

Research on Public Education Models

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Introduction

As part of Combat Poverty's Strategic Planning process for the period 1996 to 1999 the agency has commissioned this brief research survey on the public education models employed by a number of similar type organisations in the semi-state and NGO sectors with a view to improving its own public education/awareness work in the future.

The Agency identified a total of six organisations for the study two government funded organisations, ENFO and the National Youth Council of Ireland and four NGO's, Trocaire, Barnardos, Save the Children Fund (SCF) and Pavee Point. The research was to focus on the public education/awareness work of these agencies with a view to providing information on the key features of this aspect of their operations, the strategic approaches adopted, the documented and/or perceived outcomes/impacts of their education work and the staffing and financial implications of their approach in this area.

The findings are based on a series of interviews with the Directors or key people within the organisations identified by the Directors as having major responsibility for the public information/education element of their operations. All of the interviewees were very cooperative about meeting with me and very happy to be of assistance to the Combat Poverty Agency in any way they could. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and questions focused on the public education approaches adopted, the strategic thinking behind them, and the results and resource implications of the work. Only one agency, Trocaire, has carried out any formal assessment/evaluation of this aspect of their work, the remainder expressed interest but cited lack of resources as the limiting factor. Few of the organisations had separate budgets for public education/information and as an overall proportion of expenditure it tended to be low. For this reason information on these two areas is rather scant.

For the purposes of the report each agency/organisation is taken in turn and the findings are discussed under four major headings, *Background; Strategies for Public Information/Education awareness work; Perceived outcomes/impacts of Public Education work* and *Staffing Levels/Financial implications*. The names of the representatives interviewed together with their positions within the organisation are indicated at the top of each section. An attempt is then made to draw out the main features of the various public education models described together with the lessons to be learned for Combat Poverty in the *Conclusion*.

raise Traveller issues with the general population. They employ six means of doing this:

- ◆ **General Information:** They respond to requests for information about Travellers and their circumstances from teachers, students, researchers, media, individuals and various organizations.
- ◆ **Media:** Pavee Point consider the media a very important mechanism for targeting the majority population. They have devoted time and resources to this by devising their own media strategy which involved training their staff to engage in media work and cultivating allies within the media. The staff at Pavee Point are always willing to talk to the media when contacted and will in turn freely contact them if they have views on current issues in relation to Travellers. This openness means they are regularly asked to contribute their views.
- ◆ **Publications:** For a long time Pavee Point did not publish materials. However, they later realised the importance of written documentation and now have a number of publications on different aspects of Travellers issues which have been widely disseminated. They are also documenting the various projects they are involved in recording the methodologies employed and lessons learned which will be useful research material for other groups.
- ◆ **Education/Training:** Pavee Point staff contribute to Adult Education courses, in-career development courses for teachers and other professionals as well as input to schools, colleges and universities. They hold information days and organise conferences and seminars.
- ◆ **National Resourcing Role:** The organisation has a national resourcing role through the local partnerships which are funded by Area Development Management (ADM). Pavee Point also has a remit as resourcing agency on the Traveller component of Dept. of Social Welfare projects.
- ◆ **Newsletter:** Pavee Point's newsletter covers issues such as racism, crime, women and citizenship.

Perceived outcomes/impacts of Public Education work

a) Documented - There are no documented assessments of the organisation's public information/education work.

b) Impressionistic - John O'Connell thinks they have been reasonably successful in this area especially in relation to the media. Through training the staff are confident when dealing with the media as was evident recently when Pavee Point organised a press conference in Buswell's Hotel in response to recent accusations made against Travellers in the press.

TROCAIRE

Interviewee: Mary Sutton - Head of Home Division

Background

Trocaire was founded by the Catholic Bishops of Ireland in 1973 to respond to the needs and problems of the people of the Third World. Trocaire is concerned primarily with supporting the development initiatives of the peoples of the developing world and it also assists people in different emergency situations. The organisation also has a brief to make the Irish people aware of the root causes of underdevelopment and of our duties in justice towards the developing world. Trocaire has a mandate to raise funds for these purposes. In both its development and emergency work Trocaire relies on the people of the countries concerned to do the bulk of the work involved. It believes in the abilities and skills of its Third World partners and that they must become the agents of their own development. It is Trocaire's business to help them in this.

In Ireland Trocaire engages in public awareness raising on development issues. This includes campaigning on issues of public importance such as the debt burden which poor countries have to carry; against the production and use of landmines which claim so many victims every year; the question of Government assistance levels to the Third World and other such issues which arise from time to time. Trocaire's education work includes developing sectorally-aimed education programmes for Trade Unionists, young farmers and youth organisations; contributing to curriculum development at both primary and secondary school levels. Maintaining an active policy analysis programme into the causes of poverty and oppression underlies and informs all of this work.

