the Africa Day celebrations in Iveagh Gardens where we handed out 1,000 flyers on Trade Justice and the EPA trade agreements. At this event over 300 people discussed trade with our Trade Justice Group volunteers and signed a petition to the Minister for Development calling on him to raise the concerns of ACP countries on EPAs in Europe.

FESTIVAL OF WORLD CULTURES

As part of our partnership with Trócaire, we developed an interactive experience for the public to learn more about Trade Justice at the Festival of World Cultures. Our stand

at the festivals new “Trade Routes” area highlighted the negative impact of global trade rules on small businesses and farmers in poor countries in a fun and accessible way. We developed a tin can game and a maze for children where they had to help the farmer get to market, past many obstacles. Over 5,000 people passed through the Trade Routes area of the festival each day. Feedback was very positive with a few people telling us that it was the best stall at the festival, while others commented that it was great to have a stall that engaged children.



Wolfie's Unfair Funfair stall at the Festival of World Cultures, July 2010.

E-ACTIONS AND LOBBYING

In June 2010 the Irish government submitted a number of interim EPAs to the Dáil to be ratified. This was in spite of the positive position adopted by Ireland at EU level that EPAs in their current form don't privilege development enough. This was just days after the East African Community had once again declined to sign the very agreement the Dáil was being asked to ratify. Comhlámh actively engaged with members of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, providing briefings and information in advance of the hearing. Trade Matters met with the Minister for Overseas Development the day before the hearing. We also prepared an e-action to committee members, which was taken by more than 300 people, generating much awareness and interest from them. We attended the hearing, along with Trade Group members.

While we were disappointed that the agreements were ratified by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, it is important to note that a rigorous and detailed debate took place, and it was a positive step that all opposition members of the Committee voted against the ratification of the EPAs. Subsequently, in advance of a crucial EU meeting in October 2010 another joint e-action was undertaken with Trócaire, where 200 people wrote to Minister Power expressing their concern about EPAs. We intend to keep the pressure on in 2011 to make sure Ireland has the best possible position on EPAs.

POLICY INPUTS AND RAW MATERIALS POLICY REPORT

2010 has been a challenging year for Ireland. At this time of economic crisis, it is important that we do not lose our focus on the structural causes of global inequality and use this period to identify the links between inequality at home and abroad, showing support for international cooperation and the mechanisms of global solidarity.

Throughout the year the team provided current and accurate policy updates and briefings to enhance trade justice campaigning work in Ireland and Europe. Our previous briefing paper on EPAs was updated and we inputted regularly into European and Irish policy papers and resources at key national and European moments as well as participating in various policy discussions. In November we launched our policy report *The New Resource Grab* which, using new research commissioned by Comhlámh and our partners, shows how the EU wants to restrict the ability of developing countries to levy taxes on the export of raw materials or to regulate foreign investment. The report has been well received by activists and policy makers alike and we have since presented on it at strategically important events including a side event at the European Development Day in Brussels in December.

ACT NOW ON 2015

The European trend towards disproportionately cutting overseas development assistance budgets at this time of economic stress continued throughout 2010, much to our concern. Throughout the year we supported the Act Now on 2015 campaign demanding that the Irish government keep its promise to spend 0.7% of national income on overseas aid by 2015. We passed on information and actions to our supporters, promoted the campaign at key events and trainings; Comhlámh staff and supporters lobbied their politicians expressing how important they believed our overseas aid to be. The September First Wednesday debate provided a space for development workers and our members to reflect on and debate the continuing importance of Ireland's development cooperation work.



Trade Justice Activists Protesting about EU Trade Policy in Brussels, March 2010.

THE IMF IN IRELAND

Our long history of educating and campaigning on trade justice has often meant that global financial structures and institutions come under scrutiny. As part of that process, the role of the IMF in perpetuating global inequality and its

questionable legitimacy as a lending institution have become clear. It was with great concern that we watched the arrival of the IMF in Ireland. Thus the latter part of the year involved actively engaging as members of the Debt and Development Coalition to draw on their expertise and the lessons learned from the global debt justice movement to debate the role of the IMF in Ireland. The presence of the IMF in Ireland provides the opportunity to make connections between Ireland and other countries that have received loans from the IMF, and to build mutual solidarity, and the challenge for us and other development and global justice organisations in 2011 will be to bring our voice, experience and knowledge to the national discussion and debate on the IMF, and to make local to global links.

2. PROVIDING PATHWAYS FOR VOLUNTEERS AND DEVELOPMENT WORKERS TO BE CONTINUOUSLY ENGAGED WITH GLOBAL JUSTICE ISSUES

Throughout the year we have worked to identify opportunities to engage our core constituency in the volunteering continuum and provide a stepped process of engagement.

