

Comhlámh Annual Report 2008

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.

Letter from the Chairperson

2008 will be a year remembered by many as the year the global economy took a downturn and the word “recession” crept into everyday language. At home in Ireland, the building boom bubble had burst and everywhere purse-strings were tightening. Many of us in the NGO sector became concerned about how the livelihoods of those in the developing world, already precarious in many poverty-stricken countries, would fare with weakening government commitments on overseas aid and the declining generosity of donors.

Comhlámh, while keeping abreast of the bigger picture, had in fact a very busy year with some major structural changes happening internally throughout 2008. After an intensive recruitment campaign, the board was delighted to appoint Deirdre Murray in March, as the new Director of the organisation. A returned development worker in Ethiopia and former active Comhlámh member, Deirdre commenced in May and immediately turned her attention to sourcing new office accommodation for the organisation – a long-outstanding priority for all those working with Comhlámh. Around the same time, the 2005-2007 Strategic Plan was undergoing an external evaluation so change was in the air. On a mild late September evening, staff and members - past and present – with friends, shared their last glass of wine in the old Camden Street offices and toasted a new future. Ballast House in the heart of the city overlooking the river Liffey on the quays became the new home for Comhlámh.

So a new Director, new premises and new Strategic Plan.... And lest anyone think that Comhlámh has been only focusing inwards, note that members, volunteers and friends have been involved at all levels along the way. Because without the members, the organisation would cease to exist. Many of those members helped to formulate the new Strategic Plan 2009-2012. In the review of the last strategic plan, it was found “that Comhlámh is a credible, authoritative voice on issues relating to development and is playing its part within the sector”. That voice now needs to be heard more than ever over the next few years to ensure we maintain our vision of a just, equitable and sustainable world.

In global solidarity,



Mary Kinane
Chairperson



James Blackburn, a VSO youth volunteer, works the field with his colleague in Malawi. c. VSO/Simon Rawles 2007.

Letter from the Director

The year 2008 marked a new beginning for Comhlámh and me personally returning from Ethiopia to Ireland to take up the position as Director. It was an exciting time to come on board; to get to meet members around the country for the evaluation of the former strategic plan; to work with the members, our staff team, and our Board in developing and launching our new year Strategic Plan 2009-2012; and to move to our new offices at Ballast House. For those of you who remember all the talk of Solidarity House, we are mid-way there, sharing the floor of the office with the Irish Refugee Council and a floor above Amnesty International.

Within Comhlámh we made important progress in 2008 reiterating the organisation's direction and re-affirming our strategic objectives as follows;

- Supporting Development Workers, Volunteers and Activists
- Development Education
- Research, Policy and Advocacy.

Project work was successfully achieved by a dedicated team, despite all the extra demands on time of developing the new strategic plan and the upheavals of the move. Through our Volunteering Options Programme we responded to the growing interest of the Irish Public in volunteering and development work, providing impartial advice to volunteers, development workers and activists. We enhanced our support services for Returned Development Workers as well as those in the field, continually improving our Coming Home Weekends, Career Guidance, Debriefing and other services. Successful courses in Development Education were offered, creating pathways for our members to engage on local and global development issues. Key to this was the identification of a single priority campaign issue for 2009 – stopping Europe's Unfair Trade Deals. The Finance and Administration Team have been instrumental in all aspects of work across the organisation.

It has been both a pleasure and a challenge to take on the role of Director with Comhlámh this year. My thanks to our Board and Staff and to you our members in helping Comhlámh play its part in the Development Sector. I also gratefully acknowledge the dedication and tremendous work of our Chairperson Mary Kinane who will be stepping down from our Board in 2009. I hope you enjoy this Annual Report and look forward to your active engagement as a member of Comhlámh in 2009 and beyond.

