



A Resource for Higher Education Educators

Developed by Dr Gertrude Cotter, School of Education, UCC. September 2024.

TRANSCRIPTION

Programme 1: 1950s and 1960s onwards

Guests: Enid Chaloner, Colm Regan and June Barry

Gertrude Cotter (GC):



You are listening to Community Radio Youghal 104 FM. My name is Gertrude Cotter, and you are listening to the Global Hub, the program that deals with social justice issues at home and abroad. You are very welcome to the program. This program is the first in a series of eight programs which documents the history of development and global citizenship education in Ireland. The Global Hub is funded by Trócaire, the International Development Agency. But it must be said that

Trócaire has not influenced the editorial position of any of these programs. Trócaire has a long-standing development education program, and they have funded the Global Hub since 2015.

Through funding different groups like Community Radio Youghal, they help us all to educate ourselves about complex global social, economic, political, and environmental issues. There is a very strong activist and academic tradition in Ireland whereby people in all walks of life, sometimes in a paid capacity, sometimes not, bring attention to and take action on global justice issues. This series of programs aims to tell the story of this tradition in Ireland through the voices of some of those who have formed and continue to work in this area. Some might have been involved in an activist capacity, some as teachers in primary, secondary, or preschool, some as academics, lecturers, and researchers at third level. Some might work in the statutory sector, for instance, in Irish Aid, the statutory agency that funds much of the work in the sector in Ireland. Some work in the youth, community, and voluntary sector.

Development education is referred to by many names, so it can be very confusing. For instance, in this series, you will hear the terms development education, global learning, global education, or global citizenship education, and other terminology as well. But no matter what terminology people use here, they all have a similar agenda: educating for a just and sustainable world. Keeping this as our central focus, we can now hear about the development of the ideas around development education or global citizenship education in Ireland through the voices of those who have contributed and continue to contribute to its development.

This series of eight programs paints a picture of a particular slice of Irish life with personal and professional stories that need to be told. It is particularly important to capture the earlier history of development education in Ireland, since we did not have the kind of communication we have today. Back then, we didn't have the internet, we didn't have recordings from Zoom and Teams and Skype, and so on. Indeed, it must be said that we did have radio, and I am happy to recognize the enduring power of radio to tell powerful stories, and particularly the power of community radio to include and reach out to hear our voices in a democratic way.

My thanks to Community Radio Youghal for facilitating this series of shows, and I acknowledge the work of Tom O'Keefe and Paul Daly in patiently editing these programs. We will look at the development of development education in Ireland through the decades, starting in the 1950s and coming up to the present day.

GC:



In this first program, we go back to the 1950s, and I am delighted to say that our first guest is Enid Chaloner, and she is going to help us set the scene for the 1950s in both Ireland and Nigeria. First of all, Enid, welcome to Community Radio Youghal and to the Global Hub program.

Enid Chaloner (EC):

Thank you. I look forward to talking to you again, so I hope you don't mind me saying you're in your 90s. And I think it's just quite incredible that for about 18 months or so in the 1950s, you lived in Nigeria.

GC:

And also, from talking to you, I'm quite amazed by your memory, because I can't remember what I did yesterday! So, I'm asking you, really, to do us the honour of bringing us back to the 1950s. What was a woman from Ireland doing in Nigeria? I don't know what part of Ireland you were in at the time, but what were you doing, and how did you get to Nigeria?

EC:

I grew up in Dublin, and I did schooling at Alexandra. I met my husband at a friend's house, and we went rowing in a boat in Greystones. I remember he got very anxious because he got the boat sideways onto the waves, and that was my introduction to meeting the man who later became my husband.

GC:

He really made a splash then! (laughs)

EC:

Yes! (laughs)

GC:

And what was the connection to Nigeria? He was about to go there, right?

EC:

Yes, he was a civil engineer, and engineering jobs weren't that thick on the ground. When he left college, he applied to the Crown agents, and he got a job with the Nigerian railways just a week before he went away. But I met him again when he came home on leave about 18 months later, and after that, we sort of got together, and eventually, we got married, and I went back to Nigeria with him.

GC:

I mean, the development of the railways at that time was vital in terms of the country's development. Nigeria is a vast country, so it was a fundamental part of its growth, wasn't it?

EC:

Well, yes. You must remember, it was a colony, part of the British Commonwealth at that time. It has since become much more independent. But at that time, it was governed by the UK, through the Crown agents from the Commonwealth Office. Nigeria is a huge country, and coming from a place like Ireland, it seemed absolutely enormous. The distances were incomprehensible to me. It was a wonderful experience, though.