Strategies for Public Information/Education awareness work

- ◆ **Development Education:** From its beginning in 1973 to the mid-80's the focus was on awareness raising and understanding the issues underlying poverty. The activities focused on lobbying, advocacy, campaigning, targeting TD's and decision-makers. In the mid-80's Trocaire did a lot of work around the Central American issue and the Reagan visit.

In 1980 the idea was adopted that awareness raising meant Development Education which meant changing the curriculum. This Development Education work was added on to the other awareness raising activities of the organisation and a huge amount of time and money was invested in a Development Education Curriculum model. This paid off in that a lot of the Development Education material is now part of the school curriculum. The feeling within the organisation in 1995 was that Development Education had become almost another Trocaire and while believing that it was

Perceived outcomes/impacts of Public Education work

Trocaire commissioned an evaluation of the impact of their Development Education work by Prof. John Collahan and also carried out a survey of young people's attitude to Development Questions. In general they found that they had achieved their overall objectives.

Staffing Levels/Financial Implications

There are two Education officers, one Research Officer, one Campaigns Officer and one Policy Analyst, a total of five people plus the Head of Dept. involved in the Public Education/Information work. Trocaire also funds one person in each of the Curriculum Development units referred to above.

There are three resource centres in Dublin, Belfast and Cork which have a fundraising and public information/education role in the region. Each office has a staff of three to four people.

Financial

Public Education/Information receives 20% of the Trocaire budget each year. This also covers the cost of the Lenten Campaign and Fundraising

plan their strategy e.g. their poverty campaign was a public campaign and they used billboards, lobbying and TV advertisements to highlight the issue of child poverty.

- ◆ **Accessibility:** It is important to have strong materials in accessible language if you want to educate the public.
- ◆ **Targeting:** It is important to identify a range of target populations and produce materials to suit them e.g. politicians need brief but precise and accessible materials.
- ◆ **Projects:** Within the organisation it is essential to analyse each project asking '*Why are we doing it?*'; '*What do we want out of it?*' and '*What are the targets?*' You cannot select promotional materials unless your target is clear.

While asking themselves the question how best to effect change, SCF looked at what they did overseas and tried to apply it to Northern Ireland. They still provide services e.g. in Strabane they run a Family Centre and they recognise the real need for service provision in many areas in Northern Ireland. Rather than running 3-4 family centres, SCF runs one project e.g. Children in Conflict or a '*good example*' type project where they can subsequently say here is an example of what needs to be done which they can then use to lobby government with. They are now looking at areas identified by groups working with children and communities, they are looking at their needs and looking at projects that would bring about changes. Their approach is more focused and strategic.

The current focus is more on Research, Policy Analysis and Capacity Building in communities so that they can take action on childrens' rights. All these elements are linked by communications and promotional work within the organisation.

Perceived outcomes/impacts of Public Education work

a) Documented - SCF carried out some market research at the time they launched their poverty campaign. The results of this are confidential, however, the aim was to gauge what the key issues were in relation to children and find out how SCF could become identified with these issues. The exercise was carried out by a well known market research group on a shared cost basis with a number of other charities.

b) Impressionistic - SCF has a much higher profile as a result. Poverty and conflict in childcare are definitely on the agenda and they have forced government to do something. The best gauge of this they felt is the frequency they are called by the media as the first point of contact on child related issues. Recognition in terms of policy makers has been noticed in that they are now more willing to engage with SCF in their attendance at conferences/seminars organised by SCF. Approaches from community based groups have also increased.

National Youth Council of Ireland

Interviewee: Eamon Waters - Press and Information Officer

Background

The NYCI is the coordinating body for voluntary youth organisations and services in Ireland, representing over half a million young people. Their priorities are:

1. Ensuring the necessary funding for youth organisations from government.
2. Lobbying government for more comprehensive services for young people.
3. Promoting the work of voluntary youth organisations.
4. Representing the views of member organisations on a national and international level.
5. Providing the necessary information and services to all member organisations.
6. Providing a voice for young people.

Founded in 1967 and funded by Government initially it is now funded via the Youth Affairs Section of the Dept. of Education from the Lottery. The work and activities of the Council are divided among two Standing Conferences, each made up of delegates from member organisations. The Youth Work Services Conference deals with the fundamental requirements of youth organisations such as funding, training, programme development and Government youth policy. The Youth Affairs conference investigates areas of concern for young people such as unemployment and education and develops policies relating to the welfare of young people.