Deidre Murray
Director

Acknowledgements

Comhlámh would like to gratefully acknowledge the following funders for supporting the organisation's work in 2008:

- Irish Aid
- Trocaire
- VSO Ireland
- RIA
- NAPAR
- Dormant Accounts
- The Equality Authority
- IQFA
- Community Foundation Ireland

Membership

MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBER'S HANDBOOK

Members are the life blood of an organisation like Comhlámh. Our members inform our work, engage in our campaigns and are active contributors to the organisation at all levels. In the current global economic crises, the support and engagement of our membership is ever more crucial

Following consultation with members and staff the first Member's Handbook in Comhlámh's history was produced in 2008 and is available to all new members via our website. Membership fees can now be paid by direct debit and this has let to easier administration of new and renewal membership fees.

ELINK REVAMP

In 2008, the format of the eLink newsletter was changed from email to full colour HTML design and is now distributed to over 2,000 subscribers.

WEBSITE AND INTERNET JOBS NOTICE BOARD

The website continued to be a useful resource for development workers and members of the general public interested in development issues throughout 2008. Search engine marketing key words and tags was carried out in 2008 to maximise Comhlámh site 'pop up'. There were over 1.6 million "hits" on the Comhlámh website; 42,504 visitors to the website; and 377,814 page views recorded.

One of the most popular areas of the website continues to be the jobs notice board which is a useful resource for people interested in working in development.



Bloom Launch



Participants at a Coming Home Weekend

Education to Action – 2008 Development Education

The impact of the 2008 Development Education programme has been the increased sectoral capacity and public understanding of development issues which is being channelled towards action in order to contribute to the promotion of global justice. This impact will be sustained as a result of the year's work on developing a quality three year programme for 2009-2011, through engagement in a strategic planning process which identified our niche position in the Development Education sector and reflected on lessons learnt in the delivery of the previous three year programme of activities.

Our Development Education team focussed on ensuring Comhlámh's Development Education programme presented the public with a pathway of stepped, quality learner centred opportunities towards gradual engagement in development education. This was achieved in 2008 through the strategic planning process and the continued delivery of a range of targeted high quality capacity building opportunities, including formal and non formal workshops and courses (e.g. Bewley's debates, Skills in Development Education, Engaging with the Irish Political system, Diversity through the Arts, Global Trade Justice Course) innovative publications and resources (e.g. Focus, Index, Compass Directions, guidelines on the use of Images and Messages flyer), publication of accessible policy positions and critiques (EPAs updates, Lisbon Treaty, IRP Bill) and creative calls for engagement (Bloom activities and the World Social Forum Global Day of Action), all of which led to real opportunities for the Irish public to become engaged in a transformative education in which a range of perspectives and views are challenged and explored.

The Development Education team remained committed to quality assurance in all aspects of its work throughout 2008, with quality evaluations carried out on all our development education activities.

CAMPAIGNING

Comhlámh's commitment regarding education leading to action was strengthened throughout 2008. A key outcome of the 2008 programme was the identification of a single issue on which to focus development educational and mobilising activities. Following consultations with members, stakeholders and like minded organisations in Ireland and overseas, it was agreed to focus on encouraging our constituency

to engage more closely with the link between trade and development by specifically focussing on Europe's free trade framework document 'Global Europe'. Comhlámh engaged in a rich consultative process involving members, supporters, like-minded organisations and stakeholders, etc. in coming to the decision on which area to focus on in the coming years. An experienced consultant helped us to map out our planned activities and engagement strategy.

- Cooperation with Debt and Development, the Africa Centre and the Latin America Solidarity Centre around creating the **Bloom Alliance** has meant that the audience for Comhlámh issues has multiplied considerably. The successful hosting of a conference in November 2008 on how to build a global justice movement in Ireland contributed to popular awareness raising and was well attended. With three speakers from the south, the conference furthered opportunities for mainstreaming southern perspectives in our work. Work is currently ongoing on the design of a web page for use by the alliance to advance their mobilising activities.
- As part of our work to support policy change, work was ongoing in using our website to provide opportunities for mobilisation with our most recent e-action addressing the EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso on Europe's free trade agreements.
- Comhlámh continued to play an active role in the **Trade Matters Alliance** – whose other members include Trócaire, Oxfam, Christian Aid and ICTU. Throughout the year Trade Matters held four lobby meetings on trade-related issues with Irish Aid staff, including two with Minister Peter Power. Trade Matters also presented to the EU Affairs committee of the Dáil on EPAs, engaged in awareness raising, campaigns and media activities throughout the year on trade justice issues, as well as briefing key politicians including TDs and MEPs. Comhlámh ensured that its own work on the Global Europe strategy was also reflected in Trade Matter's positions.
- This year the **Trade Justice Group**, which continues to attract a varied membership, furthered its work on the EPAs-negotiations and began moving their focus onto an analysis of the EU's free trade strategy 'Global Europe'. The group continued to be active during the year and also cooperated with Comhlámh staff in the co-ordination of the trade course, as detailed below.