GLOBAL TRADE JUSTICE COURSE

The Global Trade Justice Course continues to be extremely popular and was run again over six evenings in 2010. The course was delivered by Comhlámh staff in co-operation with the Trade Justice Group and aimed to inform participants about key issues, perspectives and debates around trade and the developing world. Key actors on trade and development presented to the course, as did a representative of the Department of Trade. Thirty eight participants attended and provided very positive feedback including that they enjoyed the interaction and participation on the course; "excellent, delighted I did it and look forward to learning more". Participants were asked to identify their next steps after the course and they included "continue to learn, look for ways to make small positive changes".

INSPIRING SUPPORTER ACTION COURSE

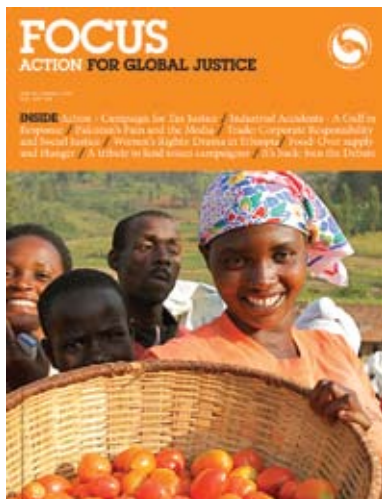
In recognition of the need to learn more about how to mobilise our key supporters and support them to take action, the Development Education Team organised a new 2 day training this year named *Inspiring Supporter Action*. The course was provided as a capacity building opportunity for similar organisations and 20 participants attended representing the Africa Centre, Seomra Spraoi, Friends of the Earth, Gluaiseacht, DDCl, and Climate Camp. The course was very well received with feedback including: "It gave the opportunity and space to reflect on own ideas while also providing some new info on methods and stats etc"; "Put everything I knew in a good context with added inspirational ideas. I liked that I learned from the people who attended rather than just from the speaker".

VOLUNTEER GROUPS

Our volunteer groups provide a way for our supporters to deepen their understanding of development issues, get active and involved, meet like-minded people, to develop skills and gain confidence to take action for global justice.

TRADE JUSTICE GROUP

The Trade Justice Group is a space for people interested in global trade justice to learn more, develop their understanding and thoughts through critical discussion and debate and get involved in raising awareness about this vital development issue. The group also provides support to people interested in developing different skills – public speaking, education, policy and advocacy, communications, campaigns etc. In 2010 activities included: inputting into an EU consultation on the new EU 2020 strategy; distributing flyers; discussing trade justice with the public and asking them to sign a petition at Africa Day; writing letters to the editor and to politicians about EPAs at key moments; attending the Dáil committee debate on EPAs; getting active at the Comhlámh stand at the Festival of World Cultures; supporting the provision of the Trade Justice Course; creating a flyer communicating about trade justice; and holding a table quiz fundraiser and awareness raising event. During 2010 the group also purchased a small portable video camera, with the aspiration to engage more with social media. The camera was used to record clips at the Trade Course this year, and it is hoped the group will develop their skills and create some engaging video clips next year.



Focus issue 86, Autumn 2010.

FOCUS MAGAZINE GROUP

This group is made up of a variety of activists, volunteers and development workers. In 2010, the group planned, wrote, produced and disseminated two issues of *Focus: Action for Global Justice Magazine*. We distribute 4,000 copies of each issue across the country in pubs, bookshops, universities, classrooms, and community groups and other interesting spaces and places. Topics covered by the magazine this year included Hunger, The Congo's Coltan, Palestine, Climate Change, Tax Justice, Corporate Accountability, and Women's Rights.

Focus continues to be Ireland's leading magazine covering development issues, and its content is informed by the interests and overseas experiences of those who are active in the group. Volunteers in the group have the opportunity to hone their analysis and understanding of global justice issues, while working on the whole production cycle of the magazine, from initial conceptualisation, through writing and research, to proof-reading and distribution. The magazine thus functions in part as a capacity building project, enabling

volunteers to develop analytical, technical and writing skills, as well as the capacity to work with a diverse team. In 2010, our first volunteer coordinator worked very hard throughout the year to ensure the magazine was produced to a high quality.

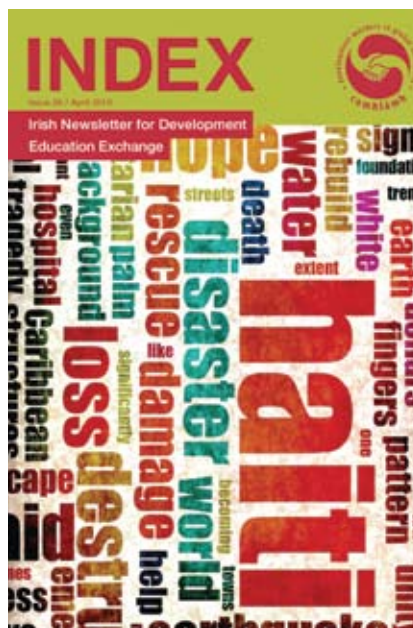
3. ENHANCING CAPACITY AND INFORMATION PROVISION FOR DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION RESOURCES

The *INDEX* Newsletter continued to be the primary newsletter for the Development Education sector. In 2010, we entered an agreement with the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) to include an IDEA page in each issue. This new venture secures the newsletter as an important sectoral resource, developed and edited by a committee representing practitioners in the sector, led by the Comhlámh's Development Education Project Officer.

