



A Resource for Higher Education Educators

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TRANSCRIPTION

Programme 5: 2000s to today

Guests: George Jacob, Dorothy Jacob, Sophie McElligott and Adedotun Adekeye

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:



I'm talking to George Jacob, who is the Head of Communications at Self Help Africa. He has seen the organization grow from being a small Irish-based NGO working in agriculture to becoming one of Ireland's leading overseas development charities, working in 17 countries worldwide, and with an annual turnover of over 45 million euros. He worked formerly as a journalist with Ireland's largest regional newspaper group. George, you're very welcome to The Global Hub.

George Jacob (GJ):

Thanks for having me, Gertrude. It's a pleasure to be speaking to you.

GC:

Let's start with yourself first and your own story. Would you mind telling us a little bit about, you know, how your interest in this area of development and global justice issues came about for yourself?

GJ:

Unlike other people you may speak to in the development sector, I didn't begin my career in the area at all. I was a journalist, as you mentioned. I worked in newspapers, and one of my first influences was probably being allowed by my parents to stay up later than I probably should have one Saturday evening and seeing All the President's Men, the Watergate scandal, and Richard Nixon's downfall. I felt the power of what media and journalism could do, how it could expose wrong at the highest levels. Now, my own career didn't exactly take the same trajectory as Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, but I ended up studying journalism in college. I worked in that sector for about 20 years, primarily for regional newspapers in Wexford and County Wicklow, and occasionally sending stories to international newspapers about events happening locally.

After working in journalism, I found myself in the development sector, largely by chance, but it was an area that had always interested me. Reading about post-colonial Africa, and even during colonization, seeing countries transform into independent states, fascinated me. The news was filled with stories from Africa—whether it was about Biafra or the Zimbabwean civil war—and it was often framed in terms of dependence, poverty, and reliance on the West. When I was introduced to an organization called Self Help Development International, now known as Self Help Africa, it felt like

the right place for me. The organization didn't just focus on emergency response; it also looked at long-term opportunities and self-reliance for communities in Africa.

GC:

How have organizations like yours, especially Self Help Africa, changed the dialogue and discourse around global justice issues over the years? What are some of the challenges you've faced and the changes you've seen?

GJ:

One significant change has been the use of images and messages, particularly with the advent of smartphones. We realized early on that we needed rules about how we represented the people and communities we worked with. You couldn't have visitors taking pictures of children in vulnerable communities without permission. We were one of the first organizations to sign on to the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages, ensuring that we used images responsibly and respectfully. It was important to name the people in the images, get their consent, and provide proper context. It was about shifting the narrative away from images of emaciated people to a more dignified portrayal of the individuals and communities we work with.

Fundraising has also evolved. There's always been a tension between fundraising needs, which often rely on demonstrating need, and the ethical responsibility to represent people with dignity. In the past, images of extreme poverty were used to generate donations, but today we focus on more balanced and empowering stories.

Continuing from where we left off, we no longer see in any of the literature published by development organizations, especially in vulnerable situations, pictures of emaciated, vulnerable, or ailing people in the way that was once common—like during the Biafra crisis or even up to the Live Aid appeal of the mid-1980s. Today, the messaging has changed significantly.

GC:

That's a very important shift.

GC:



Now with us is Dorothy Jacob, George's partner, who leads Self Help Africa's development education or global citizenship education team. Dorothy, you've worked in education throughout your career, including in the performing arts for the Wicklow Kildare ETB, puppetry, mask making, and fashion design. You have such an eclectic mix of experiences. Could you tell us about your early interests in this area?

Dorothy Jacob (DJ):

Yes, it's interesting when you look back on your career and life, and how things intersect. In terms of the work I do now, I've definitely taken a circuitous path. My journey hasn't been a traditional trajectory, but I think inequality and social justice are things you notice from an early age. One of my first jobs was with the Dublin Central Mission, providing food for those who didn't have enough to eat in the heart of Dublin. My family had the privilege of sending me to a good school, but it was obvious to me that not everyone had the same access to education or basic needs.

If I think back even further, my grandparents were involved in the penny breakfasts for children in need. So, this idea of social justice and inequality was something that was part of my life from a very young age. Later, I trained in fashion design, and I loved it, but an experience in Thailand during my training made me rethink things. I saw people there who made their clothing, carried their children, and harvested their food with just two meters of cloth. Meanwhile, I was learning about hand beading and tailoring, and it just struck me how different the realities were. It opened my eyes to the bigger picture of inequality and gender issues, particularly in how women saw themselves and their roles in society.

It was during this time that I met my future husband, George, and we had children. That's when I really became interested in education. I wanted my children to have access to a quality education, and I found myself questioning the education system in Ireland, particularly the role of religion in schooling. I felt strongly about creating a space where education wasn't tied to religion, and so I helped to start a kindergarten based on those principles. Along the way, I became involved in puppetry, and that opened up new avenues for storytelling and communication. Puppetry became a tool for expressing different perspectives and building empathy, which I believe is at the heart of development education.