COURSES/WORKSHOPS

- The **Bewley's debates** continued to receive praise from its wide public and non sectoral audience and received positive feedback in our members and attendees survey in 2008. In the survey 92.3% of people rated the debates as informative and interesting. The debates were lively, engaging, wide-ranging and thought-provoking, with much critical analysis of the topics under discussion. Policy makers, civil servants, heads of agencies and NGO-staff continue to use these events as opportunities to inform their own perspective on issues while also learning from the concerns and perspectives of the audience.
- The 9-session **Skills in Development Education** course was oversubscribed and continued to attract a wide variety of participants and provided the public with an opportunity for developing their Development Education facilitation skills. Comments received from participants included "a very good overview of different themes, methods and tools of Development Education" and "It was an excellent introductory session to Dev Ed. A good solid foundation course".
- The **Compass** project also built the capacity of the public to engage with development issues through the launch of the sought after Guidelines on the Use of Images flyer and provision of three workshops for educators on the use of images.
- The **Graduate Certificate in Development Education, in cooperation with DCU** provided the public and sector with an opportunity to deepen their academic and practical knowledge of development and development education. This year's course retained the original format of three residential weekends as well as online e-discussions moderated by the course tutors, along with written assignments and practical assessments. As a result of resource limitations, Comhlámh's involvement in the course was limited to initial advertising (reaching NGO colleagues and RDWs) and by providing tutors for the provision and assessment of the education to action module.
- The **Understanding and engaging with the Irish political system** course run for migrants in May 2008 was very successful. The course was attended by 11 participants over two weekends and one mid-week visit to the Houses of the Oireachtas. This course successfully introduced immigrants to the workings of the Irish political system and its institutions, so as to facilitate their greater engagement in Irish society as educators and community actors. As part of Comhlámh's strategy to maximise opportunities for engaging with southern voices from Ireland, we delivered this course in

cooperation with the Africa Centre. Comments included "The content was very detailed. It allowed interaction, participation and practical learning and it was well facilitated."

- The **Diversity through the Arts** course run in 2008 aimed to enable participants to explore diversity and intercultural issues with primary aged groups through the use of a variety of art forms. It was held over two Saturdays in November 2008 and 21 participants attended. The course covered an introduction to Intercultural Education, use of drama and intercultural education, use of resources, use of music and intercultural education, use of film and visual arts and intercultural education and information about immigration. Participants noted that it was "well organised, with excellent facilitators" and overall found it "most useful, very interesting and enjoyable, (covering) a lot in two days"
- Throughout the year, Comhlámh provided a range of workshops and issue based sessions on trade, aid, development, continuous engagement and campaign skills both in Dublin and regionally.

RESOURCES

- **Focus Magazine** continued to be the flagship Comhlámh publication and unique in offering alternative perspectives on development issues in Ireland. It continues to have a wide and varied readership across Ireland and contributed significantly to meeting the objective of deepening the Irish public's understanding of development issues. The magazine continues to be produced by the voluntary Focus editorial group, supported by a Comhlámh staff member. This year two issues were published with a print run of 4,000 maintained.