As mentioned previously, we strive to demonstrate the wealth and variety of development education activity happening in Ireland and development educators across Ireland from Trócaire, the National Youth Council of Ireland, the Africa Centre, the Centre for Global Education Belfast, and the IDEA are involved in deciding what themes and issues to include in each issue.

In 2010, we responded to issues currently arising in the sector and more globally, keeping the three issues of the newsletter produced relevant and up to date. The initial focus was on grappling with the issue of how to evaluate our work and ascertain impact of what is an educational process. The sad occurrence of the earthquake in Haiti, encouraged us to examine how we might as educators respond to such natural disasters to educate and mobilise and finally we looked at the importance of instruments for global solidarity such as the MDGs and overseas development assistance and the challenges they pose to us as Development Educators.



Index issue 26 April, 2010.

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION TRAINING

Along with action oriented campaigns skills trainings, and other development education inputs mentioned above, we provided two specific Development Education trainings in 2010; *Skills in Development Education* and *Exploring Global Issues and Diversity and Development through the Arts*. All trainings included follow up evaluations to identify how past participants were using the skills and knowledge acquired during the course they attended. These evaluations are vital for discovering some elements of the impact of our Development Education work.

SKILLS IN DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

The *Skills in Development Education* course continued to be a popular course with 16 participants acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to become quality Development Educators in our 10-session course held in the spring. The course included practical sessions to provide participants with the opportunity to practice their skills and to get some feedback on their training. Participants responded well to the course with comments including "Great facilitators – loved the various activities"; "Gained skills to educate and run sessions myself".

EXPLORE GLOBAL ISSUES AND DIVERSITY THROUGH THE ARTS

This three day training encouraged educators to use music, dance, art, and drama to explore the challenging issues of global justice, stereotyping, and racism. We ran this course in February 2010 in Froebel College of Education, Blackrock targeting their students as key multipliers for our work. Workshops were guided by skilled arts facilitators exploring ways to use a variety of art forms such as music, drama, and visual arts to explore diversity and global development issues with children. All participants felt the course met their expectations with comments including "I learnt how to approach and teach Dev Ed in an interactive and stimulating way. It gave me great ideas (especially art ideas) and I'm looking forward to using these new techniques in the classroom. It'll also help me to develop DE lesson plans".

4. PROVIDING CRITICAL SPACES THROUGH CONTINUED NETWORKING

Comhlámh recognises the importance of networking to help achieve our aims and share resources as a sector. In the development of our key resources we use a networking approach which works well to produce quality publications.

NETWORKING IN IRELAND

Comhlámh works actively with a variety of organisations and networks to achieve our shared aim of increasing education and action for global justice. Throughout the year we have participated in the IDEA National Council, Dóchas Working Groups, the Centre for Global Education Belfast Working Groups, the Africa Centre Development Education Advisory Group, Trade Matters network, Debt and Development Coalition Ireland. We also participated in the launch of the Clean Clothes Campaign Ireland, whose members include ICTU Global Solidarity, MANDATE (the union of Irish retailers) and Re-Dress. This is a new initiative in which we see much potential and which we hope will grow to play an important

role in Ireland. Through these networks Comhlámh has supported the production of resources and policy positions, and made inputs in conferences, seminars and training, public engagement in active citizenship, and organisational development. We continue to support the Stop Climate Chaos network, NGO Alliance against Racism and the European Network against Racism and to publicise their activities to our members and supporters.

NETWORKING IN EUROPE

We also strengthened European connections through Alternatrade our new EU project and through attending events such as the DG Trade Conference on Trade and Developing Countries in March and the European Development Day in Brussels in December. We are the most active Irish organisation on trade at a European level. We continue to actively participate in the Seattle 2 Brussels Trade Justice Network, the most active network on trade in Europe. In particular we have contributed to work related to proposing alternative trade policy approaches, and to work on raw materials and investment. We are also active in, and informed by, the global network working on the EPAs, contributing to policy briefings and other documents. Trade justice activists and movements from across the globe influence all our campaigns and policy positions.