GC:

That's such an inspiring journey. Can you tell us more about the work you're doing now with Self Help Africa, particularly in development education?

DJ:

Absolutely. The work we do aligns with the four key pillars of Self Help Africa's work, starting with sustainable agriculture. Climate justice and food security are inextricably linked, and we help students understand the complexities of ethical trade and market access. For example, something as simple as a cup of tea involves a long journey from farm to table, and we want students to understand that interconnectedness.

One of the most powerful tools we use in our workshops is a packet of tea or a banana, something everyone is familiar with. We ask students to think about the journey these items have taken to get to their plates. This sparks conversations about trade, labor conditions, and economic justice. We also focus on gender equality, which is the fourth pillar of our work. Gender issues are something I've always felt passionate about, and I work closely with schools to engage students in discussions about gender equity.

Over the years, we've moved from delivering one-off presentations in schools to developing more comprehensive engagement with students. Now, when we approach schools, we aim to have three workshops with each group to allow for deeper conversations and reflection. We cover topics like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), digital citizenship, and climate action, but we also work on programs like the Science for Development Award, which encourages students to think about how science can address real-world problems.

GC:

That's such important work. I'm curious, do you primarily work with post-primary students, or do you also engage with younger students or adults?

DJ:

While the majority of our work is with post-primary students, we do engage with adult and community education as well. In fact, one of our initiatives, the Changemakers program in Donegal, was founded with the aim of bringing development education to adults. It's been fascinating to see how local facilitators, often people who have lived in the community for years, can lead discussions on prejudice and inequality. It's about breaking down barriers within small towns and communities and creating spaces where people can engage critically with global issues.

GC:

That's fantastic. I remember Patsy Toland talking about the Changemakers program. It's amazing to see how development education has grown to include adults and community groups.

DJ:

Yes, and what's really exciting is the work we're doing at third level now. We've developed a social justice module at Trinity College, and for the last two years, it's been offered as an elective. It's an accredited course that allows teachers in training to explore development education in a deeper way. This is where we're seeing real progress because it allows us to scale up the impact of our work. By engaging with teacher education, we're preparing future teachers to bring development education into their classrooms, ensuring it has a long-term impact.

GC:

That's such an important development, especially as we think about the future of education. Unfortunately, we're running out of time, but before we wrap up, could you share your hopes for the future of development education in Ireland?

DJ:

My hope is that development education becomes embedded in every aspect of our education system. We can't continue to work in silos—our world is interconnected, and our education system needs to reflect that. Whether it's addressing climate justice, gender equality, or food security, we need to prepare students to think critically and act responsibly as global citizens.

GC:

Thank you, Dorothy, for sharing your insights and for all the work you and George are doing with Self Help Africa. It's been a pleasure speaking with you both.

GC:



The rest of the episode features a conversation with Sophie McElligott, a student from St. Joseph's Mercy School in Navan, who won the Science for Development Award for her project on sustainable menstrual products in third-world countries.

Sophie, welcome to Community Radio Youghal. Could you tell us a bit about your project and how it came about?

Sophie McElligott (SM):

Thank you, Gertrude. Our project was inspired by a teacher at our school, Ms. Dowd, who had volunteered in Zambia and noticed the lack of menstrual resources for women. This led me and my classmate Salome to develop a project on creating sustainable menstrual products for women in third-world countries.

GC:

That's incredible. What challenges did you encounter in your research?

SM:

One of the main challenges was learning about the impact of period poverty, both in third-world countries and even in Ireland. Many girls miss school due to lack of access to menstrual products, which affects their education and future opportunities. We wanted to develop reusable pads that were environmentally friendly and affordable, using materials like cotton or hemp.

GC:

That's fantastic, Sophie. You mentioned earlier that this project was inspired by your teacher, Ms. Dowd, and her experience in Zambia. How did you and your classmates feel when you learned about the challenges women in third-world countries face regarding period poverty?

SM:

It was really eye-opening for us. Ms. Dowd shared her experience of seeing how many young girls had to miss school just because they didn't have access to sanitary products. It really hit home, especially because we take these things for granted here in Ireland. It was shocking to learn that something so basic could have such a huge impact on girls' education and their future opportunities.

GC:

That's such an important issue. You also mentioned that period poverty isn't just an issue in third-world countries, but it affects women in Ireland too. Could you tell us more about that?

SM:

Yes, absolutely. One of the surprising things we found during our research was that period poverty is also a problem here in Ireland. Menstrual products are expensive, and many women and girls struggle to afford them, which can result in them missing school or work. It made us realize that this isn't just a problem in developing countries; it's a global issue.