Focus magazine

- A **Diversity through the Arts resource pack** was developed to accompany the training and is being launched in September 2009. The pack is aimed at primary school teachers and provides a range of interesting lesson plans for how to address diversity issues using the arts.
- The Compass project regrettably began the process of winding down this year following an evaluation/feasibility study and extensive consultations with stakeholders, including Irish Aid. However, during this period the **e-magazine Compass Directions** continued to provide practical support around integrating Development Education into the primary school classroom and supporting teachers in deepening students' understanding of global development issues. It remained sought after by teachers and educators in other settings and contributed towards the objective of aiding educators into Development Education.
- **The INDEX newsletter** continued to reach Development Education organisations and individual practitioners all over Ireland and Northern Ireland, some in England and the EU. This year's print run remained at 1,200 and the magazine was issued on a quarterly basis.
- Throughout the year, Comhlámh continued to act as a **central point of reference** for other NGOs in the sector to gain advice on areas of Development Education, and development and global justice issues. Staff continued to respond to requests for information, support and advice either providing it themselves or passing people onto the appropriate organisation most actively working on the issue of interest. Comhlámh also provided practical support for small groups including a meeting space and some basic office facilities.

NETWORKS AND ALLIANCES

- Comhlámh remained committed to maximising resources through the use of networks throughout the year. One staff member attended **the DEEEP Summer School** in 2008 which reinforced the organisational capacity around awareness raising and networking with European groups. Staff also built on the newly established **networks with UK based groups** through the development of new mobilising activities on the EU's free trade policy 'Global Europe'. With this new focus in mind, the Seattle2Brussels network was strategically chosen as a network for Comhlámh to become involved in.
- Comhlámh's representational work continued to enable Comhlámh to work with partners in the sector on common aims, thereby maximising resources

and contributing towards the achievement of this objective. Throughout the year there has been continued **representation** on the **IDEA National Council, Dóchas Working Groups, CGE Belfast, the Africa Centre Development Education Committee** and **the Trade Matters Network**. Comhlámh's reduced its role in the Stop Climate Chaos network, NGO Alliance against Racism and the European Network against Racism while still supporting the work of these networks.

- **Cooperation with the Debt and Development Coalition, the Africa Centre** and the Latin America Solidarity Centre around creating the Bloom Alliance has meant that the audience for Comhlámh issues has multiplied considerably and information exchange with Southern Partners has increased.
- Aside from these external groups Comhlámh continued to organise internal networks such as the **INDEX Editorial Committee** (NYCI, DICE, Trócaire, and CGE) and the **Focus Editorial Committee**.
- Throughout all our work, we committed to maximise the inclusion of **southern voices** in our work. We contributed to the achievement of this objective by working with selected organisations in Ireland who work with southern development experts living or visiting in Ireland and through expanding our networks such as the Index editorial group to include such organisations. This was further supported by the provision of bursaries to migrants and asylum seekers indicating a desire to participate in our training courses.



Index newsletter

Supporting and Protecting the Interests of Development Workers

Comhlámh's support services have evolved over the decades and kept pace with the needs of our stakeholders. The support services include individual support upon return to Ireland, personal and group debriefings, coming home weekends, counselling service and career guidance service as well as support on social insurance options for development workers, support for public servants on pensions and incremental credit, providing supporting documentation for educational and social welfare applications, etc. We also strive to increase awareness of the importance of social insurance and pensions generally to the sector and to individuals in particular. A survey of the support services carried out in 2008 reflected on Comhlámh's role to be independent; an honest broker that is able *"to provide privacy for development personnel, and distance from their sending organisation. (Comhlámh's services are) useful in terms of sensitive issues such as when people need counselling, and for issues such as careers advice and CVs where separation from the sending organisation is advisable."*

The main highlights from 2008 are:

- Careers in Development seminar: Where will we be in 2015?
- Partnering with Limerick based organisations and delivering two regional events for Returned Development Workers (RDWs)
- Maintaining a consistently high level of service throughout 2008 on all support services including Protecting the Interests of Development Workers
- Pioneering best practice model on group debriefing (personal) to RDWs in Cork.
- Publication of What Next resource for RDWs
- Information seminars on social insurance and pensions and planning for retirement
- Workshops on Protection of Interests of Development Workers at pre-departure stage for development workers.

