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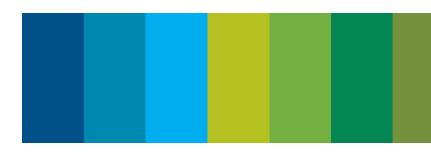
Attitudes
of Young People
& Youth Workers

to Development
& Global Justice
Issues

Maurice Devlin and Hilary Tierney

Contents

Acknowledgements

Foreword

On behalf of the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), I welcome the publication of this research into the attitudes of young people and youth workers to development and global justice issues.

NYCI's Strategic Plan 2008-2012 sees development education and advocacy for global justice as key strategic objectives in order to achieve it's vision "…where all young people are empowered to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to realise their potential and to actively participate in an inclusive society that values and respects them." The youth work sector has long recognised the importance of integrating a global justice perspective into its work with young people, recognising that good development education is good youth work practice.

Whereas previous studies of attitudes have used quantitative approaches, NYCI identified the need for qualitative research using focus groups in order to increase our understanding of attitudes to global justice issues in the specific context of youth work thereby enabling the participants to contribute their ideas and opinions freely.

The research provides us with a rich source of baseline information to inform NYCI's development education practice and advocacy work over the coming years, as well as providing impetus for future research. The findings and recommendations will challenge

NYCI and the wider youth sector to reflect on how best they can provide appropriate and effective supports to youth organisations.

NYCI is extremely grateful to Irish Aid at the Department of Foreign Affairs for funding the research. I would like to thank the participating organisations and individuals for their contribution to this piece of work by sharing their experiences and perspectives with us, without them the research would not have been possible.

I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable work of the research advisory group, Carlos Bruen, Marie-Claire Mc Aleer, Niamh Mc Crea and Johnny Sheehan.

Finally very special thanks are due to Maurice Devlin and Hilary Tierney, from the Department of Applied Social Studies in NUI Maynooth who carried out the research and for their valuable assistance in bringing the research to publication. As always it has been a rewarding experience working with them.

Mary Cunningham

Mary Cunningham
Director

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a qualitative research project investigating the attitudes of adults and young people involved in youth work towards development and global justice issues, and explores the implications of these findings for youth work practice. Twelve focus groups (six each with young people and youth workers) were conducted in different parts of the country, concentrated in three different 'sites': Dublin (city), Mayo (county) and Waterford (city and county). In total 48 young people and 34 youth workers participated in the research.

Literature Review

The research was informed and *contextualized* by a literature review of relevant research in Ireland and elsewhere. The review focused on young people (or young adults) because there is scarcely any such research into the attitudes of youth workers. In Ireland, the research includes some sharply contrasting findings, in some cases suggesting that young people have less knowledge, awareness and concern than older people about issues of global justice and inequality, but in others that they are more willing than older people to be involved in action in response to such issues. Irish young people show relatively little awareness of inequality issues in Ireland, and significant numbers show active antipathy towards certain minority groups (in this they are much like Irish adults). International research suggests that while young people are less knowledgeable than older people about development and justice issues, they tend to show high levels of interest and concern.

Knowledge of the World and Sources of Information

Both the young people and the adults in this research said they knew most about 'first world' or 'western' countries, with quite a high level of knowledge of some other countries that had featured prominently in the media in the recent past or from which there has been significant recent migration to Ireland. The youth workers were in general familiar with more countries and more parts of the world. For both groups the media were commonly identified as a key source of information, and for young people the internet was often cited as a way of following up on information they had gained elsewhere. For the youth workers the internet was just as likely to be mentioned as a group learning resource. School (especially subjects like CSPE and geography) provided the young people with some opportunities to learn about development and global justice issues; youth work was less often mentioned in this regard, *except among the Scouting group.* Both adults and young people had gained a lot of knowledge and awareness from encounters with diverse cultures in Ireland or through travel abroad (which was a more familiar experience for young people in some areas than others).

Knowledge and Awareness of Global Justice Issues

There was a wide range of responses among the young people to questions about global justice issues: some very knowledgeable, critically aware and insightful; some finding it difficult to see any relevance of such issues to their own lives at all; and the majority in between these two positions, showing some limited knowledge of global issues or relationships but an appreciation of their

relevance and a willingness to explore them further. Most of the young people were of the view that the world is 'unfair' and that global inequalities of wealth and power are unacceptable; and some were critical of Ireland's role (as they saw it) in sustaining this or 'turning a blind eye' to it. Among the issues identified by the young people as having to do with 'development and global justice' were poverty, human rights, the environment, natural disasters, trade (including fair trade), child labour, war, religion and cultural differences.

In the youth workers' groups there was for the most part a high level of knowledge and awareness of global issues and relationships, and of the links between the global and the local, particularly but not only among those with direct development experience. There was also a very strong sense of commitment to justice and equality issues, which for many workers was seen as an intrinsic part of their professional identity. They were more likely than the young people to draw unprompted attention to persisting inequalities within Irish society (as opposed to between different parts of the world), relating for instance to poverty, education and health, women, asylum seekers and refugees, migrant workers, and ethnic minorities including Travellers. There were however considerable divergences of opinion among the workers as to the interpretation of certain key concepts - including 'development' and 'global justice' themselves - and how these relate to the core purpose and 'programme(s)' of youth work.

Responses to Development and Global Justice Issues

While they could see much that is positive about Irish responses to global issues and inequalities (particularly charitable giving), both young people and adults were critical of many existing organisational and government initiatives. The young people generally appeared cynical with regard to mainstream political institutions and also, to a lesser extent, to some forms of charity. Youth workers too were in many cases critical of the 'charity model', particularly, it seemed, those with a background in development or in professional youth and community work training.

Although some young people gave examples of actions they had taken themselves in response to global issues and concerns (for example decisions about where or what to buy), respondents seemed to feel, on balance, relatively ineffectual with regard to such issues, many of them expressing a view that 'there's nothing you can do' or 'it's hard to make a difference'. Even among the more activist respondents the prevailing view seemed to be that it was difficult to mobilise young people in general to do something about global justice issues because such issues seem 'far away' and it is difficult to make the connection with their own lives. Where there was any success in doing so, it most frequently involved making connections with the lives and circumstances of other young people, and in relatively tangible ways.

The young people generally demonstrated open, tolerant and inclusive attitudes to the issues arising. There were exceptions to this - some views that were prejudiced and intolerant

- but they were usually countered with forceful countervailing arguments from within the focus groups themselves. This in itself may be a *positive reflection on the youth work context and process.*

The youth workers were much more likely than the young people to say that they thought they could make a personal difference to how the world works, although there were different views of how this could be done. Most workers seemed to see such issues as being very much in keeping with their professional aims and purpose. Like the young people, the youth workers believed that responses should focus on concrete, tangible issues and outcomes, building on the existing interests of participants; although this then raises the important youth work issue of how to challenge participants to move beyond such immediate interests. For many youth workers the process of the focus groups appeared to provide a valuable opportunity to clarify thinking or share ideas regarding issues and responses. The researchers noted that workers commonly spoke in terms of what they could or should do in response to development and global justice issues rather than describing what they had done or were currently doing. Some workers identified a tension between a commitment on their part to promote positive social and (broadly defined) political change and a continuing imperative in practice to 'deal with the individual' and 'monitor [young] people's behaviour'.

Conclusions

Given some divergences of opinion among the youth workers as to what 'development and global justice issues' refer to and how these relate to youth work, and given also that both young people and adults were most likely to focus on the negative rather than positive meanings and potential of key concepts such as 'power' and 'agency', the findings overall suggest a need for some reconsideration and *reconceptualization* of the vocabulary relating to youth work, to development and global justice, and to the *interrelationship* between these.

The report concludes that - in line with some of the youth workers' own suggestions -there is a need for a strategic and multifaceted response to the range of issues which confront young people and youth work, including issues of development and global justice. Such an approach would involve building alliances with others within the youth sector and within related sectors including those working to promote equality, justice and community development. It might also usefully involve an explicit examination of the concept of 'programme' itself (which is a key term in the legislative definition of youth work) and an exploration of whether a focus on programmes – at all levels within the youth work sector – can at times work against the development of integrated understandings and responses.

Recommendations (abbreviated)

1. In all actions and initiatives flowing from this research, an important consideration should be an interrogation of the key concepts themselves and of the relationships between them as understood by participants.

2. Opportunities should be created to enable youth workers to share experiences, perceptions and practices relating to development and global justice issues.

3. The findings of this research should be disseminated through a variety of methods and means in addition to the research report, including conference presentations and published papers within and beyond the youth work and development education sectors.

4. Given that much of the content of the proposed *Intercultural Strategy for Youth Work* has relevance for development/global justice issues it is recommended that it be adopted without further delay by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and steps promptly taken for its implementation.

5. NYCI's Development Education Programme (DEP) should avail of its existing links with the National Youth Work Advisory Committee to ensure that the findings of this research might be taken into account in its advice regarding current and future developments in the broader youth work sector.

6. The DEP should also engage directly with the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to ensure that the development and global justice dimension is adequately provided for in the renewed National Children's Strategy and - since this strategy will include young people - in the future policy framework for youth work.

7. The DEP should engage with the North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work (NSETS) which is conducting a review of the Criteria and Procedures for the Professional Endorsement of Youth Work so that the findings of this research might be taken into account as appropriate.

8. The DEP should also engage with providers of youth work education and training (in higher and further education and in the youth work organisations) to explore further the relationships between informal/non-formal/social education (and other 'models' of youth work) and development education/global youth work.

9. The DEP should avail of opportunities presented by the inclusion of 'youth and the world' as one of the eight fields of action in the EU *Council Resolution on a Renewed Framework for European Cooperation in the Youth Field* (November, 2009) and should explore ways in which youth work initiatives integrating different fields of action might be used to promote awareness and action relating to development and global justice issues.

1. Introduction

This report provides the results of a research project exploring the attitudes of young people and adults in youth work towards development and global justice issues. The research was commissioned by the National Youth Council of Ireland Development Education Programme.

Given the particular focus of this research it is important at the outset to comment on the nature of youth work and its relationship to global and development education. In Ireland youth work is defined in relevant legislation as follows:

> "Youth work" means a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is -
> (a) complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and
> (b) provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations (Youth Work Act 2001, s. 3).

This definition also formed the basis of the *National Youth Work Development Plan* (Department of Education and Science, 2003), which noted that such a formulation:

> ...encapsulates several important features which have come to be widely agreed upon among youth work policy-makers and practitioners in Ireland: the fundamentally *developmental and educational* nature of the work; the fact that it rests on the *voluntary participation* of young people; and the fact that it has been, and is, in the main provided by *voluntary organisations* (Department of Education and Science, 2003: 13; emphasis in original).

The *National Youth Work Development Plan*, in its 'vision of youth work', goes on to elaborate on these key principles of youth work and other closely related ones, including: the centrality of the educative process and therefore the role of the youth worker as educator; the importance of viewing young people, and youth work, in positive terms; the key contribution of volunteers; the active and critical participation of young people and the fact that they have rights as citizens; and the commitment to equality and inclusiveness. In relation to the latter point the Development Plan expresses a commitment to 'a vision of youth work which values diversity, aims to eradicate injustice and inequality, and strives for openness and inclusiveness in all its dealings with young people and adults' (Department of Education and Science 2003: 14-15).

A recent paper (McCrea and Sheehan 2008) stresses the complementarity of youth work with development education, noting that in the youth work context development education is sometimes called 'global youth work'. The authors suggest that the themes and issues on which it can focus include (but are not by any means limited to):

- Global development
- Human rights
- Global citizenship
- Exploring the connections between young people in Ireland and the Majority World[1]

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[1] Majority World is a term used to highlight the fact that people living in countries comprising what has previously been termed the 'Third World' actually make up the greater part of humankind.

- Understanding the causes and consequences of global poverty and inequality
- Learning from and sharing with people in the Majority World[1]
- Understanding how our actions affect people in the Majority World
- Challenging stereotypes and prejudice
- Learning how countries depend on each other
- Solidarity with people who are poor, marginalised or discriminated against
- Concern for the environment
- Celebrating the diversity of people in our world
- Enabling young people to imagine a better world
- Taking action for a more just world

Exploring further the links between development education and youth work the authors suggest that:

Development education places young people at the heart of the learning process. It starts with their experiences, perspectives and ideas and provides them with an opportunity to explore and take action on issues which are important to them.....Quality development education in youth work shares many of the same principles as good youth work. These include starting with and valuing young people's own views, learning through participation and promoting equality, responsibility and mutual respect.

(McCrea and Sheehan 2008: 53, 55).

This research report has been guided by these perspectives on youth work and development education, or on 'global youth work'. In keeping with the brief provided by NYCI's Development Education Programme, the research has employed a qualitative approach to the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. The need for a qualitative study of this nature was identified by NYCI during consultations with its key stakeholders, including Irish Aid and the National Youth Council of Ireland's development education advisory group; and the researchers also took the view that a qualitative approach was most appropriate given the nature, purpose and context of the research.

The report is structured as follows. Chapter 2, provides a review of the relevant literature, in Ireland and elsewhere. Further information on the research methodology is given in chapter 3. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the findings of this research project regarding the attitudes of young people and youth workers (respectively) towards development and global justice issues. Chapter 5 presents a comparison and interpretation by the researchers of the views of young people and adults and relates the findings of this research to the literature reviewed in chapter 2. Finally, chapter 6 offers a conclusion and some recommendations for the consideration of the DEP and of other stakeholders.

2. Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of the Irish and international literature on young people's attitudes to global justice and development issues. It focuses on young people because there is no research exploring the attitudes of youth workers to these issues specifically. It is important to note that in much of the research referred to below the relevant data relates effectively to 'young adults' rather than young people more broadly defined because survey populations often consist of persons aged eighteen and over.

Irish Research on Attitudes to Development and Global Justice Issues

European Values Study
The third wave of the European Values Study (EVS) was conducted in 1999-2000 (earlier ones having taking place in 1981 and 1990). It explores values and attitudes towards a range of social issues among the population aged 18 and over, and secondary analysis by Breen (2002) makes it possible to consider the Irish findings by age group. Respondents were asked among other things for their opinions about various 'targets' for the creation of a more just society and about the extent of their concern for different named groups in society. Figure 2.1 summarizes the pattern of responses by age group when people were asked how important it was to address three social targets: eliminating social inequalities, providing basic needs for all and recognising people on the basis of their merits (rather than, for instance, social background or family connections). Respondents could give an answer ranging from one to five, with one meaning 'not at all important' and five meaning 'very important'. This makes it possible to calculate a mean score for different groups.

Figure 2.1 Importance of social targets, by age

Legend:
- Eliminating inequalities
- Basic needs for all
- Recognising merits

In the case of the target of meeting basic needs for all there is no significant difference by age group: people of all ages agree that this is a very important goal (the mean exceeds 4.5 in all cases). There is a different pattern in the responses regarding the recognition of merit: while the very oldest groups fall slightly below the middle-aged, the scores for all age groups are relatively closely clustered except for the 18-24 year-olds, who accord this target somewhat less importance than their elders. The target of eliminating inequalities is regarded as less important among all age groups than the other two targets, and the younger the age group the less important it gets.

Figure 2.2 presents the results regarding concern for the living conditions of several vulnerable (or potentially vulnerable) groups, again broken down by age (Breen, 2002: 101). The scoring in this case was in the opposite direction, so that a lower score indicates higher concern. Overall, the pattern corresponds to the previous findings: younger people in general expressed lower levels of concern than older people. While the increase in concern with age group is only marginal in some instances, in the case of all four groups it is the 18-24 year-olds who express least concern.

Figure 2.2 Concern for vulnerable groups, by age

Legend: Elderly, Unemployed, Immigrants, Sick & disabled

Mean (y-axis)

Age (categorised) (x-axis): 18-24 yrs, 25-34 yrs, 35-44 yrs, 45-64 yrs, 65 yrs+

Source: Breen, 2002: 101

Development Education for Youth (DEFY) Surveys

These findings can be compared with the results of survey research conducted for the organisation Development Education for Youth (DEFY) in 1995 and 1999 (Wegimont and Farrell, 1995; Wegimont, 2000; McDonnell and Wegimont, 2000). In both cases the focus was on attitudes to development and justice issues among persons aged 12-24 and the more recent survey included a sample of respondents aged 25 and over for comparative purposes. Figure 2.3 presents summary data from the 1999 survey in response to the question 'How much, if at all, do you think about the problems of poorer countries, such as those in Africa, South America and parts of Asia?'.

Figure 2.3 shows that the three groups, 12-17 year-olds, 18-24 year-olds and those aged 25 and over, are broadly similar in the extent to which they think about poor countries, but with some differences, particularly at both ends of the continuum (with a higher number of the older group saying 'a lot' and a higher number of the youngest group saying 'almost never'). However, the mean scores are not far apart, particularly for the 12-17 and the 18-24 year-olds. A comparison with the 1995 results for the full youth sample of 12-24 year-olds (not shown here) suggests contrasting trends: an increase of 5% (from 11% to 16%) in those thinking 'a lot' about poor countries but also an increase of 3% (from 9 to 12%) in those thinking about them 'almost never' (McDonnell and Wegimont, 2000: 23-24).