BLOOM

Bloom: Movement for Global Justice (Comhlámh, Debt and Development Coalition Ireland, Africa Centre and the Latin America Solidarity Centre) continued to flourish in 2010 and was particularly important in providing a platform for organisations and individuals to critique the current global financial crisis. The alliance was formed to try to move beyond issue-based campaigning towards contributing to building a broader global justice movement in Ireland, and has principles of equality, solidarity, sustainability and global interconnectedness at its core. We are particularly concerned with the growing challenge of sustaining political action and activism in an inclusive way on global justice. Key activities in 2010 included a planning day and training in February, meetings on the role and power of corporations and multinationals in society, an activists social evening in July and a very well attended and critical meeting of global justice activists in advance of the Claiming our Future civil society event in October 2010.



Volunteering Options and Development Workers Programme

In 2010, the Volunteering Options and Support Services to Development Workers Programmes in Comhlámh were merged, to strengthen the synergies between the programmes, and maximise resources and impact. The purpose of the Volunteering Options and Development Worker Programme in Comhlámh is greater implementation of good practice standards by sending organisations, volunteers and development workers. This contributes to the overall objective of empowering volunteers and development workers to make a valuable contribution to development, global education and awareness raising.

Throughout 2010, work was undertaken to embed the new structure of the programme within the organisation – there was a significant period of learning within the team, as staff had opportunities to contribute their ideas to achieving overall objectives and subsequently while a transition of some responsibilities took place. In spite of some setbacks including significant funding delays, the VODW team was able to progress and deliver the key objectives of the programme as planned. We reviewed and made improvements to many of our core services and engaged with a large number of volunteers and development workers throughout the year, channelling them on to further engagement opportunities. We improved the process and criteria for engagement with the *Code of Good Practice* (CoP) by signatory organisations and noted a big improvement on meeting the required deadlines from 2009. A summary of other notable achievements during the year is outlined in the following section.

1. SETTING AND PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE STANDARDS

In 2010, work focused on further strengthening the auditing processes linked to the CoP. The CoP self-audit tool was updated to make it more user and print friendly. Additional background information was included on the CoP development and process to make it easier for new organisations to the CoP to understand their involvement. Frequently asked questions and details on the steps to follow in completing the self-audit resulted in fewer questions in 2010 during the time period in which organisations were completing the self-audits. The vast majority of signatory organisations submitted self-audits by the 5th December deadline, with a small number being given a short extension. The 2010 self-audits include data stemming from the new child protection indicators and it will be useful to assess how far organisations have made progress in implementing these, when the reports are analysed in early 2011.

The full list of signatories in Dec 2010 is listed below:

SIGNATORIES
1. A-Z Children's Charity
2. Agape Adventures
3. Alan Kerins Africa Projects
4. Camara Education
5. Chernobyl Children's Project International
6. EIL Intercultural Learning
7. Foundation Nepal
8. Friends of Londiani
9. Global Schoolroom
10. Habitat for Humanity, Ireland
11. Habitat for Humanity, Northern Ireland
12. Hope Foundation
13. Link Community Development
14. Magis Ireland
15. Medical Missionaries of Mary
16. Niall Mellon Township Trust
17. Progressio Ireland
18. SERVE
19. SUAS
20. The Volunteer Projects
21. UCD Volunteers Overseas
22. Umbrella Foundation
23. USIT
24. Viatores Christi
25. Vincentian Lay Missionaries
26. Voluntary Service International
27. Voluntary Services Overseas
28. Volunteer Missionary Movement

In addition to this, eight organisations participated in an external audit of their CoP implementation, with feedback indicating that this had been a very beneficial process. The consultant's reports provide Comhlámh with comprehensive information on organisational needs and areas for improvement - the opportunity assessment plans enabled a review panel to approve appropriate capacity building grants to participating organisations to enable them to undertake work on the areas outlined in the reports. *"We found the external audit process extremely useful and we have already implemented many of the recommendations from Martin. This is really helpful to improve the quality of our programme"*, feedback from an external audit participant.

The Volunteering Options Working Group (VOWG) provided support during the year in further developing the CoP implementation strategy. Discussions primarily focused on working towards a three stage model, to ensure that the CoP continues to develop into a more robust quality assurance process. The VOWG undertook work on developing 'Minimum Standards' within the CoP - issues with the wording of indicators were addressed to ensure clarity of meaning and

to make them more transferable into minimum standards. This area of work will be progressed with support from the external auditing consultant in early 2011.

Alongside work on strengthening the auditing processes, we continued to prioritise creating opportunities for signatory organisations to share good practice and learning, building their capacity to implement the CoP. We organised two peer support meetings during the year and three issues-based workshops on themes of particular interest to organisations – these were a *Critical Incidents* workshop (Jan), *Practical Safeguarding* workshop (June) and a workshop on *Strengthening the link between Volunteering and Development Education* (Oct). A positive outcome of this last workshop was the decision to establish a committee to work further on this issue – the first meeting of this committee took place in Feb 2011, with Comhlámh as convenor. Comhlámh also liaised with Dtalk during 2010 to put in place a more in depth seminar to meet the needs of organisations in the area of organisational preparedness for responding to security situations – this will take place in April 2011. The VODW team also met with organisations regularly throughout the year to brief new staff on the CoP and other support services available, as well as providing ongoing information and support by email/phone.