The support services team is made up of 3 Dublin based staff and one Project Officer – Support Services and Outreach based in Limerick. The work of the Support Services team is linked very closely to that of the Volunteering Options team and we maximise these synergies to the fullest possible extent through sharing

of information, publicity, etc.

NETWORKING

We've long held the view that the quality of our relationships with sending organisations is a key enabling factor in reaching volunteers and development workers and in 2008 we endeavoured to maintain regular contact with the lead sending agencies through meetings and correspondence. We hosted an annual appreciation event for sending organisations in December and presented the support services available in terms of usage and access.

ONE TO ONE MEETINGS AND DEBRIEFING SERVICE

Comhlámh offers and provides two types of individual support, i.e. the traditional one to one meetings and more recent personal debriefing service since 2007. The focus of these meetings varied from general transition support to careers and social insurance. A group debriefing was provided for a group of returned volunteers as part of their undergraduate course with UCC.

Some comments about our debriefing service and awareness raising workshop from two volunteers and one sending agency are below :

"It was great to meet you last week and I feel so much better for it. I've joined the gym, gone back playing GAA and I'm off to Turkey in September for 2 weeks. The research project is also coming along slowly but surely!! Without a doubt, none of those things would have happened if I hadn't spoken to you. Thank you so much." RDW

"Thank you again for the debriefing it was a great and all is well in the stress department! I have read over the information you provided for dealing with stress, thank you it was helpful." RDW

"I just wanted to drop you a quick note to let you know how much I enjoyed your workshop on debriefing practices yesterday. I found it really interesting and informative and am very keen to understand how we can provide better debriefing services to our returned volunteers." – Sending Organisation

REORIENTATION EVENTS

The Coming Home Weekends are a key component within the support services programme and these residential weekends provide a valuable space for RDWs to reflect on their experiences overseas, explore the transition of returning to Ireland and look at options for continuous engagement in global

development issues from home. These weekends are led by a Comhlámh facilitator and assisted by two RDWs who have participated in Comhlámh's Training of Facilitators programme which prepares RDWs as co-facilitators on these weekends. The training has been highly successful for both Comhlámh and the individual RDWs who become involved. The training focuses on the process of facilitation and content of the weekends. Co-facilitators partner with Comhlámh to deliver these weekends to recently returned development workers.

Some comments for RDWs about the weekend:

"Just a brief note to tell you how much I appreciated your support and enthusiasm over the recent 'Coming Home Weekend'. I felt overwhelmingly positive after the few days in Dublin." RDW, Sri Lanka.

"I want to say thank you for organising the weekend. I took a lot from it and feel as though I'm starting to make sense of my time overseas and how I can use it in whatever I do in the future. I will keep in touch." RDW, Zambia.

CAREERS ADVISORY SERVICE

As in 2006 and 2007, the careers advisory service continued to be a popular service for returned development workers throughout this year.

This service covers the following:

- Crafting your CV
- Interview technique and tips
- Strategic career planning
- Job search
- Further/higher education search

Some comments from RDWs on the careers service:

"I met the Careers Guidance Counsellor and she was great, really helpful, and is being on-goingly helpful as I update my CV. Definitely worth it, and probably better for me to have my head around being home for a while as well!"

"Many many thanks for all the information and especially for our meeting on Wednesday. I needed the help you gave me with the CV and am ever so grateful to you; I really am delighted to be in touch now with Comhlámh and am looking forward to the coming home weekend in September."

COUNSELLING SERVICE

Awareness of this service was provided at all stages

of the volunteering continuum to individuals and to sending organisations.

Some comments on the service from RDWs:

"I can't thank you enough for this service...A big dark cloud has been lifted."

"Just to say I have finished my sessions, my thanks to you and Comhlámh for this valuable support. My counsellor was really great, down to earth and motivated."

In December 2008, we invited the counsellors and the careers guidance service to meet the sending agencies at our annual appreciation event for sending organisations. The objective was to provide the opportunity for each stakeholder to gain greater insight into the work of the other and to highlight Comhlámh's role as the network leader. It proved to be a fruitful meeting of minds.

