

# SHARING KNOWLEDGE ON NORTH-SOUTH LINKS: REPORT ON SEMINARS HELD IN REGIONS OF WALES DURING 2007-08

## ***Background***

The Development Studies Association was awarded a grant of £9,900 by the Welsh Assembly Government as part of the "Wales for Africa" strategy to organise a series of five regional day seminars (grant letter dated 20/03/07). Each seminar would explore in depth one of the theoretical and practical issues underlying different aspects of the links between Wales and Africa which the strategy aims to promote and support. The seminars were designed to build on the success of the day seminar on 22 June 2006 at Cardiff University on *Learning from North-South Links* in bringing together those involved in community, school, business and institutional links with African partners to exchange information and to work together and share lessons learnt on a number of practical matters of joint interest for improving the way links are run and increasing the benefits to be obtained from them.

## ***The Seminars***

The seminars have been organised over a period of 14 months through the (Welsh) Network of Development Researchers (NDR), which is established as DSA's Welsh Study Group and whose aim is to promote debate on the many connections between international development issues and the post-devolution agenda in Wales. Each was arranged in a different part of Wales with a different university or other local institution acting as host on aspects of Wales-Africa links. The first four seminars (the fifth is yet to take place) attracted an average of 60 attendees including 3-5 invited speakers and 4-7 groups or practitioners giving brief presentations of their experiences. Details are set out in Table 1. Notes from the seminars and copies of presentations are posted on NDR's page of the DSA website: <http://www.devstud.org.uk/studygroups/wales-group.htm>

Headline learning points from the first four seminars follow.

### **1 Local Food and Development**

- The trends towards buying local and fair trade foods were both very small up to a few years ago. It's hard to be sure how significant the recent changes are.
- The ethical dilemma between 'local and green' and 'global and fair' is a real one, but there is plenty of room for big increases in both local and fair trade food buying before this dilemma becomes a major issue.
- EU regulations make heavy demands both on local food producers and on producers in developing countries wishing to take advantage of the trend towards fair trade.

### **2 Somaliland, Diaspora and Development**

- Somaliland is a little known post-conflict success story, Despite not being recognised, its government is largely in control of its claimed territory, has charted its own path, has popular support and has much of the form and content of a democratising state.
- Given the historical link with Somaliland which means that Somalilanders form the largest African diasporic group in Wales, Welsh institutions are in a unique position to form links with counterparts in Somaliland. Support for institutional development and capacity building may be particularly appropriate forms of activity.
- There is great potential to build on the links of the diaspora in Wales with Somaliland to facilitate development (through volunteering opportunities, school/community links, etc.)
- It is worth investigating the potential for adding value to remittances either by lobbying for tax relief or, in the shorter term, by channelling them through charities that could claim gift aid and thus gain extra funding for development work.

### **3 North-South International Community Partnerships**

- Why community partnerships? Mutual learning and friendship may be most important. The 'official' justification is indirect, in terms of increased awareness and lobbying.
- Projects arise best from joint analysis of common problems, not 'us' helping 'them'.
- In terms of evaluation, measuring the achievement of specific agreed objectives, while important, may not be the MOST important thing.
- Asking "How have perceptions and awareness of the other changed [on each side]?" would lead to a useful evaluation process which might itself help change perceptions.
- UKOWLA's *Toolkit of Good Practice* is highly recommended.

### **4 North-South School Links and Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship**

- School links should ideally fit in to an integrated, cross-curricular and whole-school view of ESDGC.
- Survey data from a DFID-funded project on the impact of school linking at all levels, north and south, is now being analysed; the report will be circulated once it is available.
- Successful partnerships are based on intangible elements such as 'respect' and 'commitment' (and, for many, 'friendship'), plus recognising how great communications difficulties can be even in the same language.
- "Steep Learning Curve Ahead". Launch out into space and be prepared for unexpected learning!
- School links cannot be expected to make substantial direct impacts on the MDGs. However, they can make a big indirect contribution to 'Education for All' through a positive effect on the southern teaching profession and better development awareness supporting well-targeted international aid.
- Why do school linking? "We just bring ourselves to engage at a personal level, breaking barriers such as those of colour, history, borders, to see you as a brother or as a sister, so that together we can tell your story and tell my story." (Ephson Ngadya, Grassroots Theatre for Development, Zimbabwe)