During the year, providing general support to the sector in developing good practice standards was also a focus of our work. We were represented on the *Safeguard Steering Group* and were also invited to be a member of the *European Year of the Volunteer (EYV) Steering Committee* in 2010/11. This committee met four times during the year, with initial meetings discussing plans for 2011 and how to respond to the four key objectives of the year, namely: Creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Ireland; Empowering organisers of voluntary activities to improve the quality of those activities; Giving recognition to volunteering activities; and To raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering. The VODW PM is a member of a Working Group formed to look at the second of these objectives – Quality in volunteering. The VODW PM also participated in a meeting convened by CONCORD in Brussels on 8th November to explore possible collaboration amongst international volunteer cooperation organisations and supporting bodies in the EU, particularly during EYV. Various opportunities for engagement were discussed and all in attendance agreed it would be useful to have a regular, informal space for sharing and collaboration on issues of common concern.

2. RESPONSIBLE, RESPONSIVE INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING

Throughout the year we gave advice to a large number of people interested in volunteering overseas – this was undertaken by phone, email, at one-to-one advisory sessions and various stand events around the country. A trend we noted during the year was a shift towards enquiries in relation to volunteering for a career in development and more professionals enquiring about using their skills in an overseas capacity, although we still had a significant number of people enquiring about short-term, general skilled

volunteering. *"I cannot compliment Comhlámh enough on the service. I have recommended it to friends and would urge you to continue it if possible". "I had some specific questions in relation to volunteering and you gave very informative answer and also provided supporting leaflets" "The 1-1 follow up was invaluable", participant's feedback on 1:1 advisory service, 3 months post-service.*

We ran two one day *Options and Issues in Volunteering for Development* Courses in collaboration with the *Options and Issues Volunteer Group*, which were held in Dublin and Galway. These courses encourage potential volunteers to think critically about the role of the volunteer in development and to consider the relevant questions to ask in advance of making a decision to volunteer overseas and/or getting involved in Ireland as an alternative to going away. *"I am happy with the day. I have expanded my knowledge greatly and I will therefore be able to make the best decision possible for volunteering". "I found the group interaction excellent. It was great to listen to other peoples' views on development issues", Options and Issues course evaluation comments.*

Demand for our pre-departure training services was again strong in 2010. While in previous years we collaborated with Dtalk to provide two day training for Camara and UCDO volunteers, in 2010, Comhlámh assumed sole responsibility for this service. While this resulted in an increased workload, particularly with regards to administration and logistics, we were able to liaise with each organisation to adapt the programme content to fit the needs of each organisation more effectively. In addition to training for UCDO and Camara, we also provided modules for Global Schoolroom, Outreach Moldova, NUIG Medics and Trinity Global Health Masters Students – a total of 307 volunteers were trained in 2010. Overall improvements to the training programme during the year included the design of a comprehensive intercultural module, which can be adapted for different groups needs. *"Brought together for me a lot of things regarding volunteering – what I need to consider, realistic goals and expectations and to consider everything in a cultural context. I learnt more about the rest of my team and also a greater exploration for my own reasons for going", comment on most important learning from pre-departure training.*

During the year the VODW team continued to develop and update www.volunteeringoptions.org and www.comhlamh.org. An internal review of the volunteering options website content was carried out to identify where changes could be made to improve content and accessibility, with relevant changes being implemented. We also commenced work on building a library of digital footage in order to introduce more interactive material to the website and improved our links to Comhlámh's social media platforms to increase referrals to the site.

During the year the VODW team responded to opportunities to promote the programme and activities in the media. We received coverage in: Galway local newspapers for our Options and Issues Course; interview on Dublin South FM to promote the CoP, website and International Volunteer Day events; interview with Primetime as part of a special report on Security in the Field. In addition we liaised on an

ongoing basis with the Producer and Director of the RTE Ultimate Volunteer Series, giving critical feedback on the show. A significant amount of time was invested in updating the Coming Home Book, Services Leaflet and Careers and Courses booklet to help promote our work and provide useful resources for volunteers and development workers.



Don Mullan, keynote speaker at our International Volunteer Day event in the Mansion House.

3. CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Throughout the year we responded to a large number of queries about Comhlámh support services and ways to engage in development post-placement. It was interesting to note that we tracked a number of people engaging in various different activities through Comhlámh after their initial contact with us, which was a positive affirmation of our signposting services and the degree of interest in both skills and knowledge development, plus sharing of personal experiences, whether through a focus group, giving a talk to prospective volunteers or facilitating some of our training workshops.