PROTECTION OF INTERESTS OF DEVELOPMENT WORKERS - SOCIAL INSURANCE AND PENSIONS SERVICE

Information on the various options currently open to volunteer development workers and salaried development workers re social insurance and pensions are provided as part of the PIDW information provision service. Comhlámh administers the Volunteer Development Worker PRSI Scheme and the Public Service Pension Scheme on behalf of Irish Aid as well as raising awareness of the importance of maintaining one's social insurance record as continuous as possible. Information is also provided re incremental credit, educational grants, validation of applications for child benefit and maternity, etc. Eight information seminars/workshops were held in 2008 on the Protection of Interests of Development Workers to development workers, students and sending organisations including one information seminar on planning for retirement by John Lowe, the Money Doctor.

EVENTS – DUBLIN AND REGIONAL

Careers in Development Seminar: Where will we be in 2015?

Comhlámh hosted a Careers in Development seminar in December 2008 in the Irish Aid Centre. The event was well attended by senior managers and HR professionals/practitioners in the development sector, staff currently working in D-NGOs, RDWs and others interested in career progression and finding employment in the sector. The event stimulated

conversation and debate about the future skills and competency needs of the development sector at home and abroad and provided insight into careers of a number of senior managers in D-NGOs. Overall participants rated the conference as very relevant and complimented the organisation of the event and the venue. There were many requests for the event to be held on an annual basis. The short career guidance sessions that were available on the day were appreciated. Many participants were encouraged at the variety of careers in the sector and the creative career journeys shared in the early part of the seminar. A report of the conference is available on www.comhlamh.org and feedback from the event was provided to the Dóchas Task Group on Careers in Development, of which Comhlámh is a member. Following the Careers Seminar, International Volunteers Day was celebrated. The key note address was by Malcolm Quigley, Director, VSO Ireland and the evening provided a relaxed setting for RDWs to socialise and network with each other and sending organisations.

REGIONAL EVENTS

Comhlámh's Support Services and Outreach Officer is based in Limerick and two regional events were hosted in May and December 2008 in Limerick. The first event coincided with Africa Day and Comhlámh partnered with Doras Luimni to host a celebration and networking opportunity for RDWs and migrants based in and around Limerick city and county.

Comhlámh also partnered with Doras Luimni/Limerick City and County Councils to deliver a drumming workshop as part of the Limerick City and Council Intercultural Day in December. The organisers of the intercultural event were very complimentary of Comhlámh and commented that they have had received *"a lot of great feedback from people about the workshop - it was a great idea to have it and it really brought a lot to the whole intercultural event.....great to have you and Comhlámh present for the Intercultural Festival."*

PUBLICATIONS

In 2008, Comhlámh added the following resources to its existing suite of publications:

1. **What's Next? guide** - is a companion to Comhlámh's **'Coming Home Book'**, which supports RDWs in settling back into life in Ireland.
2. Printed guidelines on the Counselling and Careers Advisory service.
3. **Step by Step** guide to volunteering

Volunteering Options Programme

Throughout 2008, Comhlámh's Volunteering Options programme continued to work to achieve its key objectives:

- To promote informed decision-making by potential volunteers;
- To promote good practice by volunteer sending agencies;
- To encourage volunteers' understanding of their role within 'development'; and
- To support volunteers on their return to internalise their experience.

VOLUNTEERING OPTIONS WEBSITE/PUBLICATION

The Volunteering Options website was completely redesigned and updated in 2008 by Arekibo, who selected Volunteering Options as their corporate social responsibility client for 2008. The new site aims to present the information in a visually appealing and accessible format, to encourage users to engage with the website and avail of all of the information on offer.

The website continues to offer a space for volunteer sending organisations to advertise their upcoming opportunities, via the organisation database and a new 'latest news' feed to the homepage. In addition, Code of Good Practice (CoP) signatory organisations can access information on the Code of Good Practice (CoP) and relevant training supports, plus share sample policies and ideas via the restricted Members Area. There were over 30,000 visits to the site in 2008.