### ***The Future***

There is plenty of scope to continue this seminar series. Suggested topics for 2008/09 include:

- Religion, faith communities and development
- Media and representations of Africa
- Gender relations and women's involvement in development
- Carbon offsetting

NDR members in other institutions have been canvassed. In addition to the possibility of repeating the same venues, the following are likely future hosts:

- University of Wales Aberystwyth
- North East Wales Institute Wrexham
- Glamorgan University

**Table 1: Details of NDR Welsh Seminar Series 2007-08 “Sharing Knowledge on North-South Links”**

<b>DATE &amp; PLACE</b>	<b>LOCAL HOST(S)</b>	<b>SEMINAR TOPIC</b>	<b>NOS</b>	<b>INVITED SPEAKERS</b>	<b>TITLES OF PAPERS/TALKS</b>	<b>LOCAL GROUPS PRESENTING</b>
13 Mar 07 St Asaph	IFANC/RELU University of Bangor	Local Food and Development	58	Professor Alan Warde University of Manchester	Changing eating in Britain	Ynys Mon/Anglesey Local Food Group Shropshire Hills AONB Hay-Timbuktu Link Dolen Cymru
				Professor Kevin Morgan Cardiff University	Ethical Foodscapes: Local and Green versus Global and Fair?	
				Graham Day and Monica Truninger University of Wales, Bangor	Eating locally: a comparative regional study	
				Morag Webb COLEACP	The impact of EU market and regulatory demands on producers in developing countries	
24 May 07 Cardiff	CPLAN Cardiff University Somaliland Societies in Europe	Somaliland, Diaspora and Development	63	Steve Kibble Progressio (International Catholic NGO)	Reconstruction and democratization in Somaliland	Support Somaliland Somali Progressive Association Somali Integration Society Somaliland Societies in Europe
				Admos Chimhowu IDPM, University of Manchester	The socio-economic impact of remittances on poverty reduction	
				Gibril Faal Chair of AFFORD) Founder of RemitAid(tm)	Enhancing the role Diasporas play in African development.	
				Andy Leather King's College Hospital; The Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET)	KTSP (King's College Hospital, THET, Somaliland Partnership) - the first 5 years	
				Eid Ahmed Somaliland Societies in Europe	The potential for education and university links between Wales and Somaliland.	

20 July 07 Llandrindod Wells	PAVO - Powys Association for Voluntary Organisations	North-South International Community Partnerships	43	Alan Thomas Visiting Professor, Centre for Development Studies, Swansea University	Why community partnerships? Human Values and the Role of Civil Society in Development	Grassroots Theatre for Development, Zimbabwe  Five Gold Star Communities Pilots: - PONT (Pontypridd-Mbale, Uganda); - Brecon-Molo (Kenya) - Crymych-Hlotse (Lesotho); - Bryn y Cwm-Yirgachefe (Ethiopia); - Hay-Timbuktu
				Nick Maurice UK One World Linking Association	Best Practice in North-South Community Partnerships	
				Hazel Johnson Professor of Development Studies, The Open University	Learning from the Daventry-Iganga Link	
28 Feb 08 Newport	University of Wales Newport (also supported by Cyfanfyd, Gold Star Communities Initiative, and Wales International Dimension in Education)	North-South School Links and Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship	76	Sheila Bennell (World Education Centre, University of Wales Bangor)	The Role of School Linking within ESDGC in Wales	Wales-Zanzibar School Links including "ERLAFS" (Education for Rural Livelihoods and Food Sovereignty)  Grassroots Theatre for Development, Zimbabwe  St Cenydd Comp. Caerphilly (Lesotho link through Dolen Cymru)  Wales Somaliland Communities Link  Clun Primary School, Neath Port Talbot  Beaufort Hill Primary, Blaenau Gwent (link with Kenyan School)  Care for Uganda (Bbowa-Briton Ferry link)
				(Karen Edge Institute of Education, London)	Evidence on the impact of N-S school partnerships on schools, teachers, students and communities	
				Bob Doe (Chair, UK National Commission for UNESCO Education Committee School Linking Task Group)	School Linking and 'Education for All'	