GC:

It really is. I was very impressed with the fact that you didn't just stop at researching the problem—you actually developed a practical solution by creating reusable sanitary pads. How did you go about designing these products?

SM:

Well, we wanted to make something that would be easy to produce with materials that are widely available, especially in poorer countries. We designed reusable pads made from layers of cotton fabric, with an absorbent core in the middle. The idea was that these pads could be washed and

reused, making them more sustainable and affordable in the long term. We also wanted to make sure the design was simple enough that girls could make them themselves with basic sewing skills.

GC:

That's brilliant, Sophie. It sounds like a very sustainable and practical solution. Did you have the opportunity to test these products or share them with any communities in need?

SM:

Yes, we were able to connect with a woman in Spain who works with communities in Africa. She helped us understand what materials would be available and gave us feedback on the design. We also looked into other sustainable materials, like hemp, which is more environmentally friendly and can be grown in many parts of Africa. We hope to continue working on this and potentially collaborate with more organizations in the future to get these products to the women who need them.

GC:

It's really inspiring to hear about the impact your project has had, not only in raising awareness about period poverty but in developing a practical solution as well. Before we wrap up, Sophie, could you share your thoughts on the importance of education around global justice issues, especially for young people?

SM:

I think education is key, especially for people our age. We are the future, and it's important for us to understand the challenges facing the world and to be part of the solutions. Projects like this one open your eyes to things you might not have thought about before, and they inspire you to take action. I definitely think there should be more education around global justice in schools.

GC:

Absolutely. It's so important for young people to be engaged in these issues and to see themselves as global citizens. Sophie, thank you so much for joining us today and for sharing your incredible work. I wish you the best of luck with your studies and with the continuation of this project.

SM:

Thank you so much for having me!

GC:

That was Sophie McElligott from St. Joseph's Mercy School in Navan, who, along with her classmate, developed an award-winning project to create sustainable menstrual products for women in third-world countries. Such an inspiring young woman.

GC:



Now, we're joined by Ade Adekeye, who has been working in the development education sector for over a decade. Ade facilitates workshops at both the second and third levels of education, and he also works with the Galway One World Centre. Ade, welcome to the program.

Adedotun Adekeye (AA):

Thank you for having me, Gertrude.

GC:

Ade, you've had quite an interesting journey, and you've been involved in development education for many years now. Could you start by telling us a little about how you first got involved in this work?

AA:

Sure. My family and I moved to Ireland in 2008, and we sought asylum. We were in the asylum process for about five years. Not long after we arrived, Vicky Donnelly from the Galway One World Centre came to the center where we were staying and delivered a workshop on development education. That workshop really opened my eyes to the inequalities in Irish society and in the world more generally. I realized then that if my children were going to grow up in this country, I needed to be part of the solution. I wanted to help challenge the stereotypes and misconceptions about migrants and people from other parts of the world.

GC:

That's such a powerful motivation, Ade. What kinds of issues did you address in those early workshops?

AA:

One of the main things we talked about was bias and how it affects our perception of others. We would ask questions like, "What kind of lens are we using to view other people? What misconceptions do we have?" It was really about encouraging people to challenge their own biases and to think critically about how they relate to others in society. We also talked a lot about development and what that means in different contexts. It's not just about economic growth or charity—it's about sustainable change that empowers communities.

GC:

And what was the response from the students you were working with?

AA:

Initially, some students were a bit reluctant to engage, especially when talking about sensitive issues like race and inequality. But once they realized that it was a safe space where their opinions were valued, the conversations really opened up. Young people have such a wealth of ideas and insights, and they're often much more open to discussing these issues than we might expect. It was really encouraging to see them engage with the material and start thinking about how they could make a difference in their own communities.

GC:

That's fantastic. One thing I wanted to ask you about is the role of the migrant voice in development education. In Ireland, historically, we haven't had a large migrant population, but that has changed in recent years. Do you think the development education sector has been successful in including migrant voices?

AA:

That's an interesting question. While there are certainly more migrants involved in development education now than there were in the past, I still think there's room for improvement. Migrants bring unique perspectives and experiences that can enrich the conversation, but we need to make sure we're actively reaching out to them and creating spaces where their voices can be heard. It's not just about inviting them to the table—it's about making sure they feel welcome and valued when they're there.

GC:

Absolutely. It's about creating a truly inclusive space. Before we wrap up, Ade, could you share your thoughts on what development education means to you and why it's important?

AA:

For me, development education is about creating awareness of the inequalities in the world and helping people understand their role in addressing those inequalities. It's about challenging the status quo and working towards a more just and equitable world. Development education isn't just about learning—it's about action. It's about empowering people to make positive changes in their communities and beyond.

GC:

That's such an important message, Ade. Thank you so much for joining us today and for sharing your insights and experiences.

AA:

Thank you, Gertrude. It's been a pleasure.