Working for a Better World: A Guide to Volunteering in Global Development has continued to be in high demand as a resource for volunteers throughout 2008. New Island publishers continue to promote and sell this publication through their contacts, in bookshops nationwide and online through Amazon.com. It is also available for order directly from Comhlámh and the Volunteering Options website. Approximately 350 copies of the book were sold during 2008.

INFORMATION PROVISION

Throughout 2008, staff provided information and advice to over 250 individual members of the public who contacted Comhlámh with queries about overseas volunteering. This included: information on organisations that arrange placements; suggestions about relevant questions to ask before making a final decision; and advice on some of the issues that can arise for people who volunteer overseas. Volunteering Options participated in a number of events aimed

at general awareness-raising in relation to overseas volunteering, linking in closely with the new Irish Aid Volunteering and Information Centre. The Programme received media coverage in the Sunday Tribune, Hot Press Magazine and the African Voice Newspaper.

TRAINING

Tailored training courses and workshops were provided throughout the year for the following groups: people considering overseas volunteering, people who had committed to going overseas for short-term placements, and people returning from overseas placements. A total of 550 short-term volunteers participated in Volunteering Options training in 2008.

A series of **pre-decision making courses** (Options and Issues in Global Development) took place throughout the year, to assist those considering volunteering abroad with making an informed decision.

Comhlámh also continued to meet the demand from sending organisations and volunteer groups for relevant **pre-departure training** for volunteers undertaking short-term voluntary placements (up to three months).

To complete the volunteer cycle, Comhlámh ran four, one day **'Moving Forward' courses**, which aimed to provide a space for participants to reflect on their experience of volunteering overseas and to consider the ways in which they could engage with development issues on an ongoing basis, in their lives in Ireland.

CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE AND VOLUNTEER CHARTER

Throughout the year, we focused on disseminating the Code of Good Practice (CoP) and Volunteer Charter, building relationships with and between sending organisations, and supporting the self-audit and peer support aspects of the implementation process for the CoP. At the end of 2008, the following organisations were signatories to the Code of Good Practice (CoP)

SIGNATORIES TO COP

Camara

Chernobyl Children's Project International

Concern

Edmund Rice Voluntary Service Programme

EIL Intercultural Learning

Friends of Londiani

Friends from Ireland

Goal

Habitat for Humanity

Health Action Overseas

Hope Foundation

i-to-i

International Service Ireland

Jesuit Volunteers International

Link Community Development

Medical Missionaries of Mary

Moldova Vision

Niall Mellon Township Trust

SERVE

Skillshare

Sif Eile

SUAS

To Russia With Love

UCD Volunteers Overseas

Viatores Christi

Vincentian Lay Missionaries

Voluntary Service International (VSI)

Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO)

Volunteer Missionary Movement (VMM)

A key progression in 2008 involved testing an external auditing model to complement the peer support implementation strategy. Three organisations from the Volunteering Options Working Group (VOWG) (Suas, Camara and ISI) agreed to participate in the audits, enabling the different dynamics of CoP implementation for both short and long-term volunteer sending organisations to be captured.

In order to support the development of both the CoP and Volunteer Charter, and to ensure accountability within our work, we established a Volunteering Options Working Group at the beginning of 2008. Comprising representatives from a wide variety of sending organisations, the group met three times during the year, in February, October and December. It provided assistance and expert advice on assessing and developing the implementation strategy for the CoP throughout 2008 and on furthering the recommendations of the CoP evaluation report.

We organised two peer support meetings in 2008 (April and November), in order to encourage the implementation of the CoP. Both were held in the Dublin Writers' Museum, and were attended by a large number of organisational representatives. The meetings also provided an opportunity for both information and knowledge-sharing, and for organisations to meet each other and strengthen their own networks.

An important aspect of the work in 2008 was to carefully evaluate the development of the CoP since 2004/05 and to look at ways in which it could be improved into the future. An external consultant conducted a detailed evaluation of the process, involving interviews with signatory organisations, volunteers, host project partners and Comhlámh staff. Many positive outcomes of the process were identified, along with several recommendations for future clarifications and ways of strengthening the CoP.