Figure 2.3 Incidence of thinking about the problems of poor countries

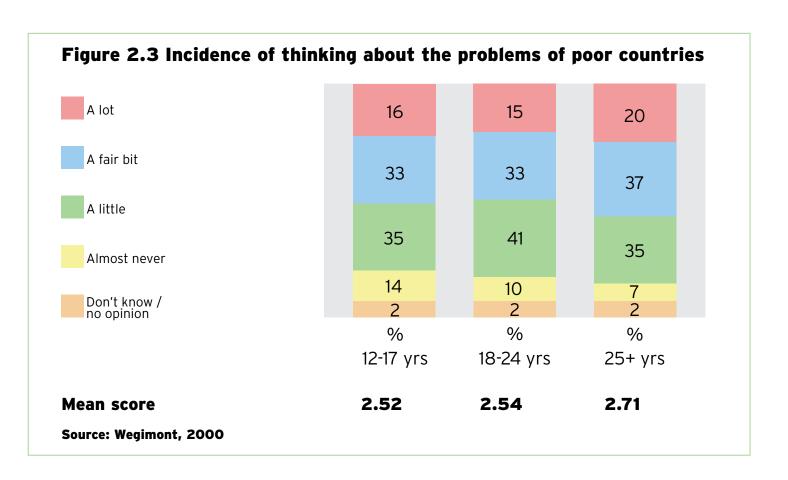|	12-17 yrs (%)	18-24 yrs (%)	25+ yrs (%)
A lot	16	15	20
A fair bit	33	33	37
A little	35	41	35
Almost never	14	10	7
Don't know / no opinion	2	2	2
Mean score	**2.52**	**2.54**	**2.71**

Source: Wegimont, 2000

Table 2.1 indicates extent of involvement or willingness to get involved in voluntary organisations or groups 'set up to help countries in the Third World'. It includes aggregate data for 12-24 year-olds in 1995 and 1999, with an indication of the increase or decrease in the interim, as well as disaggregated figures for the 12-17 and 18-24 year-old groups in the later survey (1999). There are also figures for those aged 25 and over in 1999, for comparative purposes. The findings among young people are generally positive. The total proportion of young people aged 12-24 already involved has increased from 5% to 8%, although the proportion not yet involved but prepared to participate has fallen by the same amount. However, the proportion neither involved nor willing to get involved (the most negative possible response) has fallen by 9%. To the right of the table it can be seen that in 1999 younger people were much more open to the idea of involvement than those aged 25 and over. The proportion of the latter group 'not yet involved but willing' was barely one third (34%), whereas it was almost one half of 18-24 year-olds (47%) and considerably more than half (56%) of the 12-17 year-olds.

Table 2.1 Involvement and willingness to be involved with voluntary organisations set up to help the countries of the Third World (per cent)

	1995 12-24 yrs	1999 average	% change	1999 12-17 yrs	1999 18-24 yrs	1999 25+ yrs
Already involved	5	8	+3	8	8	10
Not currently but prepared to be involved	55	52	-3	56	47	34
Involved previously but no longer	-	9	n/a	6	12	12
Not prepared to be involved	39	30	-9	28	32	43

Source: McDonnell and Wegimont, 2000; Wegimont, 2000.

The DEFY research addresses a further very important issue. People's level of motivation and commitment regarding social issues, whatever their age, is likely to be influenced by the extent to which they think they can actually have an impact on the society around them. Table 2.2 shows the extent to which young people in 1995 and 1999 thought they could 'help to bring about improvements in their locality, their country and their world' according to the DEFY research (McDonnell and Wegimont, 2000: 10). Overall, the responses might on first glance appear encouraging, since there are majorities in the affirmative in all cases. However, the trend merits careful attention. For the overall 12-24 year-old group, the proportion thinking they could do so declined by 13% (from 74% to 61%) in relation to the local level and by 14% (from 66% to 52%) in relation to the national level in the period between the two surveys. The percentage thinking they could make an improvement globally increased, but only by 5% overall. The breakdown of the 1999 figures into the 12-17 year-olds and 18-24 year-olds shows that confidence in being able to make a difference does not increase with age, particularly at local level.

Table 2.2 Can young people help to bring about improvements in their locality, their country and their world? (per cent)

		1995 12-24 yrs	1999 average	% change	1999 12-17 yrs	1999 18-24 yrs
Local	Yes	74	61	-13	64	59
	No	18	31	+13	27	34
National	Yes	66	52	-14	51	52
	No	26	35	+9	33	37
Global	Yes	66	71	+5	70	71
	No	24	20	-4	19	20

Source: McDonnell and Wegimont, 2000.

Attitudes towards Development Cooperation

Returning to broader attitudinal issues, a study commissioned by Ireland Aid/NCDE in 2002 investigated *Attitudes Towards Development Cooperation in Ireland* and included a national sample survey of persons aged 15 and over (Weafer, 2002). The key findings are presented by broad age group, including the 15-24 year old category, making it possible to draw out some broad comparisons between the younger and older respondents.

● With regard to 'knowledge about developing countries', the youngest age group claims to know least while the oldest (65+) claims to know most. Other groups with relatively low levels of knowledge are: Dublin residents, young single adults and those with no children, those attending church infrequently or never, and – especially – people who are not concerned about levels of poverty in developing countries.

● 'Concern about levels of poverty' in developing countries was lowest among the youngest age cohort, and highest among women and those with higher levels of education. Overall, respondents did not have a clear image of what overseas development involves. Once again the youngest age cohort expressed most uncertainty (along with Dublin residents and working class respondents). These were also among the groups least likely to have heard of Ireland Aid (now Irish Aid).

● Among all respondents, and in keeping with the international research cited below, the media are dominant as sources of information: TV news, newspapers, other TV programmes and 'third world charities' being the four most commonly mentioned. School/education was, not surprisingly, more likely to be mentioned by younger respondents and especially students.

● As regards perceived reliability of information, younger people (and Dublin and Leinster residents) were more likely to regard the media as unreliable; and also to regard school as unreliable, although those with highest levels of education had the most positive views of school.

Attitudes of Second-Level Students and Teachers

A further recent important source of information on attitudes to development issues among Irish adults and young people is the report *Development Education in Irish Post-Primary Schools*, funded by Irish Aid and jointly conducted by the Shannon Curriculum Development Centre and the University of Limerick (Gleeson et al., 2007). This study might be regarded as being of particular interest in the present context because it took place specifically within the education system (of which youth work is defined as a part both by practitioners and by legislation) and focuses separately on the attitudes of the adults and young people who interact within that system. It uses primarily quantitative methods.

A total of 1193 teachers and 4970 students were surveyed (the students being sampled from second year and fifth year). The report presents findings separately for teachers, students and for schools (the first two will be focused on here).

● Teachers were found to show relatively low levels of activism in relation to development issues, the most prevalent types of activity being passive in nature (for example making a donation, which scored 90.5% compared to 3.4% for 'participating in a demonstration on a Third World issue').

● More than 60% of teachers scored low on levels of knowledge of development and aid issues, 'raising questions about the content knowledge of the teaching force as a whole...and their consequent capacity to teach these issues effectively' (Gleeson et al., 2007: 15). Only 17.6% considered themselves well-informed, and just over one third (35.6%) said they had a high or very high level of interest in Third World issues.

● A very high proportion of teachers (84%) had taught some 'Third World/Developing World topic' in the previous five years, but only 32% perceived themselves as being engaged in 'development education' while doing so. Furthermore, the methodologies used tended to be 'quite didactic' – textbooks and videos/DVDs – even though textbook-based methods were identified as most effective by less than 5% of respondents. Perceived opportunities to address development education topics varied considerably depending on the teacher's subject.

● Development education was perceived to be 'more valued' by teachers in secondary schools than those in community and comprehensive schools and vocational schools; and teachers in vocational schools were considerably less likely to perceive

their students to be interested in these topics. This suggests a class dimension to the findings although this is not pursued in the report.

● The gender dimension is however addressed. Female teachers tended to show higher levels of activism than male teachers, although not a significantly higher level of knowledge. Teachers in single-sex girls' schools (who are more likely to be female) are more likely to state that development education is valued in their school and more likely to say that they enjoy teaching these subjects.

The main findings relating to second-level school students in the *Development Education in Irish Post-Primary Schools* report are as follows.

● Almost three quarters of second and fifth year students report that they are either very concerned or quite concerned about poverty in the Third World. 'This is a fairly consistent finding irrespective of student gender or, in the case of second years, school type and represents a high level of concern about Third World poverty from a sizeable majority of students' (Gleeson et al., 2007: 33).

● Knowledge of development and global issues as measured by the survey instruments (which asked a range of specific factual questions) is 'quite high given the level of knowledge required and the complexity of the tasks undertaken'(ibid: 37). The second year cohort has an average score of slightly under 5 out of 10 for the

survey items (results for fifth year students are not provided).

● There are mixed messages regarding the students' reactions to particular situations or scenarios. Generally, their interactions with images and messages concerning the Third World evoke 'feelings of pity and a sense of unfairness' (ibid: 50). However, while the older students (i.e. fifth years) were more likely have a sense of unfairness on seeing a picture of a starving child (21.3% as compared with 14.7% for second years), they were less likely to do so on hearing that children were being exploited (41.2% as compared with 50.7%).

● Regarding activism, 64% of second year students and 45% of fifth years agreed or strongly agreed that 'I take actions that make a difference to the future of the Third World'. In general, the young people's levels of activism were found to be 'stronger than their teachers' (ibid: 39). Fundraising was the activity most frequently undertaken by both year groups.

The *Development Education in Irish Post-Primary Schools* research contains very interesting findings regarding 'inter-group relations' in Ireland, and these are relevant in the current context since some global justice issues have a significant intercultural dimension. On a 'social distance scale' exercise (administered to the students but not the teachers), students reported relatively low levels of social distance from a range of minority groups, the lowest level of distance being from 'Black Africans', followed by 'Eastern Europeans' and Muslims. However,

considerable distance was reported from members of the Travelling community. Only 31.1% of second year students and 27.2% of fifth year students answered 'yes' to the statement 'I would be happy to have members of the Travelling community living next to me' (answers for other groups ranged from 68.2% to 81.0%). Only 17.8% of fifth years answered in the affirmative to 'I would be happy to go on a date with a person from the Travelling community' (compared with 62.9% for Black Africans, 58.7% for Eastern Europeans and 40.0% for Muslims - the 'dating' question was not asked of second years). The responses to this particular question with regard to all four groups give pause for thought, but particularly the response relating to Travellers:

This clearly suggests a serious need for concerted intercultural education, paying appropriate attention to the relationship between the settled and Traveller communities. It further highlights, if highlighting were necessary, that racism should not be seen as a skin colour issue, but rather as an issue which can be 'white' on 'white' as much as 'white' on 'black' or, indeed, 'black' on 'white' (Gleeson et al., 2007: 50).

Attitudes towards Equality and Inequality

This raises broader questions of equality and inequality which are very relevant to this research. The target of eliminating social inequality was one of the attitudinal items explored in the European Values Study (EVS), as discussed earlier, and equality/inequality are certainly prominent among the key global justice issues (and are perceived as such by young people and youth workers in the current

study, as will be shown later in this report). An Irish study of young people's attitudes towards and experiences of 'equality concerns' in the educational context (Lynch and Lodge, 2002; Lodge and Lynch, 2003) throws additional light on this area.

The study involved twelve second-level schools (varied according to type of school and gender mix) located across six different counties. It included a total of 1,557 students as well as their teachers. A variety of methods and media were used: informal discussion, tape recordings, essay writing, focus groups, a questionnaire survey and observations in classrooms, playgrounds and at school events. The study found that the young participants were 'keenly aware of the inequality they experienced because of their youth and lack of power vis-a-vis adults' (Lodge and Lynch, 2003: 16). However, there was a striking lack of awareness of other types of inequality or of equality as a broader issue. For example of all the 1,202 students who wrote essays about 'their most pressing equality concerns', almost half (48%) expressed concern about the way adults exercised power and authority over them, but 'only a tiny proportion named any minority identity as a contributory factor in their (and anyone else's) experience of inequality' (Lodge and Lynch, 2003: 17). Only 20 young people (1.7%) spontaneously identified race or ethnicity as an equality concern, while only 8 (0.7%) mentioned sexual orientation. These figures are less surprising when we consider the responses of their teachers. When asked about important equality issues in Irish education, 12% of teacher respondents spontaneously mentioned gender (itself a very low figure) but less than 1% identified disability, sexual orientation, religious identity, race or ethnicity.

The young people in the study were not only lacking awareness but were often actively hostile and negative towards lesbian and gay people. In the questionnaire survey, a majority (55%) thought that discovering a friend to be gay or lesbian would be grounds for terminating the friendship. Homosexuality evoked sentiments of ignorance, fear and hostility among boys in particular. Again, the role of teachers appears crucial. When the attitudinal data showing a high level of homophobia was presented to teachers in all twelve schools, only in one of those schools did the teachers themselves raise the subject in their discussions with the researchers (ibid.: 23). Given that other survey research - including the EVS findings presented above - consistently shows relatively tolerant attitudes towards homosexuality among young people aged 18-24, the question arises whether the negative attitudes which appear (according to the research under discussion) to prevail among younger age groups can be attributed to developmental factors, the school environment, the dynamics of the adolescent (especially male) peer group or some combination of these.

In keeping with the findings in the report by Gleeson et al. (2007), just discussed, Travellers were also found to be subject to very negative attitudes in the research by Lodge and Lynch (2003). Almost all the young people in their survey (91%) thought that 'having Travellers in this school would make life difficult for the teachers and the pupils' and more than half agreed that 'if I made friends with a Traveller,

my other friends might not go around with me anymore'. Attitudes towards other ethnic minorities were less negative, although the authors note that their fieldwork took place prior to the 'very significant increase in the number of migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers entering Ireland' (Lodge and Lynch, 2003: 35). Attitudes towards people with disabilities were also more benign, if anything more characterised by ignorance and pity than hostility. Direct knowledge and experience of people with disabilities not surprisingly was associated with much more positive attitudes (although there were few young people with disabilities in the schools studied). In this as in other areas of inequality, teachers, schools as institutions, and the educational system as a whole are implicated in the findings.

> ...where young people had the opportunity to study and socialise in a more diverse environment, differences (such as disability, or membership of minority ethnic groups) could cease to be seen as deviant or subordinate. Schools themselves have failed to provide an inclusive environment in which young people are afforded the opportunity to learn to respect and recognise difference (Lodge and Lynch, 2003: 31).

The findings just outlined may be compared with those of a recently published study by Pat O'Connor (2008) based on a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the content of more than 4,000 texts submitted by young people in response to an invitation to write a page that would 'tell their life stories...describing themselves and the Ireland they inhabit' for posterity as part of the millennium celebrations

(O'Connor, 2008: 23). The texts analysed were a random sample drawn from an initial total of 34,000 texts completed by young people aged 10-12 and 14-17 (that is, in fifth grade at first level and transition year at second level). The analysis also extends to the 'back pages', on which the young people had the option to make a drawing or collage, or to write a poem or a song. All the content, therefore, represented the young people's own choice of what to include or exclude (within the obvious constraints of the classroom environment) rather than responses to structured questions.

O'Connor reports that the majority of young people made reference to the future in their texts (not surprisingly perhaps as they were written as part of the millennium celebrations). Of those who did, just over one in five expressed a hope for greater equality. Girls in both age groups were more likely to express such hopes (O'Connor, 2008: 87):

> I hope that everybody in the world will have a warm house, a warm bed.
> **(Emma, Fifth Class, First Level)**

> Why is it that one half of the world lives in wealth while the other lives in extreme poverty even though there is enough wealth for the whole world over, if it was shared out evenly?
> **(Mary, Transition Year, Second Level)**

> I hope the new millennium and the new century will be considerably more peaceful than the previous ones. I also hope that through the efforts of aid agencies and Western governments the threat of famine will be eliminated and

that developing countries will mature into peaceful, prosperous and democratic nations.

(John, Transition Year, Second Level)

According to O'Connor the content of the texts often interweaves the young people's personal futures with wider social issues, 'whether at the level of individual charity, vocational commitment or more diffuse aspirations', and sometimes in a 'touching, humourous way' (O'Connor, 2008: 88):

My ambitions/hopes in life are to get enough points to study medicine, to help people who arent as fortunate as me, try to stop wars, make the peace treaty in Northern Ireland, work and try hard to get rid of things such as racism and learn sign language.

(Nicole, Transition Year, Second Level)

I had two other brother's and sister's but they died a long time ago...I want to be a Doctor so I will be able to save people's lives and mess with stethoscopes.

(Morgan, Fifth Class, First Level)

Alongside such benign and generous sentiments in the texts, the author also notes that 'within an Ireland where multiculturalism was beginning to be a reality, there were some evidences of a racist ideology' (O'Connor, 2008: 92). More generally, she concludes that there is 'some evidence of a broader global consciousness' but that the most common global references are to the worlds of entertainment, sport and consumer culture and to the place of globalised technology in the young people's own lives.

In this context it was striking that although the boys' orientation (through international soccer) was predominantly towards the United Kingdom, the girls' (through American teen TV) was predominantly towards America. The implications of this difference in orientation are not clear, although it would be interesting to explore this (O'Connor, 2008: 92).

Eurobarometer Findings

The European Commission's Eurobarometer surveys help to place the Irish research findings in a comparative context. Eurobarometers include persons aged 15 and over. Some of the findings relating to development and humanitarian aid and to political attitudes will be summarised briefly below.

Development and Humanitarian Aid

Eurobarometer research has consistently shown young people to express a relatively high level of support for development aid. The precise questions asked have varied over time, as has the degree of attention to age differences in the published reports, but some general patterns are clear.

In the 1998 Eurobarometer on *Europeans and Development Aid* (European Commission, 1999), those aged 15-24 were considerably more likely than other age groups to consider it 'very important' to help 'people in poor countries in Africa, South America, Asia, etc.'. The figure was 32.2% as compared with 28.8% for 25-39 year-olds, 27.6% for 40-54 year-olds and 25.8% among those aged 55+ (in other words it declined consistently with age). There was somewhat less of a difference when the

figures for 'very important' and 'important' were aggregated but the younger age group remained the most supportive of aid (at 78.6%).