As a result of funding delays, the *counselling service* was unfortunately put on hold for the first six months of the year, which resulted in a lower take-up of the service than in previous years. We used the time to develop a formal counselling and debriefing policy paper, to better support this important service into the future and to formally agree provision of services to the Rapid Response Corps. Our *careers service* was conducted primarily through signposting and provision of resources such as the Careers and Courses

leaflet and our IVD seminar in 2010, although we hope to be able to offer limited access to one-to-one sessions again in 2011.

The two *Coming Home Weekends* were a key point of contact for Comhlámh with returning development workers in 2010 - there was a wide spread of placement countries represented including: Haiti, Sudan, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Kosovo, Nigeria, South Africa and Nepal. Participants' professions/programme areas were also quite varied including Accountants, Engineers, Community Development Workers, IT specialists, Nurses and Teacher trainers. A focus group reflecting on the weekends over a period of years was held in October to suggest ways in which this service can continue to meet the needs of returning volunteers and development workers into the future - some very positive feedback was captured along with useful suggestions that will inform the structure and content of the Coming Home Weekends in 2011. *"I just wanted to say thank you very much for your hard work this weekend it helped get me back on track!" "I really enjoyed the weekend - just what I needed! Thanks again for a really lovely experience"*, feedback from CHW participants.

A *Moving Forward Day* was held for 60 of the UCDVO volunteers in September, with significant advance work undertaken to enable the piloting of a structured group debriefing model during the morning session and to enhance the afternoon sessions on intercultural learning and staying engaged upon return. A key objective was to make links with the pre-departure training programme content and to reflect on how the overseas experience had changed their perspectives. The programme was very well received by participants who appreciated the opportunity to come together for the first time since returning from their placements and to hear the perspectives and compare experiences with volunteers that had travelled to other programme countries. *"Small group sessions were invaluable. It was the first time I'd ever properly reflected on my experiences". "That I can volunteer in the future, it doesn't end here. Learning that not everything goes to plan"*, feedback from MFD participants.

Also in September, we provided a one day *group debriefing* for 24 UCC students returning from a six month service-learning placement in developing countries. This day was similarly found to be very useful in reflecting on the learning and personal overseas experiences, as well as providing an opportunity to raise issues that could be fed back to UCC to improve the volunteer experience for future UCC students.

To support the provision of these training days we ran two, *Training of Trainers* Programmes in May and September. The first focused on pre-departure training and the second on group debriefing, with a mix of 28 returned volunteers/development workers and group leaders from UCDVO and Camara being trained in programme methods and content. This will enhance our capacity to offer this type of training into the future.

For *International Volunteer Day* (IVD) 2010 we organised a seminar and reception in the Mansion House on 4th

December – this was postponed until the 22nd January due to the snow, but was still fully subscribed on the day, with the venue full to capacity. The theme of the seminar was “Volunteering: a Stepping Stone to a Career in Development?” The keynote speaker was Don Mullan with a panel consisting of Kate Malone (Concern), Eoin Murray (Trocaire) and Andrew Forde, each sharing personal experiences and journeys of volunteering and working in development and insights to recruitment trends in the development sector. Eilish Dillon (lecturer in Kimmage Development Studies Centre) chaired the seminar, which proved to be a highly engaging and inspiring event, with a high level of audience participation in the questions and answers session and reception afterwards.

4. INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING AND EXCHANGE RE GOOD PRACTICE

In October 2010, the VODW PM attended the IVCO Conference in Singapore. The conference was hosted by the Singapore International Foundation and the theme was ‘Asian Perspectives on International Volunteering’. Additional sub-themes explored included trends in: Youth Volunteering; Climate Change and International Volunteering; International donor perspectives; Reciprocal Volunteering. It was an extremely well organised and fruitful conference, with lots of exchange of ideas and perspectives. The huge increase in interest in youth volunteering among conference participants was to be noted, as in previous years those represented were less involved in this area. Following the conference, information was shared with all sending organisations at the November peer support meeting who were guided on where to download speeches, video clips and relevant reports from the conference.

The VODW PM continued as a member of the Steering group guiding the development of a Code of Good Practice in the UK – we were able to provide guidance to Tourism Concern who is piloting an assisted self-audit process in England and Wales in 2010/11 leading to the *International Volunteering and Gap Year Standard*. Support was also provided to NIDOS who wished to gain further insights to our approaches which may inform implementation strategies for their own new Effectiveness tool – a guide to self assessment on good practice in international development’. During the year we also had some enquiries from organisations based outside of Ireland about signing up to the CoP and adapting our materials.