GC:

And what were the impressions of Africa in Ireland at that time, and what were the impressions of Europeans in Nigeria?

EC:

In Ireland, Africans were rarely seen. There were a few, and most of them were probably medical students, but you didn't see many. As for Europeans in Nigeria, we were welcomed, but there was always a sense that we were only there temporarily. Nigeria was governed by a governor general in Lagos, and the country was divided into three regions: western, northern, and eastern. We lived in the eastern part, which later became Biafra, where the civil war took place.

GC:

What was life like for you there?

EC:

It was an unusual lifestyle. Club life was very big, and there was a strong social aspect to it. We had a local drama society, and I got involved with the British Council, which ran festivals of Nigerian art. The tropics are hard on clothes, so we learned dressmaking, and we helped each other. My husband's job was to oversee the railway line, and every month, he would go "on the line," where he inspected the railway. I used to go with him sometimes, and we'd travel through the country by railway carriage, which allowed me to see other parts of Nigeria.

GC:

So, you really had quite the experience there, traveling the country. What was it like for you, moving from Ireland to such a vastly different place?

EC:

It was a huge adjustment, of course. You had to adapt to everything—cooking, clothes, weather. I learned to sew out of necessity, and I became involved with the local community. The climate was equatorial, very humid and wet, with thunderstorms regularly. I remember one storm was so severe that rainwater ran through the bottom of our house.

GC:

That sounds intense! It must have been challenging to live there at times. How did you find the people and the culture?

EC:

The Nigerian people were welcoming. However, the conditions were tough for many. There was widespread poverty, and many people lacked access to basic necessities like running water and sanitation. It was a shock for me, coming from Dublin. Life was hard for the local people, but they made do with what they had, creating things like shoes from old tires. It was a remarkable level of resilience.

GC:

It must have really left an impression on you. Looking back, what would you say was the most impactful aspect of your time in Nigeria?

EC:

Definitely the scale and the challenges of development there, particularly how vital the railway was to the country. The railway moved people, goods, and capital and opened up the country's economy. It gave me a much broader understanding of how infrastructure plays a key role in a nation's development. I wouldn't trade that experience for anything.

GC:

It's amazing to hear your story, Enid, and how much you remember. Thank you so much for sharing this experience with us today. Before you go, would you like to nominate a piece of music to play?

EC:

Well, when I think of the 1950s and those thunderstorms in Nigeria, I always think of "Singing in the Rain" by Gene Kelly. It's a cheerful song, and it reminds me of those tropical storms.

GC:

Wonderful choice! Let's have a listen to "Singing in the Rain."

*(Clip of *Singing in the Rain* by Gene Kelly plays)*

GC:



So, with me now is Colm Regan. Colm has been involved directly in development and human rights education for over 40 years, and has worked in Ireland, North and South, the UK, Zambia, Australia, Rwanda, Brazil, Vietnam, and Malta. Until recently, Colm was the coordinator of the Irish NGO 8020 Educating and Acting for a Better World. He is now living and working in Gozo, Malta, and teaching at the University of Malta. Thank you for joining us, Colm.

Colm Regan (CR):

Thanks for having me, Gertrude. It's great to be here.

GC:

We're so pleased to have you as one of the contributors to this series on the history of development education in Ireland. You have such a rich and far-reaching career in this sector, spanning over 40 years. Let's start by discussing your early influences. What drew you to this line of work in development and global education?

CR:

Well, I'm a geographer by training. My interest in geography developed in school, and inevitably, that led me to look beyond Ireland and become interested in other countries. I went on to study geography at UCD, and at the same time, there were big social movements going on. One of the major issues was Northern Ireland and the civil rights movement there. That took up a lot of our time and energy as students.

GC:

That must have been a very formative time.

CR:

Yes, absolutely. But there were also global issues that influenced me—things like the civil rights movement in the United States and the American war in Vietnam. I was particularly struck by the carpet bombing of Cambodia. Another key issue was apartheid in South Africa. So, my early activism was shaped by both domestic concerns—like Northern Ireland—and international movements for justice.

GC:

You mentioned the anti-apartheid movement. Can you talk a little more about how that influenced your work?

CR:

The anti-apartheid movement was huge. It really opened up our understanding of global inequality and racism. At the time, we were also involved in civil rights issues here in Ireland, like the campaign for contraception rights. But globally, we were also looking at apartheid, the American war in Vietnam, and human rights abuses around the world.