A Eurobarometer on attitudes to humanitarian aid conducted in 2005 (European Commission, 2006) found no significant differences by age when it came to justifying such aid: the overall proportion considering it 'totally justified' was 60%. There were however differences according to educational level, with the proportion among those 'still studying', most of whom would be in the younger age groups, being 65%. Similarly, 54% of those still studying considered it 'very important' that the EU provided humanitarian aid outside its territory compared with an aggregate figure of 48%. However, the younger age groups were less knowledgeable about the providers of such aid. Asked to 'name some organizations or institutions' involved in humanitarian aid, 76% of the 15-24 year-olds could name at least one, a high percentage but somewhat lower than the average figure of 80%, and *considerably* lower than the score of 85% among the 40-54 year-olds. The pattern was replicated in responses to the question 'Do you know that the European Union…funds humanitarian aid activities?'. Among 15-24 year-olds, 55% answered yes, much lower than the 63% scored by both 25-39 and 40-54 year-olds (but equalling the figure for the 55+ age group).

This bears out a point often made in the literature on development and global justice (and indeed on other social issues). Support for development aid may not translate into, or indeed be based on, *knowledge* about developing world issues (O'Loughlin, Quigley

and Wegimont, 2000; Weafer, 2002).

Finally, the special Eurobarometer on *Europeans and Development Aid* (European Commission, 2007) found that among all age groups roughly four out of five respondents had 'never read or heard about' the Millennium Development Goals; although the figure for those 'still studying', a group likely to include a preponderance of young people, was lower at 74%. When the goals were listed and respondents were asked to identify priorities, there was little difference according to age group except for the fact that younger respondents were considerably more likely to highlight combating HIV/Aids and other diseases, and a little more likely to prioritise universal primary education.

Political Attitudes

Since issues of global justice and development are closely related to politics and the 'political', broadly defined, it is also relevant in this review to touch on the subject of young people's political attitudes. In recent years, in Ireland and in other countries, there has been a concern that far from being more radical or 'activist' than adults in social and political terms, young people are generally apathetic and uninterested. One of the considerations which led to the preparation of the EU White Paper *A New Impetus for European Youth* was the 'widening gap between young people and public affairs at national, European and international levels, with the attendant risk of a "citizenship deficit"'(European Commission, 2002: 10). Eurobarometer findings have tended to support the view that there is such a gap. In May/June 2005 the proportion agreeing with the statement 'I am interested in what is going

on in politics and current affairs' was 67% for the survey sample as a whole but only 55% for those aged 15-24. Asked to respond to the statement 'I feel well informed about what is going on in politics and current affairs', 58% of the total sample agreed, but only 47% of 15-24 year-olds. Moreover, within the 15-24 age group, the younger the respondents were, the less interested or informed they were likely to feel (European Commission, 2005; see also Lalor, de Róiste and Devlin, 2007: 184-5). This relatively unenthusiastic response to politics and current affairs among young people was in keeping with the actual voter turnout in the elections for the European Parliament in 2004: only one third of 18 to 24 year-olds participated in the elections, compared with a turnout of 45.6% for the electorate as a whole (European Commission, 2005).

Of course 'politics and current affairs' may be interpreted by young people in a narrow sense to refer to institutional (or 'party') politics and the affairs of government, and findings such as these may not fully reflect their interest in or information about the world around them, so they need to be interpreted in the light of a range of other research results, including those presented in this report.

Selected International Findings

This section will present a summary of some relevant research findings from selected other countries which share significant cultural and political features with Ireland: Canada, the UK and New Zealand.

Canada

The *War Child Canada Youth Opinion Poll* (2006) is a national opinion poll of Canadian young people's attitudes to human rights, social justice and international issues. The research explores attitudes of 15-24 year-olds to various topics including: awareness and concern about global issues; war and conflict; hunger and famine; environmental issues; HIV/Aids; developing world debt; terrorism concerns; human rights and UN human rights treaties; NGOs; and the impact of youth action. The study also included a cohort of older age groups for comparative purposes.

The survey found that two-thirds of respondents claimed to follow global issues in the news at some level; among these one in six stated that they followed global issues 'very closely', and this was more likely as they got older. There was also found to be a direct positive correlation between the degree to which young people follow global issues and their concern for these issues.

Half of the young people surveyed claimed to know something about developing world debt, but only one in ten thought they were very knowledgeable about the issue. There was found to be little consensus as to what is the cause of the debt, corrupt governments in developing world countries (15%) and weak economies in developing countries (11%) being most often mentioned.

Only relatively small minorities were familiar with any of the major human rights treaties: the figures were 33% for the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; 22% for the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and

21% for the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (21%). Nonetheless, a substantial majority (72%) thought these treaties are at least somewhat effective in protecting human rights around the world. Three-quarters of the respondents thought that young people can make a difference in making the world a better place to live, but most were cynical when asked how seriously young people's views are taken by decision-makers. Less than one in ten (7%) thought their views were taken 'very seriously' and just over one third (35%) 'somewhat seriously', while 42% thought they were taken 'not very seriously' and 15% 'not seriously at all'.

The main sources of information on global issues reported by Canadian young people were firstly television news (75%), followed by newspapers (52%) and the internet (39%). Young people regarded teachers, parents and the media as all being important information sources on global issues. Famous people who speak out on global issues were much less likely to be regarded as important sources of information on these issues, but were seen to be important when it came to raising awareness. Most respondents thought they learned something about global issues at school: 33% identified war or lack of peace/ territorial disputes as an issue that they learned about in school, with smaller proportions identifying world hunger or poverty (20%), terrorism (15%), environment, pollution or global warming (11%), and diseases such as Aids (5%). Other issues were mentioned, but none by more than four per cent of respondents. One quarter of respondents said either that they did not learn about any world issues at all in school (12%) or that they had no opinion (13%).

In comparing the results from the two age cohorts of the study it was found that for the most part, views of Canadian young people on global issues do not differ very much from those aged 25 and over. What follows are some of the key differences between the two groups:

● Adults (for present purposes defined as those aged 25+) emerged as more concerned about the environment than youth (adults 67%; youth 59%), but appear less concerned about the HIV/Aids pandemic (adults 51%; youth 59%).

● Adults are almost twice as likely as young people to follow global issues closely (youth 15%; adults 27%) but are much less likely to cite the internet as a source of information (youth 39%; adults 24%)

● Adults are more familiar with the concept of developing world debt. They are also more likely to believe that the problem is largely caused by corrupt governments in Third World countries (adults 27%; youth 15%)

● Adults are less optimistic than young people about the chances of progress in their lifetime on major global issues.

The War Child Canada report concludes that the research findings contain apparently contradictory results: on the one hand Canadian young people are clearly not accessing important information on global issues and their knowledge on several topics of concern remains inadequate, yet on the other hand they are optimistic about their ability to make a difference and about the progress that can be made on a global scale in their lifetime.

United Kingdom

A study conducted on behalf of the Department for International Development (DfID) in the UK utilised data from the National Statistics Omnibus Survey which researched attitudes to development among respondents aged 16 years and over (Lader, 2006). For the overall sample, almost three quarters reported that they were concerned with levels of poverty in developing countries; with concern highest among the middle age group (45-54 years: 80%). While 75% of 16-24 year olds were concerned or very concerned, 9% of this age group reported that they were not very concerned/not at all concerned, while 13% reported having no strong feelings one way or the other about poverty in developing countries.

Further age-specific analysis of this data found that when presented with the statement 'poverty in developing countries is a moral issue', respondents 16-24 years were least likely to agree strongly. The youngest and oldest respondents were least likely to agree with the statement 'poverty in developing countries could have consequences that may affect me personally', with 44% of 16-24 year olds disagreeing. When asked in what ways the respondent thought the UK can be affected by poverty in developing countries, the most common response for the whole sample was in relation to immigrants/refugees (30% of responses). In terms of age differences, the youngest age group (16-24 years) as well as the older age group (65-74 years) were least likely to mention the financial cost to the UK in providing assistance/aid. The youngest and oldest respondents were also least likely to have an opinion on the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank's contribution to the reduction of poverty in developing countries: 42% of those aged 16-24 answered 'don't know' to this question.

Young people were most likely to believe that the level of the UK government's commitment to reducing poverty in developing countries was too low (41% of 16-24 year olds). The youngest age groups also contended that the most contribution that the UK government could make would be to work to cancel the debt of developing countries (over one fifth of these respondents). Those aged 16-24 years believed that they could make a positive contribution by donating to charities (72% of this age group) and they were also twice as likely as any other age group to report that they would make an effective contribution by working in a developing country to promote development. Respondents in the youngest and oldest age groups were least likely to report that they would make an effective contribution by purchasing fair-trade goods. As regards information sources on developing countries, young people in the DfID study were less likely to report watching television programmes other than the news to find out what is happening in developing countries. Broadly, younger respondents (under 55 years) were more likely to access information on developing countries through the internet, while older respondents were more likely to obtain such information from the radio. Also, a small percentage of the youngest respondents (aged 16 to 24 years) spontaneously mentioned school/education as a source of information on developing countries (5%) which was more than the negligible figures found in other age categories.

Another significant study carried out for the

Department for International Development was the *Ipsos MORI Schools Omnibus 2006*, a survey of secondary school pupils (aged 11-16) which included questions about their perceptions of international development topics, including: awareness of and concern for developing countries, the way in which information on developing countries is received, awareness of interdependence between developing countries and the UK, perception of how poverty in developing countries could be reduced, and whether attitudes to global issues have changed over time (DfID, 2006).

The study found high levels of (self-reported) awareness of global issues, with 90% of secondary school pupils reporting that they knew at least something about developing world countries. As was found to be the case in the *War Child Canada Youth Opinion Poll* (2006), knowledge about global issues increased as young people got older. Ipsos MORI found that 14-16 year olds were much more likely to say they 'know a lot' about developing countries than 11-12 year olds (17% compared to 10%). Some gender differences were also identified; boys were more likely than girls to report that they 'know a lot' about developing countries (boys 16%; girls 11%).

The majority of respondents expressed concern about issues in developing countries. Two in three (66%) reported being concerned about the lack of food, healthcare and education, while almost one quarter (24%) stated that they felt 'very concerned'. Younger children were found more likely to be concerned than older children (71% of 11-13 year olds compared with 59% of 14-16 year olds).

Most young people thought that poverty in developing countries affects people in the UK: more than three quarters (77%) said that it affects the UK 'at least a little', while just 7% believed that the UK is unaffected (15% were unsure). The most common type of perceived impact on the UK was its provision of assistance to countries involved in war and conflict (35%). Other types of perceived affect included: an increase in the spread of diseases to the UK (33%), encouraging people in the UK to send money/aid to developing world charities (31%) and increasing the number of people who want to come to the UK (30%).

In relation to reducing poverty, young people remained split on whether the world's governments can do enough to reach the 'poverty goals' (part of the Millennium Development Goals) by 2015 (50%: 50%). Girls were found to be more optimistic than boys, and younger children were found to be more optimistic than their older counterparts.

The sources of information cited by respondents were quite similar to those in the *War Child Canada Youth Opinion Poll* (2006) in that television was most frequently mentioned (89%), followed by newspapers or magazines (66%). However, the Ipsos MORI study found that school lessons were more frequently cited as a source of information than the internet (56% and 51% respectively).

Finally, a recent survey commissioned by the British volunteering charity V found that young people expressed high levels of 'concern' about a range of global issues, particularly terrorism, war and poverty, but that they were much less likely to have taken any action in relation to

their key concerns. Time was cited as a barrier to taking action but also, and more interestingly perhaps, 'not being sure how to help' and believing they had 'nothing to offer'.

> This suggests that much more work needs to be done to raise awareness of the ways young people can get involved, and to make clear the importance and value of their contribution, whatever their skills or experience (V, 2007: 7).

The V study also found that young people were much more likely to say they had 'taken action' in relation to the things they 'personally felt passionate about', which were sport (especially among males), friends, music, and family (the latter particularly among females). The pattern here was 'in direct contrast to their response to the local and global issues which concern them most', suggesting that:

> If we are to inspire many more young people to volunteer, we need to bring young people's concerns and their personal passions closer together. We need to develop positive opportunities for young people which tap into the issues they are concerned about while providing an opportunity to enjoy their personal passions (V, 2007: 19).

New Zealand

Overseas Aid: A Qualitative and Quantitative Study (UMR, 2007) is a study of adult New Zealanders' attitudes towards, and knowledge of, overseas aid and development contributions, based on a national telephone survey and focus groups. The survey found that young adults (under 30) and the 60 plus age group were most likely to report that they were 'very interested' in overseas aid; however the under 30 age group had the lowest overall interest (i.e. including 'very' and 'somewhat' interested) at 60%.

Incidence of declared donations increased steadily with age, with 43% of those under 30 declaring that they had donated in the last year, 45% of those aged 30–44, 52% for those aged 45–59, and 60% for those aged 60 plus. *Knowledge* of overseas aid was also found to increase with age, from 28% of under 30s declaring they knew either 'a lot' or 'a fair amount' about the topic, to 49% of the 60 plus age cohort. As regards *approval* for the provision of overseas aid, young adults were found to have the highest levels of approval by a considerable margin: at 83% well ahead of the percentages approving in the other age groups (75% of both 30-44 and 45–59 year olds and 71% of the 60+ age group).

Respondents were asked whether they thought the involvement of celebrities increased their knowledge or awareness of overseas aid issues. The majority (59%) thought they did not, with the declared influence decreasing with age. Among the under 30 age group 45% reported that celebrity involvement increased their knowledge and awareness, the figure dropping to 42% for the 30-44 year olds, 34% for the 45–69 year olds, and 35% for the 60 plus age group.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of Irish research into attitudes towards development

and global justice issues as well as a selection of international research findings for comparative purposes.

In Ireland, there are some sharply contrasting findings. The European Values Study research (Breen, 2002) suggests that Irish young people show less concern than older people with issues of inequality or the living conditions of vulnerable or excluded groups. In the educational research by Lodge and Lynch (2003) they show scant awareness of inequality issues and active antipathy towards some minority groups, although the researchers did not find much evidence of more positive attitudes among their teachers. Negative attitudes to Travellers in particular were confirmed in the report by Gleeson et al (2007), who nonetheless also found that student levels of activism on development issues were higher than their teachers and their levels of knowledge and concern were also relatively high. The research for Ireland Aid (Weafer, 2002) found that young people tended to score lower than adults on most items: concern about poverty in developing countries, knowledge about development issues, awareness of what development aid involves and specifically of Ireland Aid.

In the DEFY research on attitudes to development and justice issues (Wegimont and Farrell, 1995; Wegimont, 2000; McDonnell and Wegimont, 2000), young people were found to think about poorer parts of the world somewhat less than older people; and yet they express a greater willingness to get involved in groups working in the interests of developing countries. It is likely of course that, especially for the youngest age groups, levels of actual

knowledge and experience colour the findings, and in the case of all age groups there are differences relating to educational attainment and socio-economic status that have not been detailed here (but have been shown to be at play in the case of other types of values and attitudes). In relation to all matters pertaining to the formation of values and attitudes, educators - both formal and non-formal - clearly have key roles and responsibilities.

The international research in general suggests that young people are less knowledgeable than older people regarding the relevant facts and issues, but they tend to be very interested and concerned and to express high levels of approval for development and humanitarian aid (and to think that existing aid should be increased). They are also more optimistic than older people about the chances of making a difference and combating major global problems. Some recent research in Britain however notes that while young people express concern about a range of issues they are much more likely to take action about things they feel 'personally passionate' about – such as sport, music, friends and family – and that the challenge is to highlight more effectively the links between these 'passions' and the local and global issues.

The remainder of this report will present the findings of a qualitative exploration of attitudes to development and global justice issues in the youth work context, and the conclusion will attempt to relate those to the literature discussed above.

3. Methodology

This research has employed a qualitative approach to the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. The literature review in chapter 2 has confirmed that there is a need for such research, since the vast majority of research conducted to date on the attitudes of both young people and adults towards development and global justice issues is quantitative in design.

The NYCI Development Education Programme had established a Research Advisory Group in advance of the research contract being awarded (see start of report for membership) and that group was therefore involved from the very outset in contributing to the design of the research project and agreeing the details of the methodological approach with the researchers. The Research Advisory Group and the researchers were agreed that – apart from the use of desk research to collect and analyse the relevant material for the literature review - focus groups would be the most appropriate method for gathering data in this instance.

Focus groups were chosen because they are regarded by social researchers as being particularly suitable when a number of circumstances apply:

● When there is relatively little existing research into the issue or topic in question, or in the specific context in which the research is taking place;

● When a qualitative approach might be expected to throw additional light on some existing quantitative findings, and/or help to contribute to the design of further research (both qualitative and quantitative);

● When a relatively 'natural' research setting is considered advisable, one with which respondents are already familiar and which can enable them to contribute their ideas and opinions freely (particularly important when marginalised groups are involved) (Neuman 2007);

● When it is thought that the group process might itself help to throw light on the research topic (Bryman 2001: ch. 16), or more generally facilitate 'public participation in the research process' (Bloor et al. 2001: 13).

These considerations were all relevant to a greater or lesser extent in the case of the current research, as indeed they were also in an earlier project jointly commissioned by NYCI and conducted by one of the current authors (Devlin 2006). In the report of that project it was pointed out that while focus groups can by their nature pose problems of 'group effects' (for example some members dominating the discussion, others not contributing out of reticence or shyness and so on) the impact of such factors can be alleviated through careful moderation and facilitation. Partly for this reason but also so as to help to ensure validity at the stage of analysis and interpretation, all focus groups in this project were co-facilitated by two fieldworkers; and members of the teams possessed experience and expertise in youth work and group work as well as in research methods.