Comhlámh is represented on the FORUM (International FORUM for Development Service) executive committee by the Director. FORUM aims to share information, develop good practice and enhance co-operation and support between its members, exploring innovative practice and researching key contemporary issues, focusing on organisational learning and improved practice. The information is shared in person, at conferences and via the website. The Director participated in FORUM Board meetings, as well as representing FORUM at a UNV meeting in Bonn to develop plans to promote the International Year of the Volunteer + 10 (IYV + 10) in October and at a multi-regional consultation meeting organised by

UNV to contribute to the development of the publication of the State of the World Volunteerism Report (SWVR). This report is to be published and launched on the 5th December 2011 (International Volunteer Day) at the General Assembly in New York to mark IYV+10.



Julie George (Skillshare International), Iris Almeida-Côté (Canadian World Youth) Nita Kapoor (FK, Norway) Jean Tan (Singapore International Foundation) and Siobhán Sleeman (Comhlámh) – participants at the International Volunteer Cooperation Conference, Singapore, Oct 2010.

PROTECTION OF INTERESTS OF DEVELOPMENT WORKERS

The Protection of Interests of Development Workers Project within Comhlámh aims to ensure that development workers protect their social welfare and pension rights while overseas. Comhlámh administers the Volunteer Development Worker (PRSI) Scheme and the Public Service Pension Scheme for Volunteer Development Workers, on behalf of Irish Aid. We also provide information about all options that may be open to development workers including Voluntary Contributions and being retained on the Irish system under national legislation, and ensure that all sending agencies are aware of the options and inform their volunteers. Comhlámh’s technical expertise in this area is one of the organisation’s core competencies and the project complements the work that Comhlámh undertakes in developing good practice standards in volunteering and development work and in providing comprehensive information and supports to volunteers and development workers before they go overseas and upon return. Comhlámh is able to channel development workers and volunteers that are referred to us by sending organisations and the Department of Social Protection (DSP) into other areas of support available through Comhlámh and to engage them in our Membership activities.

During the year we responded to general queries from volunteers and development workers about the various schemes by phone, email and during one-to-one sessions. Two stand events in DCU and Irish Aid formed part of a strategy to improve general awareness of the schemes and to heighten awareness of broader information and supports available to volunteers and development workers before and after an overseas placement. We also validated eligible development workers for the Free Fees Initiative for Higher Education grants, Local Authority grants and allowances,

maternity benefit, and service overseas during the year, as well as monitoring policy developments that might impact on development workers.

In November, a seminar was organised for returned development workers on planning for their future and 'Surviving the Recession: Simple Steps to transform your finances' – this session was delivered by John Lowe, the Money Doctor who provided a practical, jargon free, interactive seminar on improving financial fitness targeted specifically at development workers. Managing finances can be particularly challenging for returning development workers in the current economic climate, as many are finding it difficult to secure employment immediately upon return, thus making it difficult to retain a long-term view with regard to their finances. The seminar provided useful tips to improve financial fitness, with a positive spill-over on personal well-being.

In 2010, we co-hosted an informal information seminar for sending organisations with the Department of Social Protection, which provided the opportunity for representatives that already had an initial understanding of the schemes – to come together and discuss common issues and raise questions of particular concern. The seminar was held in the Irish Aid Volunteering and Information Centre on the 3rd November and there were a total of 13 participants, from a variety of sending organisations.

In 2010, Comhlámh delivered four information sessions as part of Dtalk's Initial Preparation Courses, reaching an audience of 70 development workers and volunteers. As well as providing information about protecting rights to social welfare, these sessions focused on how development workers can protect their own interests before, during and after assignment and are designed to be practical and participatory and share advice that we ourselves have heard from returned development workers. Participants were also introduced to the *Comhlámh Code of Good Practice and Volunteer Charter* and the *Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages*.

MEMBERSHIP

In 2010, volunteers and development workers were encouraged to remain involved and aware of the broad range of opportunities and pathways to continuous engagement available to them, whether by email at initial contact, e-LINK, our publications, our website and through our services and events. New members received an initial Welcome Pack with the *Coming Home* and *What Next?* booklets, which provide a wealth of information on various ways to continue working on development issues from home and regular copies of *Focus* and *INDEX*. Comhlámh events and *Coming Home Weekends* also presented an invaluable opportunity to meet like-minded people, to network and establish links with the sector in Ireland.

35TH ANNIVERSARY AND DEVELOPMENT FORUM

Comhlámh celebrated its 35th Anniversary in May 2010 with the annual *AGM and Development Forum on Global Justice for a New Decade*. Our Honorary Patron, Mary Robinson, delivered the key note speech on Climate Justice, with

workshops on Food, Trade and Health Justice. A panel of speakers presented on Action to Activism, their pathways to engaging in volunteerism and activism. There was a great attendance at the event, and some of the original members of Comhlámh attended the day.

Comhlámh shared its Birthday Party with Kimmage Development Studies Centre and Afri, both organisations also celebrating 35th anniversaries at a party in the evening with many old and new friends joining in the festivities.