GC:

It sounds like a time when there was a lot of energy around these movements. Where did you see yourself fitting into all of this?

CR:

I saw myself as part of a broader movement, a movement for human rights, dignity, equality, and human development. I think that's where development education fits in. We are the educational wing of that broader movement. Ireland, as an emigre country, has always been aware of the wider world, but what we did with that awareness was key. The missionaries, for example, played a huge role in shaping early thinking and action around development issues.

GC:

The missionary movement is something we don't always think about when we discuss development education, but it was certainly influential, wasn't it?

CR:

Yes, very much so. Ireland's missionary tradition has had a profound impact on development thinking and education. Many missionaries were involved in development work in a very practical sense—health, education, human rights, and so on. They brought those experiences back home, and that really shaped how Ireland engaged with the world.

GC:

Who are some of the key figures you think of when you think of that movement?

CR:

People like Magella McCarron, who was involved in the Ogoni people's struggle in Nigeria and the campaign for Ken Saro-Wiwa. Pat Clarke in Brazil, who fought for the rights of favela dwellers. Owen Lambert in Ethiopia, working on famine and agricultural development. Tom Burke in Kenya. The list is long, but these individuals were crucial to building awareness and solidarity around development issues.

GC:

It's amazing to hear about these people and their contributions. But development education has evolved over the years, hasn't it?

CR:

It has, yes. It's become more professionalized, and there's been more emphasis on formal education. But at its core, it's still about raising awareness of global issues and encouraging people to take action. That's something we can trace back to those early movements.

GC:

You've also worked with 8020, which has been a key player in development education in Ireland. Can you tell us more about that?

CR:

8020 started out of a recognition that the world is deeply unequal. The name came from the fact that 20% of the world's population controls 80% of its wealth. We wanted to educate people about these inequalities and encourage action. We published resources, worked with schools, community groups, and trade unions, and organized campaigns to raise awareness about issues like aid and trade.

GC:

It's clear that 8020 has had a significant impact. Before we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to add?

CR:

Just that we must remember that these issues are always contested. They are difficult and complex, but we have to engage with them. The key word for me is "struggle." These are struggles for justice, and we don't always expect to win. But sometimes, through struggle, we do. And that's what makes it all worthwhile.

GC:

Thank you so much for your insights, Colm. Before you go, what's the piece of music you've chosen for us today?

CR:

I've chosen "Free Nelson Mandela" by The Specials. It's a song that captures the energy, politics, and passion of the movement, and it's one that resonates deeply with me.

(Clip of [Free Nelson Mandela](#) by The Specials plays)

GC:



Now we're joined by June Barry. June has had a long career in education and youth work, with significant experience in development education. She was born in England during World War II, trained as a teacher, and later worked in Nigeria, where she met her Irish husband. June worked with Ogra Chorcaí in Cork for many years and retired in 2007. June, thank you so much for joining us today.

June Barry (JB):

Thank you, Gertrude, for having me. It's a pleasure to be here.

GC:

We're delighted to have you here, June. You've had such a rich and varied experience, and I'd love to hear about your early life and what influenced you to get involved in development education. Could you take us back to the beginning and tell us a little about your background?

JB:

Well, I was born in the middle of World War II, and growing up in England after the war, people were really looking for social and political change. They had won the war, but life was still difficult. Wages were low, working conditions were poor, and rationing was still in effect. So, the Conservative government was voted out, and the Labour government was appointed. That led to big changes like the founding of the National Health Service in 1948, the nationalization of coal mines, and raising the school leaving age to 15. These were all part of the post-war social reforms.

GC:

That's incredible, June. So, you were living through a time of real social transformation. How did that impact your own education and career path?

JB:

Yes, it was a time of change. Even though I left school at 16, I was able to continue my education because my employer had to give me a day off a week to continue studying until I was 18. I managed to get my A-levels in economics and history that way. I lived in a coal mining village, and my father worked in the pits. Working conditions were still atrocious, though. One thing that has stayed with me all my life is the memory of my father and other men working naked on their backs in inches of water, picking at the coal seam above their heads. When my father complained, the unions wouldn't back them, and he was put on "the market," which meant he could be sent anywhere and worked for minimum wages for two years.

GC:

That sounds like an incredibly harsh experience for your father and your family. Did that shape your views on inequality and justice?

JB:

Yes, absolutely. I was very young at the time, but it's something I've never forgotten. I think that's where my early sense of injustice came from. At that point, I didn't know much about the wider world beyond Europe. It wasn't until I went to college at 19 that my world really opened up.