Selection and Composition of Focus Groups

When the key objective of research is to arrive at findings which can be generalised to apply to an entire population, quantitative

survey-based methods, based on randomized sampling of respondents, are most appropriate. As discussed in the literature review there have been several surveys to date of young people's and adults' attitudes to development and global justice issues in Ireland (albeit not focused specifically on youth work), but a dearth of qualitative research exploring the assumptions underpinning such attitudes or the reasons why respondents might hold the views they do. Qualitative research, including focus group research, is more suited to this latter purpose. In such research it is neither necessary nor practicable to use random or 'probability' sampling (in which every member of a given population, in this case every young person or adult involved in youth work in Ireland, has an equal chance of being selected as a respondent); what is important is that 'the different groups when taken together cover the complete range of the study population' (Bloor et al. 2001: 91).

The researchers and the Research Advisory Group, based on their existing knowledge of and contacts with the youth work sector in Ireland, identified a number of variables that should be taken into account to ensure that as full a range as practicable of the study population (given constraints of time and resources) could be reflected in the composition of the focus groups. These included:

- age group
- gender
- region and urban/rural location
- uniformed/non-uniformed group
- generic youth group/'targeted' project
- experience (or relative lack of it) of

development education programmes.

Taking these variables and practical considerations and constraints into account, and working in cooperation with partners in youth work organisations, it was agreed to adopt a strategy whereby there would be three key research 'sites', each consisting of a geographical area and an associated partner organisation, as follows.

- Dublin city – City of Dublin Youth Services Board
- Waterford city and county – Waterford Regional Youth Service
- County Mayo – County Mayo VEC

In each of these areas key contacts/informants were used to organise focus groups of adults and young people. In most but not all cases the groups were made up of participants who were already known to each other: the use of pre-existing groups where possible is generally favoured in focus group research (Bloor et al. 2001: 22). In total twelve focus groups were organised, six with young people and six with adults (the latter including a group of students in training in youth and community work in NUI Maynooth). The groups ranged in size from four to eleven participants, broadly in line with standard focus group practice (Bryman 2001: 341-42). Table 3.1 summarizes the group locations and participant numbers for young people and adults. In addition to convening for focus group purposes as indicated in the table, the Project Managers' Group in CDYSB facilitated the project by meeting with the researchers at an early stage to offer general advice and feedback on the research design.

Focus Group Questions

The approach taken to asking questions in the focus groups was the subject of detailed discussion with the Research Advisory Group. Researchers using the focus group method vary widely in the extent to which they adopt a defined structure for their questions. Bryman (2001: 346) makes the following observation:

> There is probably no one best way and the style of questioning and moderating is likely to be affected by various factors, such as the nature of the research topic (for example is it one that the researcher already knows a lot about, in which case a modicum of structure is feasible) and levels of interest and/or knowledge among participants in the research (for example, a low level of participant interest may require a somewhat more structured approach).

In this case it was considered that the research team and the Research Advisory Group were collectively in possession of sufficient knowledge to introduce such a 'modicum of structure' and that this would also be advisable (indeed necessary) in the event of a relative lack of interest and/or response on the part of participants. However, the researchers were conscious that even with such an approach it was important to allow for 'at least some discussion that departs from the interview guide, since such debate may provide new and unexpected insights' (Bryman 2001: 346). In addition, visual aids were used as a trigger for reflection and discussion, or what Bloor et al. (2001; 42-43) call a 'focusing exercise', in the form of a number of maps representing the world (and the relationships between its parts) in different ways. Thereafter verbal questions fell broadly into four clusters, as listed below. These were agreed in advance with the Research Advisory Group in the light of the overall objectives of the research project and they have been used to structure the presentation of findings in chapter 4.

Table 3.1 Focus group locations and numbers of participants

Young People		Youth Workers	
Waterford	(4)	Waterford	(5)
Dungarvan	(4)	Castlebar	(9)
Castlebar	(10)	Ballina	(3)
Ballina	(10)	Dublin (different projects)	(6)
Dublin (Scouts group)	(9)	Dublin (project managers group)	(6)
Dublin (different projects)	(11)	NUIM students	(5)
Total	**48**	**Total**	**34**

1. How do participants see the world: what type of knowledge/information do they have about (different parts of) the world, and where do they get it?

2. What do participants see as the main relationships/links between and within different parts of the world?

3. What do participants identify as the key 'global justice issues'?

4. What do they think is being done/ should be done about these issues, and what is (or should be) the youth work response?

Data Analysis

There were four fieldworkers in total (including the two authors of this report) and the particular combination of the two-person team conducting the focus groups varied from case to case, but all fieldworkers read the texts of all the group discussions, which were transcribed in full (Bloor et al. 2001: 59-62). Given that the focus groups themselves had been based on a (flexible) structure of broad sets of questions, the transcripts were first scrutinized carefully and coded according to the range and type of response which emerged in each case. At this stage the research team compared their preliminary analyses to ensure that there was broad agreement at a descriptive level regarding the pattern of responses within the focus groups for young people and for youth workers and to identify more obvious similarities and differences as well as to share preliminary interpretations and questions arising.

The next stage was to examine the transcripts again with a view to identifying themes or issues emerging

- that went beyond any one question (or set of questions);

- that linked in with findings from the literature from Ireland or elsewhere (whether confirming or contradicting it) or

- that raised interesting questions about the perceptions or definitions of key 'governing' concepts in this research such as 'development', 'global justice' or 'youth work' itself.

The research team again shared perspectives on these matters and having received feedback from the Research Advisory Group on a preliminary report prepared a final draft.

At all stages of analysis the researchers were conscious of the diverse composition of the focus groups and the fact that responses represented the opinions and experiences of individual participants who differed on a range of variables (age, gender, type of group or region and so on). However, a comprehensive quantitative analysis on the basis of such variables (in other words a 'count' of types of response or attitude expressed according to the above or other variables) was not conducted, for two reasons. One is practical: even when steps are taken to try to ensure that each respondent can be singled out accurately (for example by asking everyone to identify themselves, give their age, where they are from or what their experience is at the start of the focus group so that individual responses can be 'tracked' though the course of a recording)

technical considerations, group interaction or just background noise can sometimes make it difficult to identify individuals with certainty (and therefore to 'count' reliably). The second, more important reason has to do with the nature of the research design. As the sample itself is not a 'probability' one and the research findings do not claim to be rigorously representative of the broader population, such quantification is unnecessary and might even be misleading. However, the research team was certainly conscious of the need to be alert to the presence and significance of relevant variables throughout the research process, and where it is deemed appropriate in this report attention is drawn to one or other feature of the respondent's (or the group's) identity or circumstances and in some cases tentative suggestions are made as to the possible broader patterns that might be at play.

Ethical Considerations

Arrangements for informing participants in advance of the nature of the research project and securing consent to their participation were dealt with through the support and assistance of the youth groups and projects which cooperated in the research. This was the most practicable and appropriate way of dealing with these matters in the current instance given that the project focused specifically on youth work settings. Permission of the participants was sought and granted for the electronic recording of the discussions. Respondents were in all cases assured of anonymity and confidentiality; and where names are given in the research report these are pseudonyms.

4. Attitudes towards Development and Global Justice Issues: Focus Group Findings

This chapter presents a descriptive overview of the findings from the focus groups. The format it takes is largely based on the key research questions (or strictly speaking clusters of questions) agreed by the researchers and the research advisory group:

1. How do participants see the world: what type of knowledge/information do they have about (different parts of) the world, and where do they get it?

2. What do participants see as the main relationships/links between and within different parts of the world?

3. What do participants identify as the key 'global justice issues'?

4. What do they think is being done/ should be done about these issues, and what is (or should be) the youth work response?

The findings for young people and adults are presented separately below because the focus groups themselves were almost entirely separate and there were significant differences of emphasis or orientation between them, at least in relation to certain questions or issues. Young people's responses are presented first, followed by youth workers', the latter with a particular focus on how they differed from young people's (so as to avoid repetition) and much more attention to the aspects of the discussions most relevant to their specific concerns and responsibilities as adult workers. The following chapter compares the main themes and patterns emerging in a more integrated manner and relates them to the findings from the literature review.

Young People

Knowledge of the World and Sources of Information

In the focus groups participants were initially provided with a series of maps, which showed different representations of the world (including Mercator's Projection, Peter's Projection and a version of the "upside down" world map). The use of these maps allowed for the opening up of the discussions within the groups to broach members' knowledge of the world and different regions/countries. First, participants were invited to compare the images and give their general impressions of them. Subsequently, they were also asked to indicate what parts of the world they knew about, and how much they knew about the particular areas identified, as well as the sources of such knowledge.

Not surprisingly, when presented with the contrasting maps the vast majority of participants promptly recognised the relevant visual differences relating to positioning, size and/or proportion of the various countries/ regions. Most were not familiar with the range of actual images presented (apart from Mercator) and most did not appear to have previously been consciously aware of the variety of possible representations of the physical world or what these might signify, except for the general distinction between 'political' maps (i.e. showing country borders) and others. However, some of the participants *were* aware of the representational issues and; even where they were not, discussion of the possible significance of the differences between the maps quickly generated relevant responses, sometimes in the form of questions.

Interviewer: Why do you think it's [the map] shown like that?

Carol: Maybe it's in relation to wealth or something.

Di [youth worker]: Or population?

Carol: Or population yeah.

Kay: Is it to do with sources, like where it is from, like this is from Trócaire and this is just from an atlas. Like is it their take on it?

Several participants noted that viewing these maps alerts us to Ireland's size relative to the rest of the world. For example:

> One is the one you normally get and one is the one how everything is, like the true shape of everything, Ireland is a lot smaller than it is actually shown on the one that we [usually] get.

More generally, some participants acknowledged how certain map types can give a distorted impression of the physical size of different regions/countries and therefore of the scale of certain issues or problems.

> You realise how many more people would be affected by Africa I suppose, because in this one it looks a hell of a lot smaller and in this one it looks huge and then obviously it means that…it just seems like a really big place to have droughts and famine.

Often, as in the quote just given, there was a sense of the focus group itself providing the opportunity for participants to reflect on these issues for the first time. In a small number of cases – particularly where the young people had already had substantial experience of development education and related programmes or opportunities – the relationship between power and representation seemed already familiar even if these terms were not used. As one young man commented:

> It would probably be [people from] the northern hemisphere making maps.

Again using the maps as a visual aid, the young people were asked to indicate which parts of the world they think they know a lot about and which parts they think they know little about. In general, participants said that they know most about what might be designated as 'first world'/ 'western countries', although rather than using such terms they referred specifically to Ireland, Britain, other countries of Western Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia. This is of course what might be expected given historical, linguistic and political links and – in the case of Europe – it also reflects young people's experiences in school. As one young woman said:

> We said we'd know, we both did French in school, we know more about France, certain countries in Europe or if you have visited like Spain, you'd know more.

In certain cases enormous media exposure had created a greatly increased awareness of other countries, notably Iraq.

> The war in Iraq…you hear about it all the time and you're constantly watching it on

the news.

In general terms the type of knowledge exhibited by the participants can be seen to have been mediated by the source from which, and the context in which, they have acquired it. The main sources of information identified by the participants were: personal contacts/ exposure (including travel); media (including news and the internet), formal education and, less commonly, youth work itself. These categories are not of course mutually exclusive.

Personal Experience

Within the spectrum of information/knowledge sources, personal contact, 'exposure' or experience is likely to be particularly effective. A large number of participants stated that they had visited different countries or areas for holidays, to visit relatives or for exchanges (usually through school but also through youth work). Most popular in this context are Western Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States. For most people, holiday destinations tend to be countries with which Ireland is perceived to have some form of close political and/or cultural relationship. These, along with countries which are physically nearby and countries regarded as 'important' (in whatever terms) therefore tend to be the countries that people will have a greater knowledge of, as the following exchange illustrates:

Interviewer: What are the countries that you'd know most about?

Peter: The ones beside you, the ones that are big.

Aoife: The ones that are tourist destinations,

the ones that [you] generally go to like… France, like people go to France and Portugal and Spain and Germany but not many people go to Slovakia and, like the well known, the more common, more traditional European countries.

Others also pointed to the fact that they have friends or relatives who live/have lived in various parts of the world. Through these relationships participants appear to have developed some knowledge and understanding of the countries or areas in question. This personal experience extends to areas outside of those defined as 'first world/Western countries', with some participants also indicating that they know people who have visited other parts of the world, including African countries and India.

Apart from participants travelling abroad, Ireland's place within an increasingly globalised world means that young people are also exposed to a greater range of cultural diversity through interaction with immigrants. Some focus group participants mentioned how they had developed interpersonal relationships with people from different countries and regions now living in Ireland which had enhanced their understanding of these areas by providing a 'real' connection for them. The introduction of non-Irish cultures presents young people with an alternative to the often negative conceptions of, for example, Africa that they have become used to in the context of their media consumption (see below). For example, one young male respondent observed in relation to African immigration to Ireland:

They're bringing their culture to Ireland,

their dance and their music.

Such a view may not take account of the diversity of cultures in Africa, and may too readily associate 'culture' with certain types of artistic expression, but it has the advantage of acknowledging the positive impacts of migration. Another participant observed how her job as a waitress has brought her into contact with people from other countries and cultures:

> Yeah, working with a load of people where I'm working now, the waitressing again, there's loads of them [migrants], loads of people from different countries. I'd be asking them what's a word and comparing and whatever; and I'd tell them what it is in Irish. You know just learning a bit of their language. Then they go home to get married and they tell us how it's done over there.

The same participant explicitly compared this type of personal contact with media sources: 'It's real, it's not the ad on the telly, it's life experience'.

However not all the views which appeared to be shaped by personal exposure were positive or even accurate (this is in keeping with research findings elsewhere). In some cases respondents appeared to confuse different issues or aspects of migration. For example, the issues facing migrant workers (who make up the majority of immigrants) and those facing asylum seekers were sometimes collapsed together as the experiences of 'foreigners'. The following were two such comments:

> All the foreigners come here...all they get is €19 a week.

> All the shops take on foreigners because they know they'll work at minimum wage.

As is frequently found to be the case in attitude research (particularly in relation to topics such as justice, equality and inter-group relations), and as will be clear from the examples above, an element of *ambivalence* appeared to characterise the views expressed (a point to be re-visited later). In at least one case, this was explicitly acknowledged to be the case. The following passage comes from a focus group with young people who came from (relatively) comfortable backgrounds, had direct experience of development education and of international travel (both through their youth group and with their families) and in general showed a high level of both knowledge and awareness in relation to many of the matters discussed. The context was a conversation about direct contact with people from other countries living in Ireland.

Paul: But it's not always the best of opinions you form of other people for as well as Polish people taking Irish jobs like, as in you don't see it as a new culture coming in and a new opportunity to learn something about someone you don't know.

Interviewer: You see it as a threat, or it's seen as a threat by some people?

Paul: Romanians knocking on your door and robbing your house and stuff.

Cian: Rob your bike. [...]

Paul: But there is some good...

Matt: There are good ones, yeah.

The discussion continued with several of the young people giving examples and expressing opinions on inward migration, and challenging each others' views. Some drew parallels with the Irish experience.

Paul: It's the same for us like, druggies [?] be off in Europe and they'd be like, ah the Irish or whatever, they must be all like that, so it's the same for everyone really.

Cian: You don't see Irish people going around robbing people like.

Mike: You would.

Paul: We were just like all the Polish people about six [sixty?] years ago, off in different countries trying to get jobs. Most people don't realise that.

As well as illustrating the ambivalent nature of some of some of their attitudes, this exchange also highlights the potential of young people, when given the opportunity, to engage in constructive discussion and debate on relevant issues in a youth work context, a point returned to below.

On a few other occasions other attitudes were expressed which were quite negative from a global justice perspective. Examples included:

We've hardly enough money as it is...[we should] sort people out here first like...

I think every country can't be wealthy, like there has to be poor countries for there to be wealthy countries, there has to be positives and negatives in the world or else its not balanced...I think it's natural, if that makes any sense.

Media Sources

Media sources such as television news and advertisements, newspapers (and other print media) and the internet all featured in the focus group discussions as important sources of knowledge about the world. In particular they were seen to give young people access to information about issues relating to poverty (particularly with reference to Africa) and also military conflict. With respect to the latter the 'war in Iraq' was most commonly referred to ('You hear about it all the time and you're constantly watching it on the news') but conflicts in Korea and Africa were also mentioned. A number of the focus groups took place shortly after a television documentary on the chain store Penney's use of 'sweatshop' manufactured products, which publicised and brought to people's attention an example of injustice and inequality that had a connection with their own lives.

Television news, in particular 24 hour coverage, was seen as useful in providing information about current affairs, although the knowledge gleaned was often somewhat cursory.

I watch Sky News every morning, so last year there was big trouble between North and South [Korea] about nuclear bombs or something.

The same participant was conscious of the

use of the media by charities to disseminate information and raise awareness, particularly about Africa.

> I'd say if it wasn't for the charities half of our population wouldn't know anything about it.

However, the media were seen as a somewhat unreliable source of information, with many participants highlighting certain biases in representations of specific parts of the world and particular issues. For example, many young people noted that the information provided by charities, and their advertising, tends to emphasise negative aspects of life in Africa such as poverty, war and genocide. While they recognised these as legitimate issues, they also realised that such a focus does not provide a full account of particular countries/regions. One participant suggested that in relation to Africa the media present 'a lot of negative stuff, really, you never really hear positive kind of tourism kind of stuff' (although of course not all 'tourism stuff' need be positive). Another, asked if the media images we see of African countries are accurate reflections, responded:

> No they're not because there's a lot of places there that are wealthy. It's like anywhere there's going to be poor areas and there's going to be wealthy areas. Do you know there are some beautiful areas out there as well and you don't see that part, you don't see the beautiful areas... You just see all the poverty and people alongside the street with flies in their faces with no food.