An evaluation and update of the Volunteer Charter was also conducted, in order to ensure its usefulness and relevance for volunteers. Two thousand copies of the Volunteer Charter were disseminated to sending organisations, their volunteers, and to potential volunteers throughout the year (including through the Irish Aid Volunteering & Information Centre). An additional 3,000 copies of the revised Volunteer Charter were printed in the final quarter to meet demand for this publication.

LINKS WITH HOST PROJECTS

In July 2008, Volunteering Options visited host project partners of three signatories to the CoP in South Africa and Lesotho. One of the key objectives of the visit was

for Volunteering Options staff to see programmes in operation on the ground and to have an opportunity to meet directly with project partners to gain feedback on aspects of the Volunteering Options Programme.

RESEARCH ON CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

A key objective of the Comhlámh Strategic Plan and the Volunteering Options Programme is to encourage volunteers and development workers to place their experience within the global context, and to support volunteers in a longer term commitment to development. In 2008, Volunteering Options conducted some research to find out what barriers (perceived or otherwise) are in place to prevent returned volunteers and development workers from becoming actively engaged with development issues upon their return. Documenting the push and pull factors and also the enablers for continuous engagement will assist Comhlámh, and other organisations in the volunteering sector to channel volunteers more effectively post-placement, and to formulate relevant methods of support

INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING

Throughout 2008, work continued to promote key aspects of the Volunteering Options Programme internationally. Comhlámh co-hosted the Forum European Conference on Volunteering together with Irish Aid in Dublin in June. Comhlámh staff presented papers about the development of the Irish CoP, and on the findings of the research Comhlámh conducted into the use of Codes of Good Practice re international Volunteering amongst Forum Members. Additionally Volunteering Options staff presented a paper on the 'Impact of volunteering on host projects and links to the CoP' at the IVCO Conference in Cambodia, which was well received.

Volunteering Options continued to make links with other countries working to develop good practice standards. Volunteering Options staff participated in a Steering Group formed to guide the development of a Code of Good Practice in the UK. The UK CoP draws heavily on the Comhlámh CoP in terms of content and design. The Volunteer Charter also attracted strong interest with two organisations/networks choosing to adapt it for their constituency groups.

**COMHLÁMH DEVELOPMENT WORKERS IN GLOBAL SOLIDARITY
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE AND NOT HAVING A SHARE CAPITAL)
DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT AND EXPENSES SCHEDULE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2008**

	2008 (€)	2007 (€)
INCOME		
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform	-	4,250
Irish Aid - DEU	250,642	204,947
Irish Aid - CSU - Support to RDW's and Members Engagement	289,822	239,141
NGO Funding	14,988	17,101
Irish Aid - CSU - Volunteering Options	247,233	183,710
Dormant Accounts	2,000	2,795
European Commission	11,250	8,000
Philanthropic Foundations and Trusts	3,176	924
AGM Income & Members Weekend	645	839
Courses Income	3,487	4,674
Fundraising	-	5,192
Membership	16,452	17,551
Protection of Interest for RDW's	198,757	83,746
Donations	1,103	1,065
Sale of Resources	1,582	2,358
Administration Income	4,198	5,733
Services	13,209	13,260
Bank Interest Received	<u>14,227</u>	<u>13,294</u>
	1,072,771	808,580
EXPENDITURE		
RDWs Support	248,668	133,717
Membership Engagement	63,503	107,120
Volunteering Options	258,309	204,595
Anti Racism and Intercultural Education	3,238	37,791
Integrating Ireland	-	1,391
Development Education	280,638	194,035
Campaigning and Research	23,022	27,126
Protection of Interest for RDW's	<u>179,161</u>	<u>45,374</u>
	(1,056,539)	(751,149)
OTHER DEDUCTIONS		
Provision for Dilapidation on previous offices at 10 Upper Camden Street, Dublin 2.	20,000	-
	<u>(20,000)</u>	-
(DEFICIT)/SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	(3,768)	57,431