Mary Robinson, Honorary Patron and keynote speaker with Niall Crowley, chair of the Development Forum on Global Justices, May 2010.

COMHLÁMH AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Comhlámh maintained its presence on a range of social media platforms; Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube. Updates are posted on these networks on a daily basis, sharing information about Comhlámh events and activities, courses and publications. It is also a forum that enable sharing of other relevant information on development issues.

COMHLÁMH IN PRINT

Bill Jackson (one of the founding members of Comhlámh) has been interviewed for two books that will be of interest to Comhlámh. Both concern the early and more recent days of Ireland's aid for the developing world. Ronan Murphy, formerly Irish Ambassador to Austria and Russia and former Director General of the Development Cooperation Directorate at the Department of Foreign Affairs will be examining the history of Ireland's development assistance; while Kevin O'Sullivan of UCD's School of History and Archives will examine the history of Irish foreign aid, its structure, motivations and relationship to broader foreign policy. Both authors interviewed Bill extensively, in particular about APSO's contributions to the aid programme during his time

as Chief Executive. He was able to stress in the interviews that he regards APSO's close association with the setting up of Comhlámh as one of the most important of those contributions.

GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Comhlámh, as a member of Dóchas strives to achieve compliance with the *Code of Corporate Governance*. On an annual basis nominations are sought for the Board of Directors based on a skills matrix ensuring a comprehensive range of knowledge and experience is represented. Elections take place, as appropriate, at the annual AGM and the Board of Directors is the primary decision making body for Comhlámh members between AGMs. The Board is responsible for decisions on the plans, the budgets and the policies, defining the scope of Comhlámh's programmes and is accountable to the membership. On a daily basis the organisation is managed by the Executive Director. At the first Board meeting following the AGM, a Chairperson, Treasurer and Staff Liaison Officer are nominated. The role and responsibilities of all Directors is set out in Comhlámh's Governance Manual. Board members are provided with initial induction and training, as and when, appropriate. The Board meet on a 6 weekly basis reviewing performance and financial reports; ensuring that the organisation is performing and delivering as per proposals and the Strategic Plan; adhering to financial procedures; remaining solvent while expending the budget according to the annual plan; and complying with all legal requirements. Budgeting and expenditure are carried out under the principle of cost effectiveness. The Board work to an annual work plan and have structured into that an opportunity to review their performance and to prepare for renewal. Comhlámh has a Risk Register and Action Plan for the entire organisation that is reviewed on a six monthly basis, with some risk mitigation lying with the Executive Director, staff and the Board

Comhlámh continued its engagement and dialogue with the CIDD organisations (Comhlámh, IDEA, Dtalk and Dóchas). We have come together to ensure a structured collaboration in order to strengthen and improve the Irish civil society sector and its development practice in Ireland and overseas. Each organisation has a clear constituency and mandate with regard to: undertaking and articulating issues; undertaking advocacy; setting policies and standards; building individual capacity; building organisational capacity; assessing progress of the development sector and sharing learning of the development sector

Comhlámh adheres to the *Code of Conduct on Images and Messages*, and makes every attempt to proof all use of images against the Code and reports annually on this to Dóchas.



Alice-Mary Higgins, Niall Crowley, Mary Robinson, Stephen Rigney and Simon Holmes at the Development Forum on Global Justices, May 2010, celebrating Comhlámh's 35th Anniversary.



Comhlámh members at 35th Anniversary Development Forum, May 2010.

Comhlámh Development Workers in Global Solidarity

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE

Detailed Income and Expenditure Account year ended 31st December 2010

	2010		2009	
Income	€	€	€	€
Irish Aid – DEU		170,390		184,377
NGO Funding		49,207		17,223
Irish Aid - CSU - Volunteering Options and Development Workers		389,632		430,032
European Commission		34,312		-
Philanthropic Foundations and Trusts		1,500		-
Protection of Interest for RDW's (Including Contributions Payments)		225,144		136,665
AGM Income and Members Weekend		1,444		625
Courses Income		6,330		6,554
Membership		5,908		9,551
Donations		1,908		27,317
Sale of Resources		396		4,785
Administrative Income		8,164		1,097
Services		15,600		8,624
Bank Interest Received		2,419		4,988
		-----		-----
		912,354		831,838
Expenditure				
Volunteering Options and Development Workers	421,069		477,389	
Development Education	218,498		222,990	
Campaigning & Research	5,149		16,192	
Protection Interest for RDW's	213,064		130,392	
Alternatrade	31,204		-	
	-----		-----	
		888,984		846,963
		-----		-----
Operating surplus/(deficit)		23,370		(15,125)
Other provisions	-	-		(45,000)
		-----		-----
		23,370		(60,125)
		-----		-----
Surplus/(deficit) on ordinary activities		23,370		(60,125)
		=====		=====
	-		-	