Young people also appear keenly aware that a very large proportion of the media sources they encounter and use (at least certain types of media) are produced in the United States. For example, participants commented on America's dominance of film production (or at least production of the films to which they are generally exposed). One said:

> Yeah, because a lot of movies are actually American, I'd say like 90% of them are American, they're all made in America.

Another echoed this:

> I haven't seen so many films from Italy or Australia, 90% of them are made in America.

The significance of the domination of American (or Anglo-American, or European) media in the current context is twofold: young people are less likely to be exposed to representations of the majority world, and furthermore those representations that they do encounter are likely to reflect perspectives and interests different from and perhaps inimical to those of the people who live there.

Even in the case of the USA, one participant observed that the 'saturation' of American media products does not necessarily mean that people here have a deep understanding of the country or its politics (for example the presidential election campaign):

> Even though you hear so much I wouldn't consider that I know an awful lot about it, I'd see all that in the news but I wouldn't consider that I know all the ins and outs.

It was in the context of 'not knowing all the ins

and outs' but being interested in finding out more that the internet was often mentioned. Where knowledge and information about global issues are concerned, it appears young people often see it as a resource to be used when they are interested in following up on something they have come across elsewhere.

> If you read a book about a certain thing that happened in Africa or something, I'm interested now and wanting to know the whole story so I go on the internet and try to figure what they're actually on about.

Another obvious attraction of the internet is the possibility to have contact with other young people all over the world, and this in itself can raise awareness or provide information.

> ...I do a lot of talk on the internet on the message board and stuff like that and there's a lot of people saying that one in every five people is Chinese or something out of the whole world!

Of course information accessed through the internet (or other media) should not be accepted uncritically or without question and many of the young people stressed this themselves. Some spoke of seeking out independent sources of news and websites they felt they could trust in relation to world affairs. In a scouting group one young man suggested that Wikipedia was a useful source of information and a friend replied that it wasn't a 'proper website' (for reliable information) because 'you can put anything you want on that'.

Formal Education

Within the focus group discussions school and formal education emerged as a significant space in which people access information about global and development issues. As compared with the relatively narrow images portrayed in most media, most young people saw school as giving them a deeper and more rounded understanding of global cultures and issues. Subjects such as geography and CSPE (Civic, Social and Political Education) were particularly highlighted. Language classes were also seen as helping to enhance knowledge of particular cultures (but only European ones). One participant noted how in geography class she was introduced to debates around fair trade:

Interviewer: And you had Brazil [highlighted on your map].

Susan: Yeah because of the coffee beans and the fair trade and how they try to process their own beans to make more money but the more powerful states wouldn't let them so I just know about that.

Interviewer: And how did you know that, where did you hear all that?

Susan: Geography.

Interviewer: From school. Would you do a lot of that?

Susan: Yeah.

School-based projects also provided learning opportunities. These might involve accessing information about particular topics or countries ('India is on the course for Geography'), or

engaging in more direct forms of action and intervention.

> This year for the Junior Cert we had to do a project on charities, raising money for charities [and] we had to bring someone in to talk to us about what they do...over in poorer countries.

Also, increasingly and very importantly, the classroom itself is becoming a more diverse place, meaning that there is more 'direct exposure' within the education system ('There are Burmese people in our school'). This direct contact is all the more important because as one participant put it 'Geography can only bring you so far', meaning that young people must use their own initiative through the internet and other means. Moreover, school organisation and timetabling and the division of knowledge into 'subject disciplines' can impose their own constraints:

Paul: There is stuff done in school, it's only first time like, it's not spoken about enough. It's like CSPE is the only subject that I've ever heard about Fair Trade and all, like I've heard about it obviously from the news and all but...

Mike: And it's dropped after Year 3 as well.

Joe: Most schools only have it like one class a week.

Paul: And they put you on a bit of it for the class and then they go onto a different subject like.

Youth Work

The group of young people just quoted were involved in scouting and they had a much more rewarding experience of learning about global issues through youth work than through school. They spoke about this enthusiastically, noticeably more so than the young people in the other groups. There was a 'different attitude' in the youth group, more informality and a greater openness to different views.

James: You're able to express an opinion. In school like you say one thing and teachers are like no, you're wrong and then move on.

Interviewer: So here you could actually have a discussion about the student protests in town or things that are important?

James: Yeah, only a few teachers in my school you could actually hold a conversation with.

The point was also stressed that in youth work, unlike formal education, participation is voluntary – 'we all want to be here' - which makes the learning environment more relaxed and enjoyable.

Global Relationships

After discussing the different ways of envisaging and representing the world and identifying what they saw as its main 'parts' (countries, regions, continents, political blocks and so on) participants in the focus groups were asked about the *relationships* between the different parts: how and why do different parts of the world relate to each other?

Responses varied considerably. In one case

where the young people had very little experience of global issues or development education they struggled to respond at all except to say that history was important, even when the question was presented in a variety of ways and illustrative examples were given. In other cases answers came readily. In one group the immediate response focused on continents:

Lisa: You kind be going by continent, really. Like America, Europe, Asia...you know Africa, and then you have your inter-relations.

Interviewer: And what would you say about it?

Lisa: Each continent has their own problems. Africa seems fairly bad, and then America kind of, you know, they usually get on well but then they don't.

With some probing the young people quickly identified examples of 'good' and 'bad' relationships between neighbouring countries on the same continents as well as further afield, and China and Tibet were given as examples.

Interviewer: China and Tibet yeah. And why do you think...what are the things that make those relationships bad, is it about money, is it about religion, culture, trade...

Ciara: Power. China has so much power over Tibet and then America has so much power over Iraq and then it's kind of it's like, somebody abusing their power. America has so much power they kind of abuse and China has so much power they abuse it and then people are rebelling, they

have some education and they realise they are being [?].

Interviewer: And what gives them that power? Is it because they're richer, is it because [of their colour],is it because of their history?

Aaron: They've got a bigger country so they can have a bigger army and they can bomb.

Clearly the arguments made and examples given were not always very nuanced, but awareness that unequal power relations are of great global importance was evident in a number of the focus groups. Colonialism was mentioned spontaneously (i.e. without prompting by the researchers) in the focus group with scouting young people, who went on to discuss how international power relations and power blocs were changing: it had been a case for a long time of 'the three most powerful'... 'America, Europe, Russia', but more recently other counties like China and India had started to become global forces; '..they're coming into a superpower of their own but they are not fully asserting themselves yet'. The issues in relation to which power is exercised were seen to include religion, culture, land, oil, and other material or economic resources. In another group the following exchange took place:

Carol: America or Ireland wouldn't like to see Africa being the wealthiest country in the world because it's [about] power...

Interviewer: There's a power thing, so it's something about...

Carol: Yeah they want to keep them in the situation they're in because if they were to gain, to get richer and to combine and be a powerful nation, I mean they are three times the size of America, [so] keep the people in ignorance and...

Ann: If Africa was wealthy and they had all the technology the whole world would be taken over because of their population...

Carol: But also they went into Iraq and Iran because they were going to make money out of it they wanted oil, there is no oil in Africa so we let them have genocide and kill off thousands of people at a time because what are we going to gain from going in there we aren't going to get anything from it.

Ireland's place in global relationships is referred to in the last quote (which also illustrates some of the misconceptions people have about Africa, for example in relation to oil). Where it did not arise spontaneously the researchers asked the young people about their perceptions of this. Once again, some participants found it hard to formulate a response. Others drew attention to sporting or musical links as well as language and other cultural and historical connections. Power was regularly identified as a factor, and the fact that there are a number of different types of power relationship (based for example on aid, trade, charity) emerged in conversation.

Susan: I think the countries we listed that we have relations with I think they're powerful...

Interviewer: In what sense?

Susan: Like economically...like we're not exactly best friends with Africa, we send aid there but you know...

Di [worker]: Every country we listed trades with China, they're a big trading country.

Interviewer: So we import a lot from there.

Lisa: With Africa we would have sent an awful lot of missionaries out there to work and help...not so much to trade.

The meaning and application of Ireland's neutrality was brought up in the focus groups and it was the scouting group which had most to say about it (as was the case about several other issues).

Interviewer: We're a neutral country are we?

Cian: Yeah we are neutral.

Paul: Not really though.

Cian: Supposedly [.....]

James: Like countries in the Middle East don't particularly like America but I doubt there is any country who would have anything against Ireland [.....]

Paul: Allowing the US air force to land their planes at Shannon to refuel, some enemies of America could view that as aiding an enemy.

A follow up question to this reference to Shannon illustrates how some of the young people's insights were characterised by considerable subtlety.

Interviewer: So you do think our role of say letting the American aeroplanes land in Shannon, do you think that would make us complicit in some sort of injustice?

Mike: It could be naïve, as in turning a blind eye to it, not accepting the truth.

Global Justice Issues

As is evident from the excerpt above, a consideration of how participants perceived and defined 'global justice issues' generally flowed naturally from the discussion of how they saw the relationships between and within different parts of the world. If they did not draw attention themselves to the matter of justice, they were asked a general question about whether they thought the things they had been discussing were fair. Sometimes the answer was quite definitive even if the explanation was less convincing.

Interviewer: Do you think it's a fair world?

Several voices: No

Interviewer: …If somebody, if a Martian came down and looked at the world…

Ian: It's divided up between rich and poor…

Interviewer: And how does that come to be, like who's rich and who's poor and why?

Ian: Because they don't treat the poor the same, like there could be a lot of bad [things shown] on the TV and bring money into the poor.

Poverty tended to be identified very quickly as a global justice issue, and in one group the North/South global divide emerged spontaneously in discussion.

Susan: I suppose the huge [issue] is poverty that's been there for you know as far back as I can remember anyway you know.

Di [worker]: Yeah, wealth is not equally distributed at all.

Laura: The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

Di: It's about who has the most money and who has the most weapons I think nowadays, the most power like.

Susan: And if you're looking at that, I know bar Australia but as a generalisation say everything in the south is poorer.

A young woman in the same group highlighted what she called the 'vicious cycle' of underdevelopment:

> …all the countries that were colonised as well, all the poorer ones, they were the bigger countries that prospered first came in took over took all their raw materials left the people uneducated and they're just trying to catch up now, you know and you can't put money into education if you have any money and you don't have any money because you are not making anything to sell to make money so it's like a vicious circle that continues to go around.

The link between wealth and power was

highlighted succinctly in the scouting group.

> **Interviewer:** …..What are the issues that need to be addressed in terms of justice?
>
> **Resp:** Wealth. That's injustice in itself because wealth can get you away with nearly everything.

Shortly afterwards the point was made in the same group that the wealthy and powerful 'set the rules on what is just', an incisive remark and another example of the shrewdness of some of the insights which emerged in the focus groups to counter the less reflective or analytical contributions. In the scouting group some members spoke confidently and knowledgably about a range of global issues including the difficulty of forcing a change of approach on the part of powerful countries and the fact that in a democracy individual citizens must accept a considerable share of responsibility for global developments.

> **Paul:**…Like the G8 people, they won't get threatened by the ordinary people […]
>
> **Mike:** But the leaders of the G8 are put into place by the ordinary people.
>
> **Paul:**Exactly, for four years, George Bush was put into the presidency again then.

Other specific issues identified by the participants included fair trade, human rights, famine, the environment, natural disasters, child labour, war, religion and cultural differences. Just a few examples of their comments will be given here. One young woman had studied issues relating to fair trade in geography class at school.

> Well I don't think that it was fair that you know that America and other big countries like that didn't let Brazil ship and roast their own coffee beans. They basically said if you don't do that we won't give you any more aid; because Brazil found out that there was money to be made in the shipping and the roasting and they tried to make money but you know the other countries were like no. So I don't think that's fair…Well like I mean it seems to me we had a jar of coffee at a geography test and it showed you that the growers only got 3% of the profit. It shows you how it was split up money-wise and the shipper and the roaster got most of the money, but the ones who were getting the least amount of money were doing the most work… I don't think that's fair you know.

As already mentioned, participants were very conscious of the war in Iraq and attributed this to the extensive media coverage. The view was expressed several times that it was associated with oil and material interests as opposed to a simple concern on the part of the 'West' with the promotion of democracy and the defence of human rights ('…they went into Iraq and Iran because they were going to make money out of oil, there is no oil in Africa …'). As with previous examples, sometimes there was a general awareness on the part of young people that there was an 'injustice' but a limited knowledge of the detail (as in the remark about 'no oil in Africa') or limited ability to articulate the issues clearly. One young woman expressed the view that Iraq was unfairly treated and when asked

why said:

> They've all different religion like, they go by different things to what we go by. They'd be like poor countries.

One issue which was not mentioned unprompted by focus group participants but which they could see the global dimension of when it was raised by the researchers was employment. In one focus group in an area severely affected by job losses one of the facilitators raised the issue and provided some background information:

Interviewer: Why do you think that is happening, why are jobs getting moved to other countries?

Joe: Because they're cheaper.

Dan: Pay less money.

The responses were concise and accurate, but it was very difficult to generate further discussion (as opposed to providing further information). In another focus group in which the participants were generally more knowledgeable and contributed more actively, there was nonetheless little response to this issue.

Interviewer: ....is there a connection between the realities of young people's lives in [this town] today and some of the issues that we have been talking about, say in terms of trade or jobs or...

Val: Yeah I'd say it's all connected.

Interviewer: But you don't think it's so easy to make a connection with people?

Val: I don't think they are aware of it I suppose.

It might be suggested that the researchers in this instance were leading the respondents rather than simply eliciting their views. The researchers themselves viewed their approach as attempting to explore whether young people were aware of the global dimensions of an issue which is unquestionably transnational in scope and which has profound implications for young people themselves.

Finally it is important to reiterate the point that overall the responses to the questions dealt with so far varied very widely, both within and between focus groups, in the degree of knowledge and awareness evidenced and in the extent to which participants could be said to have formulated an attitude or opinion relating to the issue(s) under discussion. We have seen several examples of cases where the young people were very knowledgeable and critically aware and demonstrated considerable capacity for reflection and analysis. In other cases the participants appeared to have scarcely ever thought about the matters being discussed and to have hardly any interest in them. In one focus group the aspect of being a young person in Ireland which the participants seemed to feel strongest about was the fact that it was boring (a 'crappy little country' as one young man called it). This is not to denigrate their response, which was authentic and succinctly expressed, and their participation in the focus group was very welcome in illustrating the range of perspectives that exists. In another

group in which the participants included some members as young as ten, a question asking which world events that we see on the news we should be concerned about drew the responses 'global warming', 'people being killed' and 'Iraq', but also 'car crashes', 'buildings being on fire' and 'fireworks, bonfires and fighting...I'm scared of them'. It is difficult to generalise therefore about 'young people's attitudes to global justice issues', but the next chapter does attempt to draw out some underlying patterns. First, in the final part of this section dealing with young people's attitudes we consider their views about how to respond to the global issues they identified.

Responding to Global Justice Issues

Few of the young participants in the focus groups showed enthusiasm for discussing global justice issues, and for many such issues seemed of peripheral interest. This could be attributed to a number of factors: a focus on the local over the global and the 'near-at-hand' rather than the 'far-away'; a general sense of powerlessness in relation to such issues (in keeping with much of the literature); developmental and sociological factors related to being young (a factor commonly mentioned by youth workers as we will see); or factors associated with the focus group process itself. Participants seemed to feel relatively ineffectual themselves in responding to global justice issues (and relatively lacking in opportunities) although it may be true to say that the more interested and knowledgeable feel slightly more personally effective. As for 'official' and organisational responses, for the most part participants appeared cynical with regard to mainstream politics and also, but to a lesser extent, to some forms of charity.

Institutional/mainstream politics was seen as offering few effective solutions to global problems. At an international level, participants suggested that there is no great willingness for change within Western countries. There was a view on the part of some respondents that it was convenient for the western world to ignore issues of global concern because they did not want to upset the existing power balance in the world. The strongest expression of this view was the suggestion that, because there is 'no oil in Africa', Western governments 'let them have genocide and kill off thousands of people at a time because what are we going to gain from going in there, we aren't going to get anything from it'. A related but less extreme view was that all governments are ultimately most concerned with their own domestic political priorities.

> I don't think there's a particular country you could pick out and say 'oh they do work', because at the end of the day it's a huge government and huge governments are usually there because they're looking after their own country and they kind of think about themselves. But you get individuals who come out; you get organisations, like Amnesty International, they come out and try to look after things...

A participant in another focus group echoed this point:

> I don't think it's one country I think it's Amnesty; people as well and just normal people that try to buy fair trade, it's not just one country... Amnesty isn't really a charity, because it's helping people

with human dignity. Like they might give money sometimes, [but] they're just there to help protect people's rights.

This same young woman was clearly aware of a range of different ways of responding to and combating poverty and other global issues, and of the complexities and even inequities of the aid system itself, as she showed in her response when a friend suggested that the millions being spent on aid was wasted, or at least ineffective.

Carol: If you think about it, they're getting, you could say they're getting millions every year, but if we're giving them millions and millions, where is it all going like because they're still poor?

Susan: Yeah, but you know that more money goes out of Africa than goes in because they have to pay off debts that we make them pay.

There were several criticisms of, or at least questions about, major charities. As one of the quotes just given suggests, there was a perception on the part of some young people that 'mainstream' charities are concerned primarily with disbursing charitable donations and 'helping people', rather than advocacy work, influencing policy, promoting human rights – a perception which clearly has implications for those organisations. There were also questions raised about the way the charitable organisations spend their own budgets:

Trócaire and Concern, they spend a lot of money on ads and the thing is you don't know if your money is going to go

to an ad or to starving people; and you know it seems better to actually go there yourselves, there's organisations that need volunteers and money to go there and build houses. That seems unfair because you are actually seeing what they do and you feel probably like 'oh I did something to help somebody', rather than just giving money and you don't know where it's going. It could go to an ad, it could go to getting people to go there, you don't know. It doesn't feel like helping.