Strategies for Public Information/Education awareness work

The Public Information and Education work of the Council is the concern of all twenty four staff. This work involves the following:

1. Responding to queries and providing information on youth policy to the general public, students and youth organisations.
2. Providing information within the organisation primarily via an internal newsletter *Youth Agenda* sent to members and youth information centres. 1000 - 1500 copies are distributed each month.
3. The projects that the Council are involved in produce materials e.g. Health Advisory material/Aids leaflet which are distributed through youth organisations and youth centres. They also publish reports, education materials and general materials on youth related issues.

opportunity in the Dept. of Equality and Law Reform with Minister Mervyn Taylor and a group of babies from different social and cultural backgrounds. The message was that unless there is a change in attitudes the babies will grow up suffering the same prejudices as their parents. There were photographs in all the national newspapers the following day. This event was also linked to the Equal Status Bill which is on the Government legislation programme for some time but has not been passed. The event raised the question of the public role in reinforcing prejudice and the role of government to introduce legislation to tackle it.

Perceived outcomes/impacts of Public Education work

- a) Documented* - NYCI have not carried out any formal evaluation of their public information/education work.
- b) Impressionistic* - Eamon Waters believes that the Council's focus on the media has been successful in raising youth issues at national level and as a result the Council is better known.

Staffing Levels

All 24 staff are involved with Public Information/Education work to some extent. The Development Education for Youth (DEFY) project employs four staff members and the Council's Press and Information Officer is responsible for writing press releases, design of publications and presentation of all the Council's public information.

Financial Implications

In 1994 NYCI spent £86,353 on Development Education which represents just over 16% of annual expenditure. 3% of the annual expenditure was spent on youth information and over 2% on publications and PR.

which are also available at the ENFO office. A database with 10,000 book titles on it has been distributed to 36 libraries.

- ◆ **Advertisements:** ENFO advertises its services in *Education Today* and at exhibitions and sometimes in newspapers and magazines. Advertising is expensive and their advertisement budget is restricted.
- ◆ **Circulars:** They circulate teachers who have attended environmental conferences and other related conferences.
- ◆ **Database:** ENFO advertises their database through libraries and depends on the libraries to encourage people to use it.
- ◆ **Leaflets:** ENFO prepare their own leaflets but receive assistance from UCD and other experts on specific topics. These are distributed to libraries, local authority offices and at stands at exhibitions e.g. National Ploughing Championships; Ideal Homes Exhibition and local shows throughout the country. There are 75 leaflets on different topics and display units for these are supplied by ENFO.
- ◆ **Schools:** Occasionally ENFO gives lectures in schools but this is limited as staff do not have the time. The *Talk and Trail* package (a talk on ENFO & ENFO Discovery and Research Trails a structured means of learning about ENFO's facilities which ensure school groups get maximum benefit from visits) is very successful with 118 groups having availed of it to date.
- ◆ **CD Rom Facilities:** this enables ENFO to provide public access to the wide range of information now becoming available on compact disk.
- ◆ **NGO's:** ENFO places emphasis on its good relationship with NGO's. It makes its facilities available to them - e.g. a group in Tallaght launched their booklet on *Fuel Poverty in Ireland* at the ENFO offices and the *Self Help Group* had an exhibition on *The Value of Rubbish* illustrating what could be made with rubbish from Ethiopia - as long as the NGO is not using the premises to sell their own message. The ENFO office is in a good central location in Dublin. There is no possibility of having regional offices as the costs would be too high and there is an embargo on public service staffing.

Perceived outcomes/impacts of Public Education work

Liam Dolan judges the success of their work by the number of people who use the service. In 1995 62,000 people availed of their services. One-third of these people used the library and two-thirds were casual visitors taking leaflets and visiting the exhibitions.

Last March ENFO carried out a survey on all queries. There were 800 a week in March and ENFO estimates that there are on average 600 per week annually. ENFO did not have the resources to carry out a detailed analysis of the users, however, they do know that a significant proportion are school students and the remainder are members of the general public who visit the ground floor information office and exhibitions. One-third of all users make use of the library. The number of people

Barnardos

Interviewees: Owen Keenan - Director and Angela Canavan - Information Officer (separately)

Background

Barnardos started work in Ireland as a branch of Barnardos UK in the 1960's. The founder of the organisation Thomas Barnardo was a Dubliner born 150 years ago but the organisation began in England and the Irish branch only became an independent voluntary charitable organisation here in 1985. The purpose of Barnardos is to advance the state of children in Ireland, especially children whose wellbeing is at risk or who are disadvantaged. The organisation is primarily a service provider but Barnardos also wants to have influence on policy issues for children. Their work is divided into three areas:

1. **Family Support Services**

This is direct preventative and early prevention intervention work in communities and the type of family support is different in each area e.g. in Tallaght Barnardos run day nurseries and in Mulhuddart they work with early school leavers. The Barnardos emphasis is to work with the whole family in order to support the child.

2. **Specialised Therapeutic Services**

Adoption advice services which supports the adoptee, birth mother and adoptive parents.

A bereavement counselling service for children is to be launched in June 1996.