GC:

So, you went to college to train as a teacher, and you also studied youth work. How did you go from England to Nigeria? That must have been quite a leap.

JB:

It was! After completing my studies, one of the nuns at the college asked if I would like to work in Nigeria, and I absolutely jumped at the chance. I had studied modern history, which touched on colonization and the slave trade, and those topics really stayed with me. So, I was eager to go. I went to Nigeria when I was just 22.

GC:

What was the political situation in Nigeria at that time? Was it during the Biafran War?

JB:

When I first arrived, Nigeria seemed easy-going and welcoming, but there were tensions brewing. The colonial powers had divided West Africa without considering the nations that were already there. So, in Nigeria, you had the Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa peoples—very different from each other. That sowed the seeds for the eventual conflict, especially when it came to the ownership of natural resources. We were there when the Biafran War broke out, and it created deep divisions. Many Igbo people we knew went back east to join the war.

GC:

It must have been a very difficult time. How did you manage family life and work during such a turbulent period?

JB:

It was challenging, but we managed. I was teaching art and history in Nigeria, and we had our four children. Life was full, but it was also a time of learning. Being in Nigeria and witnessing the effects of colonization and the conflict there had a profound impact on me.

GC:

That's fascinating. It seems like your time in Nigeria really influenced your later work in youth and development education. How did you transition from teaching into youth work?

JB:

Yes, it did influence me a lot. When we returned to Ireland, I couldn't get a permanent teaching job because my qualifications were from England. So, I started volunteering with youth work programs like the summer play schemes and youth clubs run by Ógra Chorcaí. I loved youth work—it felt like a natural progression from teaching, but with more of a focus on working with disadvantaged young people.

GC:

It sounds like you found your calling in youth work. Can you tell us a little about what Ógra Chorcaí was, and how development education fit into that work?

JB:

Ógra Chorcaí was a youth organization that supported voluntary youth leaders in running youth clubs and summer schemes. I started working with them in 1979, and in 1986 I became one of the support workers. Development education fit perfectly into this role because we were already working with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and global issues like poverty and inequality resonated with them.

GC:

That's really interesting. How did you introduce global issues to young people in Cork, and what kind of impact did it have?

JB:

It had to be done in a way that wasn't too academic. The activities needed to be participatory and engaging. One example I remember clearly was a project on homelessness and poverty. We had a

group of young people from the favelas in Brazil come to Cork to talk about the conditions they faced, including police harassment. As part of the project, the young people in Cork built temporary dwellings on the streets to show people what life was like for those who were homeless. It was a powerful way to make the issue real for them.

GC:

That's such a creative and impactful way to engage young people with global issues. It really brings the topic home in a tangible way. What else did you work on during your time with Ógra Chorcaí?

JB:

We worked on a wide range of issues, from environmental sustainability to human rights. One of the key programs we were involved in was the Development Education for Youth (DEFY) program, which was run by the National Youth Council of Ireland. Every year, they would publish resources on a global issue, and we'd use that as a basis for our work with young people. It was a great support for youth workers, providing activities and background information that we could use in our clubs.

GC:

It sounds like development education was really thriving in Cork at that time. Was there a strong sense of collaboration between different organisations?

JB:

Yes, absolutely. Cork had a very vibrant development education scene in the 80s and 90s. We worked closely with organisations like Trócaire, Comhlámh, and the YMCA. We supported each other and shared resources. It was a very dynamic time for development education in the city.

GC:

It's clear that you've made a huge contribution to development education in Cork, June. Before we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to add?

JB:

I think it's important to say that development education is vital, especially in times of economic downturn. I remember saying this to Conor Lenihan during a question-and-answer session, and he laughed at the idea of an economic downturn. But when things get tough, people tend to turn inward and focus on themselves. That's when development education is needed the most—to remind people of the wider world and our responsibilities to each other.

GC:

That's a powerful message, June. Thank you so much for sharing your story with us today. You've given us such valuable insights into the history of development education and your own incredible journey. Now, I believe you've chosen a song for us—what have you picked?

JB:

I've chosen Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind." It's a song that resonates with me, and it was popular with the young people I worked with. It's simple, but the message is powerful, and it's a song that anyone can play and sing along to, even with just a guitar.

GC:

That's a beautiful choice. Let's listen now to Bob Dylan's *Blowin' in the Wind*.

(Clip of *Blowin' in the Wind* by Bob Dylan plays)