As already noted, many of the young people found it difficult to see how their own small, individual actions (as opposed to donations) could make a real difference. Even the motivation to do so was thought to be a problem when most people's perceptions of 'global issues' is that they are 'far away'. As some of the young people themselves suggested, it is possible to be aware of particular 'global issues' but feel no personal connection to them, which allows people to maintain a sense of emotional distance from forms of inequality and suffering:

Kate: People are in their own little world and that's very far away and it's happened somewhere else.

Niamh: And it's like you say 'oh yeah that's awful that's terrible somebody should do something about it but not me'.

This point was made more than once in the context of a discussion of child labour being used in the manufacture of the clothes many of us may be wearing.

Di: It doesn't affect people at all. Like we walk into a shop, we see something we like; we don't really care how it was made, or that a child was hurt doing it.

Louise: If the child was sitting in front of you here you would be horrified. But the fact that it's somewhere else, somewhere far away, you don't have to see it and you don't have to face it, you are going to just buy [the clothes] anyway.

A young man in another focus group made the related point that consumers would need explicit reminders in order for their shopping behaviour to change.

Yeah but if you seen the sign like, if you see clothes that are cheap, you just see cheap clothes, you don't think about it at that moment, but if you see 'child labour' above it like, 'child labour made this' like [you would think twice]…

There was a general sense of powerlessness in relation to global issues, the most common opinion being that there is little that young people as individuals or even young people collectively can do to create change. The following remarks came from three different focus groups:

There's not much we can do about it… it's hard enough for things to change.

There's nothing you can do really.

It seems really hard to make a difference when you are in Mayo.

Of course comments such as these raise basic questions about how 'the global' is perceived and understood (and 'taught' in a range of settings). It seems that many – perhaps most – young people do not necessarily make concrete connections between their own locality and the wider global context. This may be partly attributable to the fact that 'global issues' and 'global education' (when the latter is explicitly available to young people, which it often is not) is pitched at too abstract a level. Those participants with an interest in raising awareness of such issues certainly thought a very concrete and personalised approach is necessary, and a few practical examples were cited, such as this one in a participant's school.

Well, like my music teacher went to Sri Lanka with her daughter and she went to an orphanage and for our CSPE we had to do a project and we decided to do Sri Lanka; so we had her in talking to us about Sri Lanka because she went to an orphanage and she was telling us about their lifestyle and she was showing us pictures so then we decided for Christmas you know we were so sad because we were told that they wouldn't get anything so we sent a parcel, a present, off, and we are raising money for a photocopying machine for them. So that's kind of good because it's getting us involved with people our own age.

In general terms the young people drew less explicit attention to the value of (and the potential for) learning about, and responding to, global issues in youth work contexts, although the fact that all the focus groups were taking place in youth work settings and that many of

the young people demonstrated a high level of knowledge and awareness means there may be a link between the two. In one particular case, as discussed earlier, the young people in a scout troop expressly drew attention to how much more they learned about – and thought they could do about – global justice issues in youth work than in school. The potential of youth work to address these issues will be given more detailed attention in the section on youth workers' views which follows.

Youth Workers

Knowledge of the World and Sources of Information

When the maps were shown to the youth workers at the start of the focus groups, there was a much greater degree of familiarity with the different images than there was among the younger participants. In particular, most people had seen Peter's Projection before (as well of course as Mercator) and the idea that the globe could be represented visually in a variety of ways, and that these could relate to political considerations, power and vested interests, was well known to them.

> Well Africa is smaller in a normal, regular map and it's probably because like it doesn't really have much power over anyone else so it's made seem smaller because America seems so much bigger, but it's not if you look at it in this one… If you make it smaller you might tend to forget about it more.

> Like power is concentrated in those areas, like the west, so it's like a very Europe-centric or Western-centric sort of view.

But then when you hear figures like two thirds of the world is starving and you think, but this is rich and this is rich, well then when you look at the real size you say alright I see now.

In general, knowledge and information among the youth workers about different parts of the world tended to be organised around large regions each with a distinctive focus. There was a lot of familiarity with certain European countries, especially those associated with languages studied in school, and extensive experience of travel within Western Europe, facilitated by the introduction of the Euro ('It's a currency thing as well…you're going to be more inclined to go to a country now'). Knowledge of Eastern Europe was particularly informed over recent years by the increased number of immigrants working and living in Ireland. Knowledge of 'Asia' appeared to centre on business and increasing economic power as well as developments in technology (and it was noted that perceptions of countries like China and India are changing); and information about developing countries was mainly focused on aid, poverty, famine and war and informed by the advertising campaigns and work done by aid agencies. Recent events and media coverage had also highlighted issues related to employment rights and the exploitation of workers and many respondents referred to these.

Joan: I think we are more familiar with like India, Eastern countries.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Joan: I suppose there is, there's slightly more

information on TV and that if you look for it, there's a lot of trade going on...Penney's documentaries going on. So I think....people have got their...work [in] the IT sector and that, slightly more familiar with that.

In addition to being informed by their own study or (holiday) travel, by reading and by the media, some participants had direct experience of development work abroad and/or work with development organisations in Ireland and this had shaped their opinions and their analysis.

I've been to Tanzania and stuff and seen the poverty there and seen the difficulties that people have, small towns where they had Coca Cola everywhere and you couldn't get a doctor, you know what I mean, multinationals, it's disgusting.

These workers were very conscious of how their experience provided a perspective which was quite different to the 'mainstream' view.

I think it's very difficult, I have an advantage because I worked in it years ago but for most people the only information they are getting is the ad campaigns or the bits on the news and there is no explanation what is really at the heart. You only find out it's about water failure and crop failure. The Ethiopian famine of '84 like they were still exporting massive amounts of crops to Europe where[as] they were having a famine but 'ah they can't help themselves'. Like Ghana I think had to change from rice which used to feed 90% of the population to exporting coffee I think in the '90s. Then the coffee price fell on the world market, they couldn't sell the coffee and they had to go into massive debt to feed

their own country.

A colleague had also been on placement in Zambia and contrasted her experience with the images she had been accustomed to beforehand. As well as challenging the accuracy of such images, she questioned their effectiveness from the point of view of the charities making use of them.

Well that was the difference, these people were portrayed as miserable and starving and we all needed to help them and they were victims. That's not the way people are at all, they aren't victims, they will do what they can to help themselves, they're not sitting waiting for handouts from the western world. But there were other powers stopping them you know that kind of way, that some of them wouldn't even know about it, they wouldn't understand, like from one day to the next there could be 200% mark up on a bottle of milk and they'd no money so just I think the way they are portrayed over here...People get sick of it, that's being honest, they turn off the ads, but the people aren't like that. They [charities] are hardly going to portray them singing and dancing because who is going to give the money then but I don't know, I think people get sick looking at it. The reality would be a lot better I think.

Generally, the youth workers took the view that direct personal exposure was the most effective way to learn about global issues, whether through 'actual travel and experience' abroad or through interaction with diverse cultures and identities in Ireland. In either case

'real first hand experience' was recommended, where 'there is no one else influencing it or twisting or changing what the real facts are'. It was suggested however that all experience is mediated in some way by context; and even those with an understanding of how the mass media work are not immune to influence:

> ...we're all manipulated by the media, no matter how intelligent or smart we think we are, I think.

It was also suggested that there is a common dilemma facing everyone: 'Is it your responsibility to learn about it or should somebody else be telling you?'. Some of these points will be taken up again in the section on responses below.

Global Relationships

As will be clear from some of the excerpts above, there was a high degree of knowledge and awareness among the youth workers of the political and economic dimensions of all major global relationships and of the interaction between the global and the local. For example it was suggested that even if most people (young or old) can't see far beyond their own immediate vicinity, 'those two or three streets [probably] include a McDonalds and they include a Gap' and that everyday lives are inextricably entwined with global processes.

Some of the discussion focused on the fact that a major contemporary cleavage is that between West and East – the so-called 'clash of civilisations' - and it was noted that there has long been a tendency to reduce the world's complexities to a few simplistic categories.

When I was a kid there was the same kind of negative aspect to Russia, like all this media, the Cold War and that kind of stuff. It was like they were like out there, and we were free, and Africa was starving.

Among the workers, just as among the young people, there was a particularly high degree of awareness of the war in Iraq and of related issues, and a generally critical view of Ireland's position in relation to global power blocs, as the following comments from two different groups illustrate.

> I think we benefit too much [from] having alliances with superpowers rather than raising our profile and lobbying for change.

> [Ireland is] like a lapdog really...I think strategically where we are positioned we are kind of friendly with everyone and kind of always have been, you know?

Ireland's place in the world in political terms was related to the position the country adopts in relation to aid and development. It was acknowledged that Ireland has a reputation for generous charitable giving to development agencies, but it was suggested that while we may give money to address immediate problems we do not make enough effort to bring about political, administrative and policy reform which would lead to lasting change.

> We're part of the capitalist [system], there's this focus on charity, but do we care about global issues on the political level, [or just support] the charity?

Another respondent commented:

> But there [is] a lot of money in those countries and it's just the unfair distribution of wealth that maybe Ireland is too stuck in the whole charity model and that we're too much into giving money and we're too much benefiting from unfair policies in other countries and in a way we're buying into that.

The 'charity model' came in for criticism in several focus groups, perhaps reflecting the activist background of some participants as well as their training in social analysis (as part of youth and community work education or otherwise).

> ...like most of the charities, even if they are doing some good work, they're acting out of a charity model... a lot of these campaigns are focused on a sponsor trail, very individualistic, where very few of them have that political [dimension] explaining the reasons why, like.

Global Justice Issues

Not surprisingly in the light of the foregoing examples, most workers did not hesitate when asked to identify the major global justice issues.

> **Interviewer:** If you were asked to just list off the top of your head what are the global issues...?
>
> **Karen:** Environment is a big one.
>
> **Chris:** War.

> **Stephen:** Minority control over resources and the power of decisions.

Or in a group of youth workers in training:

> **Interviewer:** ...[I]n terms of what you would characterise as global justice issues, what do you think they are?
>
> **Fidelma:** Guantanamo Bay just pops straight into my head.
>
> **Ciaran:** Human rights, China.
>
> **Fiona:** Poverty.
>
> **Una:** The injustice [of] the power of one country over another country...
>
> **Ciaran:** ...I would prioritise food and people that are hungry.
>
> **Fidelma:** Child slave labour always comes into my head.

For some the key issues relate to the overall nature of the global economy.

> Capitalism as a system, I would see that as causing an amount of global injustice and economic inequality.

Other specific issues identified corresponded with those mentioned by the young people: energy, trade, aid, human rights, migration, racism. Gender inequalities and related issues were mentioned more often in the adult groups (including prostitution, trafficking, genital mutilation and more general cultural

differences relating to the role and status of women) . And as already noted there was a strong degree of appreciation that 'global justice issues' are matters affecting everyone, here and now.

> ...I do think it's very important that development education is part of our process of awareness of others and how you just take part... in your everyday life, [they] are quite fundamental and they're not that far out there.

The plight of asylum seekers in Ireland was frequently mentioned.

> I also think the other thing is there is a lot of hypocrisy in Ireland so we say we're Ireland of the welcomes...but I think as we've seen...I think Ireland is a very racist society and we talk about global justice, there's a lot of prejudice...there is racism, there is xenophobia in Ireland and I also think at a governmental level - there's people languishing in hospital for three or four years not allowed to work and this feeds into the prejudice of people...I think the government has a big responsibility around educating people about what people do get on social [welfare] than what they don't get, [that would be] more to the point.

Workers were also very conscious of the possibility that the economic downturn will lead to an increase in racist attitudes and be used by those wishing to resist the development of a diverse Ireland.

> ...you know the young people we work

with haven't got a lot of money, but they're hearing that they are losing out because of these people [immigrants]. That's getting worse like, there is less and less resources so that is only going to get worse that people are blaming other people, rather than the government, they're blaming individual cultures rather than the government...you hear people saying, [and] you know they didn't say it [themselves], they heard it [from someone else] because like they're twelve: 'My sister was going to get a flat and she didn't' ...

Responding to Global Justice Issues

Discussion of responses to global justice issues – current and potential – included a consideration of how individuals can change their own behaviour and encourage those around them to do the same.

> I do believe you can do things on a personal level as well, I can share what I have learnt or what I've looked up. As much fair trade stuff as I can, I will buy it. I have other people buying it...I explain between Barrys and Lyons [tea] and we try and get past that. I won't shop in shops if I know they use child labour [but] I know most of them probably do. I have friends driven demented but it's ... I think you can do it on a personal level and then you can try and bring it forward as well, even in my work with young people.

Several workers suggested that fair trade products pose something of a dilemma because they can be more expensive and while this may not be a problem for them personally they

were conscious that it could present difficulties for the young people they work with or their families.

> And even the whole fair trade with buying stuff, I would be very cautious [with] particular kids because I don't want them going home to their mother going, I want you to buy the fair trade stuff, because it's more expensive and that family may not be able to afford it... If you inform them about it without pushing it too much or have it upstairs [in the youth group] and that's the stuff really, people can hopefully [buy it] when they get to their own adult life...

Apart from cost, participants also highlighted the complexities of making the right choices in relation to their consumption and other aspects of lifestyle. In many cases it is difficult to find out if a company or a product is 'ethically sound', and sometimes choices are not readily available.

> ...say for example I want to boycott Coca Cola right, I've now found that Subway is part of Coca Cola, but if you go to some pubs in Ireland, everything is Coca Cola, owned by Coca Cola, even River Rock is owned by Coca Cola. The only drink you can get is 7up which is owned by Pepsi. I do think that some people are very aware and do what they can within their life [but it is difficult].

> I'm scared to look into it otherwise I will figure out I have nothing to buy. I'll assume everyone is corrupt.

Some workers were less involved in making direct changes of lifestyle or consumption but were nonetheless donating regularly to development organisations. The focus group itself provided the opportunity to reflect on the merits of different responses.

> If I thought it would be better for me to buy say fair trade tea and coffee and fair trade stuff and cancel those direct debits I would do that. Sometimes it's kind of hard to know and it's [hard] work to find out which is better, what usage of my 40-50 euro whatever it is every month, would make more of a difference to people in the developing world. The conversation has just made me think maybe I need to check that out a bit...

Sometimes respondents explicitly drew attention to the links between a range of global issues (such as aid, exploitation, environment) and the need to educate people about these.

> It's our job... to educate, there is no point in sending off a couple of million to India and at the same time we're all buying clothes from a certain shop that employs six year olds...and even with the whole climate change and where we buy our food and purchase our food...just say for example if you were buying food and... it's being imported from Peru and that farmers over there [are being made to] fertilise their land in a certain way that it's destroying the natural resources in a certain country.

For the most part, respondents thought there were many positive features to Irish responses

to global justice issues, including voluntary work, regular charitable giving and generous responses to emergency appeals. However, as already indicated there was a generally critical assessment of the mainstream charity model and disapproval of the recent shift in fundraising towards 'commercial' campaigns with very large advertising budgets and a kind of 'tourism' growing around the aid issue. Questions were raised about the proportion of budgets devoted not just to advertising but also administration in the development agencies ('the bigger the campaign, the less money they're spending on the people') and some also questioned the value of groups travelling to work on volunteer building projects.

> When you take flights, accommodation, this, that and the other. And by the time they're out there, granted they do their week's work and don't get me wrong, I know it's going to be a hard week for them, I'm not questioning that. Would it not be better off having €15,000, one person going out and giving the €15,000? The problem is, where does your money go?

It might be suggested on the basis of comments such as this one that while there were criticisms of many aspects of existing aid arrangements there was also an element of ambivalence in the workers' views. For example while criticising certain dominant images of Africa they also tended to agree that, at least as far as encouraging donations were concerned, such images made a certain sense. Although there was criticism of the scale of expenditure on administration there

was also a recognition (sometimes based on direct experience) that aid is a highly complex operation which requires a high degree of organisation and coordination. Certainly there seemed to be agreement among participants that responses to global justice issues need to be strategic and multi-faceted, both in society as a whole and specifically within their own sphere of operations and influence, namely youth work.

Youth Work Responses

In discussing youth work responses to global justice issues the youth workers also expressed a variety of views about young people – their needs, interests, experiences and their place in society. The fact that 'young people in Ireland' are now much more heterogeneous than before was noted, meaning that classrooms in schools, groups of young people on the street and (perhaps to a lesser extent) membership of youth clubs/projects are more culturally diverse.

> …the Burmese…settled here like. Every kid in [the town] would know them, the 'coloured people on the bikes' and they hang out down at the Family Resource Centre, which is the old library, so the kids relate to that and like they're coming to school…so straight into that, that's how they know about it, otherwise they wouldn't know about it.

> …there are more young people in Ireland who moved here from other countries, so there will be good friends that are from Cameroon, that are from Nigeria, and obviously they'll adopt our culture to a degree but at least they [young

Irish people] will have exposure to them, different religions, different cultures, they'll probably develop friendships and stay over with their families and all that kind of stuff. In fact [it's] the most positive way of learning. There was no one in my national school from another country and now there is something like sixty four different nationalities in the school in town.

It was also suggested that today's young people are more aware of environmental issues than older people are, and than previous generations of young people were, and that influencing attitudes when children are very young was key to this.

The environment thing is definitely part of the current generation of young people. …global warming [at first] didn't really grab people's attention but they made it that you know children won't let their parents throw a bottle in the bin or something…it really does [work] because they started it at a very young age and the schools got into it you know…

However, one participant who did a lot of outdoors and adventure work with young people thought that their attitudes and behaviour differed considerably depending on whether they were in their own neighbourhood (which would be classed as 'disadvantaged') or away on a trip, a point with considerable significance for those trying to promote environmental awareness at local level, particularly in working class urban areas .

