

UK Development Education Network Submission on the Review of DFID's Building Support for Development Strategy

1. Introduction

The UK Development Education Network comprises representatives of:

- Coalition of Aid and Development Agencies (CADA)
- Cyfanfyd, the Development Education Association of Wales
- Development Education Association (DEA)
- International Development Education Association Scotland (IDEAS)

The network exists to share experiences, learning, practice and information on development education activities in the UK. The UK Network has through its collective membership the majority of development education practitioners in the four countries and therefore offers an informed perspective on how the recommendations could impact on the policy and practice environments in the UK.

This submission aims to respond to the main findings in the DFID-commissioned review of Building Support for Development strategy. Our respective networks will provide a more detailed response on the various reviews. Here we aim to share our collective thoughts on the key recommendations pertaining to the Development Awareness Fund (DAF), the Mini Grant Scheme (MGS) and Enabling Effective Support (EES).

2. Responses to the Review Recommendations

2.1 Development Awareness Fund

- The UK Network proposes that the Development Awareness Fund (DAF) should not be phased out as proposed in the review. We believe that the replacement of the DAF with 'larger, longer term grant support for key target groups' could potentially disadvantage small and middle-sized organisations that have been the mainstay of development education practice since its inception. Withdrawing the possibility of DAF support from these organisations could significantly weaken the sector and unravel much of the effective work achieved with DFID support since 1997. We propose instead a strategic review of the DAF guidelines that is informed by DFID's key objectives for Building Support for Development. The guidelines could target key sectors in civil society that have untapped potential in mobilising public support for development. We suggest retaining the DAF but with a more strategic focus.
- Continuation Funding: the UK network agrees with the need for a 'longer-term' provision in the awarding of support through DFID grants. We propose therefore that the DAF make provision for continuation funding as a percentage of the total fund for projects that have a proven capacity to build support for development education policy and practice in the UK. Rather than invite all applicants to come up with new project proposals every three years, DFID could continue to support projects with a proven capacity to deliver on DAF funding criteria and increase capacity in development education with strategically important target groups.

2.2 Mini Grant Scheme

- As the UK Network disagrees with the phasing out of the DAF, we therefore consider it unnecessary to increase the mini grants to a maximum of £25,000 per grant per annum. We do not accept that this increase would compensate applicants for loss of income from the DAF and also suggest that it would limit the mini grant scheme's capacity for innovation and piloting new forms of practice because of the large amount involved. The UK Network proposes that the Mini Grant Scheme maximum should be increased instead to £15,000 allowing for inflationary increases since the introduction of the scheme.
- The UK Network suggests that the Mini Grant Schemes in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should retain their local management structure to ensure that the management of the scheme is informed by local knowledge of the sector. The management of the scheme by consultants operating at a national level would diminish local contact with and support to applicants. It would also prevent the effective promotion of the scheme at a local level.

2.3 Enabling Effective Support

- We believe that the EES Review under-values the overall contribution made by the process across the UK notwithstanding accepted weaknesses in delivery. Moreover, the review largely emphasises the regional performances in England at the expense of the work carried out in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The UK Network believes that the EES concept is solid and its strategic focus an essential component to mainstreaming development education in formal education. We therefore do not support a phasing out of the process.
- The UK Network believes the main weaknesses in EES delivery to be related to the managerial structure rather than programme-related. We do not support the replacement of EES with a new consortium because: first, there is no guarantee that a re-tendering will produce a more effective regional management system; and second, the effective work achieved through DFID investment in the process to date could be lost. We instead recommend that the EES regional bodies in partnership with DFID quickly agree a more effective management system that will support the development of local systems appropriate to regional formal sector structures and an effective national system that ensures delivery of core EES objectives.

2.4 General Recommendations

- We believe that all Building support for Development programmes require a greater focus on quality-control in the management and implementation of development education. This requires rigorous attention to and resourcing of effective monitoring and evaluation work.
- The Building Support for Development strategy is now ten years old and the education environment across the UK has changed considerably since it was published, not least as a result of devolution and the creation of EES regional structures. The commissioning of the reviews and the ensuing consultation process makes a new strategy both timely and necessary.

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