3. **Information and Training**

Barnardos identified a lack of information on children in general in Ireland e.g. there is no government agency where you can get information on children. They established the National Children Resource Centre in 1993 to provide Information and Training on all aspects of child welfare and child care for parents and those who work with children. Training is provided to Health Board staff, local community groups and those working in residential care. Barnardos has a panel of Trainers who provide the required training.

Barnardos produces publications in the form of fact sheets on particular issues which are very much user driven and it commissions research e.g. a study on parenting programmes in Ireland - the need for them; materials available etc.

provides an external service and also gets their message across about children and about Barnardos as an agency.

- ◆ **Advertising Campaign:** The purpose of this was to associate Barnardos with children and highlight that they are a childcare organisation to challenge disadvantage and inequality for children. The *Barnardos puts children first* poster was very positive.
- ◆ **Fundraising:** Traditionally this was totally divorced from services and the organisation has worked hard to bring them together. Staff from all areas of the organisation now understand fundraising and childcare and jointly wrote the document **Children First?** which links fundraising and the voluntary element to the substance of what Barnardos work is.

Barnardos wants to develop good relationships with the corporate sector, professional, effective and organised. The corporate challenge, a fundraising event each year sponsored by KPMG is very successful.

- ◆ **Public Relations:** At PR level they are only beginning to be effective. Barnardos feels that advertising is too expensive and you get little out of it. They feel mention in the media is a good PR mechanism. They place a lot of importance on the media and work to improve their contact with it. They stress that you need to be organised to be effective in the media. Barnardos focuses on three priority areas that they wish to comment on - child protection; family support services and juvenile justice. They see the need to educate the public that we are a long way off adequate provision in these areas.

Within the organisation every Tuesday morning the Management team have a 30 minute PR meeting where they review what happened in the media over the past week and anticipate for the following week planning their input. When the Chinese orphanage and Goldenbridge documentaries were screened Barnardos knew about them in advance and had press releases out before the programmes were screened.

Barnardos have increased contact with Local and Community Radio, Radio na Gaeltacht and Radio na Life. Their target is that by 1999 everybody in the country will know about Barnardos.

Perceived outcomes/impacts of Public Education work

a) Documented - Barnardos has not, as yet, carried out any research on their performance. Recently they bought a share of research being carried out on charities but have no results as yet.

b) Impressionistic - They believe they are much better known and recognised now than even three years ago. The increased number of enquiries, which are monitored indicate a significant increase in awareness of Barnardos. The organisation keeps an account of media coverage and this has steadily increased and there has also been a considerable increase in the number of legacies and donations made to the

Conclusions

In looking at the public education/awareness activities of these six organisations there is a remarkable similarity in their approaches. They publish information, lobby on issues of importance, develop education programmes, engage with the media to get their point across and do PR work to raise the profile of their organisations and highlight the particular issues that concern them.

For all organisations in the survey with the exception of ENFO relations with the media are very important. Some organisations are more experienced and focused in their approach to the media e.g. since its foundation in 1973 Trocaire has always had a staff member devoted to PR and media work. Trocaire is both reactive and proactive to media reports and has a very definite agenda to shape the media's thinking on Development issues. Barnardos on the other hand, while long established, are new to the media world and are still working on getting the media's attention and being recognised as the agency which focuses on children. Dealing with the media is a key element in the public education/awareness work of Pavee Point, NYCI and SCF and as agencies become more experienced they seem to be more relaxed about doing media work, using it when they need to and being consulted by the media for their views on relevant issues.

The approach to public education/awareness work varies amongst the six organisations. ENFO is primarily concerned with getting its message across in relation to the environment and since its funding is secure it can focus exclusively on providing a good service. SCF, Barnardos and Trocaire are all fundraising NGO's and have definite agendas re their respective areas of operation ie. childcare and development issues. SCF and Barnardos are more inward looking, constantly questioning themselves, what they are doing and why whereas Trocaire seems more outward looking, constantly seeking opportunities to position itself so as to influence the development agenda. The National Youth Council and Pavee Point are busy providing services, their public education/awareness brief appears to be lower on their agenda being treated more as an intrinsic element of their work.

Overall the need for training for staff before they can effectively be involved in public awareness work was stressed especially for media work and it is considered important to have **all** staff involved in contributing ideas, practitioners as well as management. Most agencies think it is important to have accessible and user friendly materials on the issues they want raised. There is a place for research reports but for the general public information in accessible language is a priority.

SCF, Trocaire and Barnardos, all fundraising organisations, spend roughly 20% of their budget on public information/education work as does the National Youth Council. SCF, Pavee Point and Barnardos budget for a public information/education component in each individual project budget whereas Trocaire and NYCI have separate budgets for public information/education. ENFO is solely a public information/education organisation so its total budget is spent on this work.

Finally, it came across throughout all the interviews that it is vitally important to be very clear and focused about what your organisation is saying to the public and why.