…environmentally and stuff, you have

kids like saying littering is bad and I can do it when I take them walking and stuff, but the minute I take them home they just start littering because they're like 'well does it matter because this is a crap area to live anyway'…..the minute they're back in their area those rules go out the window. It's like 'ah, sure this is a shit hole anyway'.

Workers recognised that even where there was a strong sense of environmental awareness among the young people this in itself did not of necessity reflect, or lead to, a heightened awareness of global justice issues; but there was a view that it could serve as a useful stepping stone to engagement with such issues, as well as being inherently valuable in itself.

Apart from the environment there was little sense of the workers regarding young people as any more progressive or tolerant than adults. Like adults, they may have a range of attitudes, some of them blinkered or negative.

I've always found and exploring those issues with young people and a lot of young people will feel they're deprived and they're hit upon, they're being bullied, there's this list of negative things and they actually don't think that it's happening to anyone else, only themselves and sometimes teasing that out they become actually quite surprised that those are the same issues that are relevant wherever…[T]eenagers can be very black and white and very idealistic if they're cause-driven and go after something, they've got passion and

vibrancy about things, but on the other hand they can be very closed and can just see [their own] three streets and this is happening to me and that's it...

The fact that young people's attitudes, and adults', are often strikingly ambivalent was also noted, and examples were given from the worlds of music and sport:

Liz: A lot of the young men and particularly in our projects will identify very strongly with the whole black urban culture in the United States, well ok, well it's the music the clothes the whole lot of it yet they can't transfer that to the little black gaffer who lives around the corner. They don't seem to make the connection. Black footballers and things like that, they don't see, they'll still make racist comments.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Liz: I don't know why they can't make the connection, I don't know why people follow English football teams and hate when an English [national] team play, I don't know. People do it all the time, following them all in a different shirt all week. I don't [know]... it's a mental block thing that they can't transfer.

It was also pointed out that even the term 'justice' has a very narrow meaning for many young people, perhaps especially those who have had an involvement with 'justice projects' or the Youth Justice Service.

...how do you even talk about global justice or injustice when most young people when they think of justice they think of the criminal justice system and the Guards, that's it. Justice, what else does that mean, and even to explain it as fair and unfair, I think they can understand it better than justice and injustice.

This leads directly to a consideration of the approach(es) which youth workers take, or should take, to working on global justice issues with young people. It was commonly thought that for most young people, like most adults, global issues in general are a case of 'out of sight, out of mind': people tend to focus on their immediate needs and give little conscious thought to 'the justice issues in our own country not to mention anywhere else'. It was also thought by some workers that young people have 'a lot going on' in their lives already and may find it hard to take on additional 'weighty' subject matter.

Anne: I think as well I think that some young people wouldn't be capable of being concerned about it because they have so much going on in their own lives...

Interviewer: But do you think that some of the everyday things that go on in our own lives are relevant to the bigger picture?

Anne: Absolutely but I don't think that they know that.

Enabling young people to 'know that' is therefore a key challenge for youth workers. One suggestion was to use the topics in which young people are more likely to have an existing interest and find ways of raising their awareness of the global justice dimensions.

I wonder is that a way forward then in that sense that if you use stuff like sport, music, fashion, that young people can really relate to and are very involved in, they have different angles and different dynamics...

These 'angles and dynamics' can be very informal, and that is of course a key strength of the youth work approach: using spontaneously occurring opportunities to enable young people to learn, from each other as well as adults.

[Informal interaction] is more interesting, kids do school all day. If we came in and started to go 'ok we'll talk about Africa'... they don't get anything from it. Whereas we've had wee kids in this week, wee little kids from another country and by the third day it's like 'and what's your country like, and where are you from, and what's your language, and what's your....' They were bombarding [each other] with questions and they were learning bits of the language and everything.

A related advantage of the youth work context is that adults can learn with young people and indeed *from* them, if they are prepared to adopt the appropriate attitude. One worker, asked whether she and her colleagues routinely engaged in casual conversations about global issues with young people, replied:

Well we do at our project. As I say how much people would know about it [may vary] but I tell you what we are good at and I'm sure what most projects are good at, if we don't know we'll find out and if young people are asking, [we say]

come on we'll google it and we'd all sit around and we'd google it if we haven't got enough information, we'll get more information on it.

Such situations could (should) also of course allow for conversations about the significance of the global phenomenon of 'googling'! But not all workers felt as confident or relaxed as this one about handling situations where they were not in possession of the requisite information. Several participants expressed apprehension about getting into discussions with young people – or beginning more structured sessions with them – and finding that they were not sufficiently 'informed' to handle questions arising ('I might be passing on the wrong information the wrong way...'), which suggests that there is room for some awareness raising about the possibilities of informal and peer-led approaches in youth work (peer-led here referring to young people actively facilitating and supporting each other's learning and development, rather than relying on the 'expertise' of adults).

While the view was very commonly expressed that introducing a structured programme on a given theme in the youth group is a sure way of losing young people's interest – 'do a six week programme on the Muslim faith and nobody would be available' – there were nonetheless many examples of planned and purposeful interventions. One example was involvement in an international food fair which benefited the young people both directly through their involvement in the event itself and indirectly through the process of preparing for it (and reflecting on it afterwards).

And I suppose the bit before that could be the shopping and could be the going to the Chinese market shops and to be going to the food markets, that's the bit leading up to it because you know the day is going to be frantic...so it's all the bits leading up to it that's the really useful bit for learning...

It was acknowledged that workers could not assume that the benefits of experiences such as food fairs would include an enhanced awareness of global justice issues unless they took steps to address such issues either directly as part of the experience or in the context of discussions and evaluations with the young people afterwards.

In another case young people were involved in a recycling project in which they got 'points' for each can they returned, which could be redeemed against Nintendo games. It was a great success and very popular.

...I think there's an order coming in tonight and I think there's eight Nintendo Wii's, sixteen DS's.

Here too the benefits in terms of global justice - while certainly potentially present - could not be taken for granted. On hearing about this initiative another worker suggested that the appropriate youth work approach might involve enabling the young people to put the entire project in social and global context.

I think a youth worker's role as well...you were saying about bringing the cans to whatever, like the youth work role there could really be not to just look at 'ah yeah

you got a Nintendo Wii' or whatever, but 'why do you think this company wants to give you a Nintendo Wii, why is that so good like for our environment?', all that kind of stuff.

There were many other practical examples of ways in which youth work could promote global awareness, including of course international and intercultural exchanges. These were seen as particularly valuable in cases where the young people in question would be unlikely to be able to avail of such opportunities through school.

There's a lot of schools now doing these transfers with Africa, that kind of stuff, but again a lot of the time it wouldn't be the type of young people we'd work with because they're getting into trouble in school and they're sometimes not allowed out of the classroom, they certainly wouldn't be allowed to go on a trip like that.

Whatever the activity or programme, a common thread running through the discussions was the need for some 'concrete' or 'tangible' benefit for the participants.

If there is a very tangible outcome the young people feel they're getting something out of it because I suppose it's innate in all of us, unless we feel we're getting something out of it you're not really a hundred per cent convinced...

The tangible benefit need not however be a direct 'reward' for the young person her/himself; it might be convincing evidence

that their actions are leading to significant positive change in the environment or society, or a material improvement in other people's circumstances or opportunities.

> The other thing that we did here was, if people connect on a personal level, that's when people are more likely to make a change...for example, young people here at the moment [are] collecting [for] an orphanage in Uganda, they built it and all these 1,2,5 cents goes to this doctor and she runs a youth club so they can relate to that, they can relate to her having to buy crayons or paper or to do art or whatever... I think people [will make an effort] when they connect personally to something...

All of the positive examples of youth work experiences and responses were presented in terms which made it clear that positive relationships between the young people and the adult workers were essential to success, however structured or informal the interaction. Sometimes this was made explicit ('...the core thing is relationship, the relationship you have with yourself, the relationship you have with [young people] in the project... with your fellow human beings'), and it was related to the fact that youth work allows for constructive dialogue and two-way challenge between adults and young people.

> ... at the end of the day I'm very clear myself what youth work is, it's an educational exchange with young people, it's [about] social development, if we're getting into entertainment and away from the issues that are important in young

people's lives and in the world more generally I think I would leave the job if that was what it degenerated into...and I think we have to accept resistance from young people, some people saying 'that's bullshit' or 'that's boring', we have to have a dialogue about it but we also have to challenge young people and let them challenge us ...

The challenge for the workers was seen as increasing with the age of the young people involved.

> It gets harder, the older the group the harder it is to get through to them. You can get the 10 year olds who would be really interested in recycling or Third World countries, but as they go up step by step they just don't want to, it's not on their agenda.

> ...talking to the kids last night, they're older teenagers, some of them are switching off, I'm being honest now, I'm not trying to... it's a huge subject for a teenager to get their head around, and if, I don't think you could do a global justice group for 12 weeks, they'd be gone, unless there was one or two in the group that were really into it and you could get a group like that together, it's definitely challenging.

Whatever the age, however, it was suggested that the worker's task remains first and foremost to build relationships and discover interests to use as the basis for engagement and interaction ('they all have some interest, it's just a matter of finding

what it is').

An important consideration which arose in several focus groups was the need for the training of youth workers, whether paid or volunteer, so as to be able to make the most of the opportunities that present themselves. Most participants appeared to have taken part in some training, although not necessarily with a specific focus on development or global justice issues and in many cases taking the form of 'in-house' courses on programme planning and various other practical issues.

> ...there's training on how to deliver programmes, how to deal with challenging behaviour within programmes and all that kind of stuff but around where people are coming from, personal beliefs, personal values, that's missing at a lot of levels and I'd say at our own level, at a very organisational level that's missing.

There was a general sense of workers who had engaged in relevant third level training and/or education – not necessarily specifically in youth work or in development education – feeling that they had a framework and a vocabulary to deal with the issues and relate them to the youth work context. One focus group comprised workers on a professional training programme, some of whom had also already availed of other relevant training, and members noted both the value of the process to them individually and the importance of sharing the benefits with others in their organisations ('even with CE [Community Employment] staff, JI [Jobs Initiative] staff, they are not being trained and the knowledge is not being passed on to them...'). However

there was not a uniform view about the optimal nature or content of professional training in relation to youth work practice in this area ('do I need training for that or am I supposed to be creative enough to figure that out myself?'). In another group there was a strong statement from a professional worker that 'we definitely need training for people...we need some frameworks, interesting and creative ways of looking at things...'). The same worker insisted that everyone involved in an organisation should be part of an integrated training programme so that 'we would be singing from the same song sheet'.

> ...it's no good for the [professional] youth worker to be all clear about their prejudices and values and then the other [volunteer] adults that are there to be forming relationships with young people... haven't had that opportunity or haven't been able to develop themselves in that way, so my sense is it would have to be a holistic approach that would encompass everybody that's involved because we would see no distinction in terms of the importance of volunteers or part-time staff or whatever, everybody has a critical [role in shaping] attitudes to it, I think it would be totally ineffectual if it was only particular people that did it or if only the volunteers did it and the staff didn't do it.

Along similar lines, this focus group discussion highlighted the need for an integrated strategy for dealing with global justice issues in practice: an approach which, in keeping with the complexity of the issues themselves, recognises the need for multiple 'layers' and strands of action.

I do think there's layers because there's room definitely for formal programmes as well, there's room for the informal stuff that's there all the time. There might be room for the once off action, like fundraising for building the school, I think there's loads of different things. [There should be an] overall strategy for it there and I think you have to dip into...the tool kit and you pick out the tools that most suit your project at a given time.

So far the responses cited from the youth workers' focus groups, while recognising the challenges involved, have struck a very positive note about the potential of youth work to engage with issues related to development and global justice. It is important to acknowledge that there were also some negative responses, which tended in particular to cluster in one focus group. In this group there was a generally unenthusiastic view of the place of global education in youth work. The senior worker believed that 'youth work is way behind the times' and commented that of the programmes he had seen which are designed to deal with these issues, 'there's not one...you'd see working anywhere, you know, not one of them. The kids we have here, they might do half an hour'. The worker thought that providing incentives or rewards for participation ('what's in it for me, like') might work, and that at least then the young people would benefit from the experience, but that in relying so much on 'the informal thing' youth work was 'way behind times, in the old structures'. A female colleague in the same focus group said she had no experience whatsoever of global issues in youth work.

Interviewer: Have you ever done anything or seen anything done with [young people] in a broader kind of [context], poverty...justice, rights, that kind of stuff?

Rita: No, I've never seen it. I do think they cover a lot in school about the environment, I see it at home in my own family.

On the other hand the male worker, on commenting that 'youth work seems to be focused on personal individual development' added that this was 'wrong as well because kids...maybe need something else external'; and elsewhere in the discussion gave an example of a conversation he might have with young people in the project which could be clearly seen to have a global justice dimension.

You're talking about racism...you see a seventeen year old that's out of work, no job, been in trouble with the guards, as they get older they get a bit smarter and cuter...they might say the Pakistan and the Polish and look at them fuckers, they've all our jobs. Now suddenly we have to relate to that because that isn't really right and you kind of tell them that. 'Look, you're out of work because you're out of school, those guys have probably gone to school and they're here and they're using it'...It kind of eases off the pressure...

These contributions clearly raise again the question of how youth workers (and others working with young people) perceive 'global justice', how they see their own core purpose and what the relationship between the two is. This is a matter returned to in the next chapter.

The final point to be made here is that, even when workers were expressing positive views about youth work's role regarding global justice and development, when they related it to their own work or gave practical examples they very often spoke in terms of what *could* be done or what *should* be done rather than what *is* being done and what has been learned from that. This can be seen in several of the excerpts already quoted above ('it would be totally ineffectual if...only the volunteers did it'; 'I wonder is that a way forward then'). Some further examples can be given.

> I think we'd have to do a bit of exploration, to be better equipped to look at overall needs.

> ...the whole thing you could do around relationships, you could do a really good piece...

> They'd probably switch off and get bored but I do think it could, you could highlight some of the issues or do one or two exercises with them in any group...like yesterday we were doing a group with young people on anger management but you couldn't raise the whole issue of racism with them.

> ...or do you know like even your mobile phone [could be used], like where do the components of your mobile phone come from, where was it made, who made it, things that would be relevant to a young person.

> ...the way I'd do it is through a youth exchange, look at that again and see how's that going, what is the outcome.

> You could build up a programme on that [the environment], a six week programme around that very thing.

This is not to take from the value of the work already happening, and it was of course part of the purpose of the focus groups to explore possibilities as well as 'actualities', but it does suggest that there appears to be room for further exploration and innovation, and for greater clarity within the sector as a whole about the possibilities for practice relating to global justice and development issues.

5. Comparing and Interpreting the Findings for Young People and Youth Workers

The previous chapter of this report summarized the findings of focus group research with young people and youth workers exploring their attitudes to development and global justice issues. The same four broad sets of questions guided all focus groups:

1. How do participants see the world: what type of knowledge/information do they have about (different parts of) the world, and where do they get it?

2. What do participants see as the main relationships/links between and within different parts of the world?

3. What do participants identify as the key 'global justice issues'?

4. What do they think is being done/ should be done about these issues, and what is (or should be) the youth work response?

Some brief points of comparison between the young people and youth workers' responses follow, after which we make reference back to the findings in the literature review and, finally, some broader points of interpretation and conclusion are made.

In relation to their *knowledge* of the world, and not surprisingly, the young people said that they knew most about 'first world'/ 'western' countries, namely Ireland, Britain, Western Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia, with quite a high level of knowledge of some other countries that had received a lot of media coverage in the recent past (notably Iraq) and countries from which there had been a significant level of migration to Ireland (particularly some parts of Eastern Europe).

The youth workers in general were familiar with more countries and more parts of the world (Asia and Africa for instance), although the parts they knew best tended to be the same as for the young people.

As regards *sources* of knowledge, the media were commonly identified by both groups, with news programming and charity advertising among the most frequently mentioned categories, particularly when it came to learning about 'problems' like poverty, war and disasters. The internet was identified by many young people as a useful way of following up independently on information they had gleaned from elsewhere, whereas for youth workers it was also seen as a group learning resource. School provided the young people with some valuable learning opportunities, particularly through subjects like CSPE and geography, and youth work - particularly in the case of the scouting group - was seen as allowing (even encouraging) learning through discussion and debate. While both young people and adults had gained significant knowledge or insights through encounters with diverse cultures in Ireland or through travel abroad (the latter more common in some groups than others, perhaps reflecting differences of class background), the focus groups with youth workers included several participants who had direct experience of development work abroad and/or of work with development agencies in Ireland.

When discussion centred on identifying the major *relationships* between and within the different parts of the world and the key global *issues*, the patterns of response were quite different for the two sets of focus groups. It

is important to restate the point made earlier that few of the young participants showed enthusiasm for discussing global justice issues and for many of them such issues seemed of peripheral interest: they were not among their 'personal passions' as some British research cited earlier would put it (V, 2007). Regarding awareness of the issues, the focus groups with young people included a much wider range of responses than those with adults. In a few cases the young people were very knowledgeable and critically aware and demonstrated that they had already engaged in considerable reflection and analysis in relation to these issues, often in the context of a school subject or project (or, less often, youth work). Their responses were on occasion strikingly incisive and sophisticated. On the other hand, some young people (a minority) struggled to respond to the questions at all or to see any relevance of 'global justice issues' to their own lives or circumstances. Between these two extremes were those young people (the majority) who were interested and engaged and who showed some limited knowledge about the global issues or relationships but certainly an awareness of their relevance and a willingness to explore them further.

Most of the young people were of the view that the world was 'unfair' and that global inequalities of power and wealth were unacceptable, and some were critical of what they saw as Ireland's role in sustaining this or 'turning a blind eye' to it. While it is not possible on the basis of qualitative focus group research to make confident or authoritative statements about young people in general, it did seem to the researchers that the young people with more experience of and exposure to development and global justice issues (whether through exchanges, family travel, positive interaction in their locality or school or in youth work) were also those who appeared to show most concern and more 'inclusive' attitudes. There also seemed, not surprisingly, to be a link between class background and the availability of such opportunities to young people - a point explicitly touched on by some of the youth workers.

In the youth workers' own groups there was for the most part a high level of knowledge and awareness of global issues and relationships, and of the links between the global and the local, particularly but not only among those with direct development experience. There was also a very strong sense of commitment to justice and equality issues, which for many workers was seen as an intrinsic part of their professional identity. They were more likely than the young people to draw unprompted attention to persisting inequalities within Irish society (as opposed to between different parts of the world), relating for instance to poverty, education and health, women, asylum seekers and refugees, migrant workers, and ethnic minorities including Travellers.

When participants were asked to consider *responses* to global justice issues, both the young people and the adults thought that there were significant positive aspects to the way in which Irish people in general interact with the rest of the world (for example a history of philanthropic work and solidarity, charitable giving and generous responses to emergencies and crises). However they also were critical of many existing governmental and organizational initiatives. The young people generally

appeared cynical with regard to mainstream political institutions and also, to a lesser extent, to some forms of charity. Youth workers too were in many cases critical of the 'charity model', particularly, it seemed, those with a background in development or in professional youth and community work training.

As regards responding at a personal level, a few of the young people gave examples of practical actions they had engaged in (such as not shopping in chain stores associated with unethical practices, or making fair trade purchases) and many showed an awareness and an experience of environmental activism, but otherwise the young respondents seemed to feel, on balance, relatively ineffectual with regard to development and global justice issues, many of them expressing a view that 'there's nothing you can do' or 'it's hard to make a difference'. Even among the more activist respondents in the youth focus groups the prevailing view seemed to be that it was difficult to mobilize young people in general to do something about global justice issues because such issues seem 'far away' and it is difficult to make the connection with their own lives. Where there was any success in doing so, it most frequently involved making connections with the lives and circumstances of other young people, and in relatively tangible ways.

The youth workers were much more likely to say that they thought they could make a personal difference to how the world works, although there were different views of how this could be done. In fact the focus groups on occasion seemed to be providing an opportunity for the workers to discuss and evaluate (or re-evaluate) for themselves

the relative merits of different actions and approaches (for example charitable donations, changes in consumption and purchasing patterns). The same applied to the workers' views of the role of youth work in responding to global justice issues. Sometimes ideas were exchanged within the group which were directly to the benefit of the participants ('It never dawned on me...'; 'The conversation has just made me think maybe I need to check that out a bit...'). Apart from one focus group in which generally negative or unenthusiastic attitudes were expressed, the workers seemed to see such issues as being very much in keeping with their professional aims and purpose (and as mentioned earlier and repeated below, even in that 'negative' focus group it may have been a matter of terminology or interpretation). Like the young people, the youth workers believed that responses should focus on concrete, tangible issues and outcomes, building on the existing interests of participants, although this then poses the challenge of moving beyond such immediate interests. Most of the practical examples of existing youth work responses tended to be ones with quite a short term impact or that provided what might be termed 'instant gratification'.

More broadly, the researchers also noted that the workers often spoke in terms of what could or should happen in youth work rather than what was already happening, and that this – together with the other findings from this research - suggest that it is necessary to clarify the nature of 'development' and 'global justice issues' and how they relate to the nature and purpose of youth work.

Relating the Findings to the Literature

In relating the findings of this research to the review of the literature presented in Chapter 2, we need to be careful about making direct comparisons, because the great majority of that literature was based on survey research whereas the current findings draw on focus groups. Indeed, focus groups were chosen for this study precisely because of the dearth of such research to date and the preponderance of survey based findings. Furthermore, the existing research in Ireland and elsewhere is for the most part based on studies of total populations or age groups within them (or broad 'age-related' groups, such as school-going young people), whereas this research is concerned specifically with young people and adults *who are involved in youth work*.

Nonetheless it is of course relevant and worthwhile to enquire whether the findings in this study correspond broadly to those in other research. Certainly, they confirm the finding that young people are generally uninterested in, and even cynical about, mainstream politics and political institutions, national and international, and in keeping with this have rather negative views about the responses of such institutions to development and global justice issues.

The literature summarized earlier included somewhat conflicting findings about the extent to which young people in general are themselves interested in these issues, are concerned about 'vulnerable groups' or are committed to social equality. In some research they score relatively highly on these matters whereas in other studies, including some Irish research, they emerge as less concerned than older age groups. In most but not all research they appear to be less knowledgeable than adults about development and global issues – this is perhaps not surprising given their younger years and therefore less time and fewer opportunities to acquire such knowledge – but at the same time they are often shown to be more inclined towards activism than adults, or at least towards less 'passive' forms of response. In Pat O'Connor's analysis of texts written by young people describing 'their life stories...and the Ireland they inhabit' as part of the millennium celebrations in 1999/2000, there was certainly 'some evidence of a broader global consciousness' which in a substantial minority of cases was expressed in terms of a commitment to greater justice, equality and peace in the world (O'Connor, 2008: 23, 91). However the author found that the most common global references were to the worlds of entertainment, sport and consumer culture (particularly English soccer for boys, US 'teen dramas' for girls) and to the place of globalised technology in the young people's own lives.

The young people in the current research for the most part demonstrated an open, tolerant and inclusive disposition towards development and global justice issues. Their levels of knowledge appeared to vary widely, as already stated, but their attitudes towards the issues, if they were replicated across the entire youth population, would probably be taken to confirm the more positive international survey research reported earlier (with high levels of approval for development and humanitarian aid, high degrees of concern for the vulnerable or disadvantaged, and a strong awareness of global unfairness and inequality,

even when there was not a clearly articulated explanation for it). Given that this differs from most published Irish research, it is open to the interpretation that involvement in youth work makes young people more tolerant and concerned, or else that the more tolerant and concerned young people are more likely to become involved in youth work. Either explanation has some plausibility. There were certainly some expressions of less open or tolerant attitudes in the focus groups, such as the idea that we should 'look after our own' before taking care of migrants, or the view that some groups of migrants should be treated with suspicion, or the notion that greed was inevitable and inequality 'natural'; and there were echoes of some of the negative findings of Gleeson et al. relating to 'social distance' (see chapter 2). But these tended to be in a minority and they were usually countered with forceful alternative arguments from peers.

In one respect the present research differs significantly from some of the more positive international findings (and indeed from Irish survey research): the young people spoken to here were not for the most part optimistic about their capacity to make a difference, or about the chances of raising the awareness of young people in general about the links between their own lives and circumstances and global inequalities. In this context it is relevant to recall the findings of some recent British research which suggests that young people - while expressing high levels of 'concern' about a range of global justice issues - were much less likely to have taken action on such issues and were commonly 'not sure how to help' or uncertain they had 'anything to offer' (V 2007). The young people were most likely to take

action in relation to their 'personal passions', which were sport (particularly for boys), friends music and family (particularly for girls). There is an obvious link between the 'passions' identified here and the topics spontaneously identified by young people in the millennium texts analysed by O'Connor (2008), mentioned above.

In the case of the youth workers the most appropriate comparison is with the views of teachers as documented in the *Development Education in Irish Post-Primary Schools* report (Gleeson et al., 2007). As discussed earlier, Irish teachers showed relatively low levels of both activism and knowledge, but not necessarily of concern, in relation to development issues. Even though the great majority of them were involved in teaching at least one topic with a development dimension, only one third of them was conscious of teaching 'development education' when doing so. There were differences between major school-types with regard to teachers' estimation of whether development education was 'valued', which the current researchers suggest could be class-related. And there were differences on the basis of the teachers' main subjects also. In some subjects (such as geography, history and religious education) there was already a high awareness of doing development education, whereas the situation was rather different in the case of subjects like mathematics and technology and indeed modern languages, even when the teachers were teaching topics relevant to development and even when they enjoyed them. The authors suggest that:

> The low level awareness of involvement in development education on the part of

these subject teachers when compared to their relatively high levels of interest and enjoyment in dealing with these topics, suggests that it may be fruitful for development educators to focus on these subjects as suitable areas for growth

(Gleeson et al., 2007: 30).

This may have relevance for the interpretation of the findings of the present research, in which some youth workers were more likely than others to describe their work explicitly in 'development' terms. As has already been made clear, the youth workers in general were found to have a relatively high level of knowledge and awareness of development and global justice issues and also a high degree not only of concern but of commitment. (The researchers would be wary of drawing too much from this by way of a comparison with teachers since the workers in question - like the young people, and like the vast majority of people who participate in focus group research - self-selected for participation and therefore may have been more likely to be positively disposed towards the issues in question; focus groups with teachers in a similarly designed research project would provide the appropriate comparison.) In a minority of cases the positive attitudes were not shared by workers, but even then – at least in the case of one staff member – the practice that was described as being engaged in with young people actually included what the researchers would interpret as a form of 'global education'.

Combined with the fact that even among those workers who demonstrated enthusiasm for including global issues within youth work there were considerable divergences of opinion as to

what it might involve and how best it might be approached, and whether it would represent 'just an integral part' of youth work or some form of specialism, these findings overall suggest a need for awareness raising within the youth work sector as a whole of the nature of 'development and global justice issues', of how these relate to the nature and purpose of youth work, and of how the overlapping objectives of both can be best pursued and achieved.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The last chapter summarized the findings from the focus groups with young people and youth workers and related these to the literature review presented earlier in this report, noting that the approach taken in this study – qualitative focus group research – differs from the vast majority of the literature which is based on quantitative survey research. It is important to reiterate the point here that focus group research, given the relatively small overall numbers and the inevitably strong element of self-selection involved in their composition, and even when steps have been taken to take account of as many relevant variables as possible (gender, region, extent of relevant experience and so on), cannot claim to be systematically 'representative', and therefore cannot form the basis for authoritative generalized statements about the population as a whole (the 'population' in this case being adults and young people involved in youth work). When carefully sampled however, as we believe it has been in this case, it can be used as the basis for *tentative* statements about possible broader patterns. It can certainly go a long way towards illustrating the range of opinions/perceptions/attitudes relating to the themes or topics at issue and it can go further than most quantitative research in elucidating the reasons behind the views expressed. A great part of its value is that it is interactive and reflective and allows the respondents (or more accurately the participants) to 'talk back' and constructively shape the research process, and raise questions or ideas for further investigation.

Along with the general interpretations of the focus group findings presented in the last chapter, a number of broader points merit being highlighted in the conclusion. As has been noted a number of times in this report, the researchers were struck by the fact that many responses in the focus group discussions were characterized by *ambivalence* (not just mixed views within the group but 'mixed feelings' on the part of individual participants). This could be the case with regard to where the respondents themselves stood in relation to specific topics or issues, what they thought the views of the general public were, and whether they thought they (or others) could respond effectively to the problems under discussion. Such ambivalence may of course sometimes reflect the fact that the issues at hand are genuinely complex or difficult. There may however be other reasons, and on occasion participants drew attention to this phenomenon themselves. Youth workers specifically mentioned the ambivalence evident in many young people's attitudes towards Black people – varying according to whether they were celebrity footballers or rap musicians or just people living around the corner. Attention was also drawn to the ambivalence in many Irish people's attitudes to English sport (again, specifically football): individual league teams are followed avidly – even more than Irish ones - but the national team is often wished anything but success.

While these specific examples may appear relatively trivial, the broader point is that research has shown ambivalent attitudes to be closely associated with stereotyping in intergroup relations, particularly relations which are unequal or where power is a significant issue (Devlin, 2006). This suggests that work to promote analysis and action in relation to development and global justice

issues in youth work might usefully seek to make links with other related work, such as the NYCI initiative on Young People and Stereotyping, or the Equality Authority's broader ongoing stereotyping project.

The subject of power itself was frequently mentioned in the focus groups. Both the young people and adults seemed very aware that there is a power dimension not only to the world's major inequalities but also to most social problems, including war, poverty and 'natural disasters'. However, perhaps because it was being discussed in such a context, the emphasis was on the *abuse* of power, or negative forms of power. The fact that power is not so frequently - certainly not explicitly - identified as a force that can be harnessed, individually or collectively, for good or for positive ends may be related to the fact that there was often a lack of a sense of *agency* in relation to development and global justice issues, particularly among the young people but sometimes among the adults as well. As has been said already, workers often spoke in terms of what *could* be done or what *should* be done about the issues, rather than about what has already been or is currently being done. Furthermore, sometimes they seemed to feel inhibited by factors (such as a 'lack of information' or a fear of 'passing on the wrong information') which need not in fact, in the context of a positive and empowering relationship, be experienced as inhibiting at all, particularly when their own self-defined purpose is often precisely to facilitate empowerment.

Therefore, along with a clarification of the nature of 'development and global justice

issues' and their relationship to the nature and purpose of youth work, some reconsideration and reconceptualization may be called for within the youth work sector of key, related concepts such as power and agency and how these are reflected in practice.

This is all the more important given the apparent tensions which arose in some of the youth workers' focus groups between a strong and principled commitment on the workers' part to promoting positive social and indeed political (broadly defined) change and a continuing imperative in practice (at least as perceived among some workers) to 'deal with the individual' and 'monitor people's behaviour'. In a remark already quoted in chapter 4, one worker commented that 'youth work seems to be focused on individual personal development' and several workers expressed the view that there was an increasing emphasis on 'programmes' which were not always the most effective way to respond to young people's individual or collective needs.

> I think sometimes we can get lost in youth work with the notion that as soon as somebody mentions an issue we must go off and put together a six week programme.

As some workers themselves suggested, what is needed is a more strategic and multifaceted response to the range of issues which confront young people and youth work, including issues of development and global justice. Such an approach would involve building alliances with others within the youth sector and within related sectors including those working to

promote equality (the Equality Authority itself has already been mentioned above and is already a partner) and community development. It might also usefully involve an explicit examination of the concept of 'programme' itself (which is a key term in the legislative definition of youth work) and an exploration of whether a focus on programmes – at all levels within the youth work sector – can at times work against the development of integrated understandings and responses.

Notwithstanding these remarks, it is very important to stress in conclusion that the focus groups conducted for this research project – among both young people and adults - indicate that some committed and effective practice in relation to global and development issues is taking place already in youth work. As several of the youth workers themselves suggested, further steps should be taken to disseminate and share the tools and the learning derived from or informing this practice. This leads us directly to a number of recommendations.

Recommendations

1. In all actions and initiatives flowing from this research, an important consideration should be an interrogation of the key concepts themselves and of the relationships between them as understood by participants ('youth work', development education', 'global justice' and so on), all the more so as two other recent research projects (both within the higher education sector) have raised issues and questions concerning clarity and consistency of conceptualisation and terminology (Centre for Global Education,

2009; Sallah, 2008).

2. Opportunities should be created to enable youth workers to share experiences, perceptions and practices relating to development and global justice issues. These should include:

- a special event (symposium, conference, seminar) designed to raise awareness of the general issues and build relationships and networks;

- targeted initiatives focusing on some of the specific challenges identified by workers or by the research (for example working with particular age groups, moving beyond short term actions, linking global justice issues with young people's 'passions');

- consideration of an ongoing forum or network for the sharing of ideas, resources and mutual support, which might have a significant 'virtual' dimension.

3. The findings of this research should be disseminated through a variety of methods and means in addition to the research report, including conference presentations and published papers within and beyond the youth work and development education sectors.

4. Given that much of the content of the proposed *Intercultural Strategy for Youth Work* has relevance for development/ global justice issues it is recommended that it be adopted without further delay by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and steps promptly taken for its implementation.

5. NYCI's Development Education Programme should avail of its existing links with the National Youth Work Advisory Committee and specifically with its sub-committee on Youth Work Practice to ensure that the findings of this research might be taken into account in current and future developments in the broader youth work sector (for example the proposed national training programme for volunteers).

6. The DEP should also engage directly with the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to ensure that the development and global justice dimension is adequately provided for in the renewed National Children's Strategy and - since this strategy will include young people - in the future policy framework for youth work.

7. The DEP should engage with the North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work (NSETS) which is conducting a review of the Criteria and Procedures for the Professional Endorsement of Youth Work so that the findings of this research might be taken into account as appropriate.

8. The DEP should also engage with providers of youth work education and training (in higher and further education and in the youth work organisations) to explore further the relationships between informal/non-formal/social education (and other 'models' of youth work) and development education/global youth work, building on other relevant recent

research (including Centre for Global Education, 2009; Sallah, 2008).

9. The DEP should avail of opportunities presented by the inclusion of 'youth and the world' as one of the eight fields of action in the EU *Council Resolution on a Renewed Framework for European Cooperation in the Youth Field 2010-2018* (adopted November 2009) and should explore ways in which youth work initiatives integrating different fields of action (including 'youth and the world', 'education and training', 'participation', 'social inclusion', 'creativity and culture') might be used to promote awareness and action relating to development and global justice issues.

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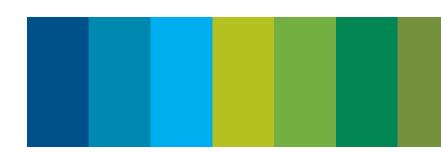
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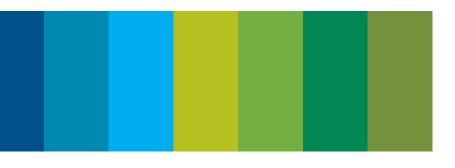*World.* Toronto: War Child Canada. http://www. ccic.ca/e/docs/002_public_engagement_youth_ opinion_poll.pdf

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