

The Coming Home Book

For returned overseas volunteers, development workers, humanitarian workers and missionaries



Reverse culture shock/
Back in action/Health/
Job-hunting/Further studies



Welcome Home!

Comhlámh, Development Workers in Global Solidarity, was established in 1975 to support development workers returning to Ireland and to promote greater awareness and understanding of development issues.

As a dynamic membership organisation committed to working for global justice and sustainable development, Comhlámh supports, empowers and trains members towards action for economic and social justice at the local and global level. Comhlámh offers particular services and support for the reintegration of overseas volunteers and development workers on their return to Ireland. It also provides opportunities to continue working for a better world by encouraging participation in Comhlámh's development education, solidarity and campaign work.

As a returned volunteer, development worker, humanitarian worker or missionary who has worked overseas in a development capacity for 3 months or longer, you are entitled to free membership of Comhlámh for your first year home and access to a range of Comhlámh services.

You will find more information about Comhlámh and how you can get involved throughout this book, particularly in the 'Back in Action' section towards the end.



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Reverse Culture Shock

The individual whose vision encompasses the whole world often feels nowhere so hedged in and out of touch with his surroundings as in his native land.

- *Emma Goldman* - Author

UNFAMILIAR SYMPTOMS

So now you're home again, but maybe you don't feel at home, and you're not exactly enjoying the life for which you'd been homesick while abroad. Instead, perhaps you're feeling alienated and disorientated. You may find you aren't understood here and you cannot share your experiences from abroad with anyone else. If so, you are likely to be suffering from reverse culture shock, a phenomenon described by Marco Polo as early as the 15th century.

At first coming home is exciting - though often tinged with the sadness of leaving foreign friends and a challenging assignment. When you've got over the initial thrill of arriving back and begin to participate again in Irish life, you realise that you are torn between the two cultures you have internalised. Some people have described this predicament as 'feeling like an adolescent second time around' or 'facing the existential confrontation with the abyss'. For others, the symptoms may be more tangible; they may become irritable, lose interest somewhat in life and friends, or even feel low and depressed for no apparent reason.

It is now recognised that re-entry shock is more severe than the shock of meeting a new culture for the first time. From friends and family and the media, you have had some awareness of how life at home has changed, but it is only when you are back 'home' that you realise how much you yourself have changed.

Abroad, most foreigners are tacitly given a grace period to behave differently to the customs of the country while they adjust to the new culture. Back home no such honeymoon is allowed. Friends and family may expect you to be the same as before you went away. They don't realise that the readjustment may be profoundly traumatic for you, and you are perceived as 'confused' or 'mixed up'. This makes the readjustment process even more difficult to work through. Extra frustration arises if you cannot find a genuinely interested colleague, friend or family member to talk to at length about the overseas experience. This is made worse if you are geographically isolated from other returnees.

Research consistently shows that more re-entry problems are experienced by people coming home from their first assignment - subsequent returns are not as difficult. Interestingly, it has also been demonstrated that those who have adapted most successfully overseas, and suffered the least ill-health, tend to find it harder on their return home.

Other factors which influence the degree of shock include changes in your own values and perceptions, changes in personal and social relationships, changes in financial status, and the 'structural' difficulties of re-entry. Structural difficulties are problems such as re-integrating into the career path, changing career, catching up on technological changes and so on. Health problems, changes in family relationships, friends moving on - all these can be additional stress factors.

People carry more than their baggage when they go overseas. Forgotten problems often resurface in the process of adjusting to the new culture or readjusting to home society, and the process of re-entry can be an opportune time to think about resolving them through counselling.

In addition, some overseas assignments expose volunteers to traumatic experiences which have repercussions only when they return home, and counselling can be genuinely helpful in coming to terms with such experiences.

It may help to know that you are actually at a stage in a process which has a beginning, a middle and an end. Don't minimise your experience, but don't exaggerate it either. Be patient, and if necessary look for help from a professional or another returnee who's been there and back.

COMHLÁMH COMING HOME WEEKENDS

Organised and facilitated by returned development workers and Comhlámh staff, Coming Home Weekends allow returned volunteers and development workers to meet and reflect on their experiences abroad. These residential weekends are open to individuals who have worked overseas in a development, humanitarian or human rights capacity for 3 months or more. Sessions are informal and relaxed. Participants have commented on how heartening it is to talk about mutual experiences and discover that others have felt similar fears, joys, frustrations and hopes. Opportunities for participants to put their skills and experience to future use in Ireland are also explored.

Past participants have described their sentiments at the end of the weekend in one word as:

“energised”, “enthused”, “focused”, “comforted” “supported” “encouraged”, “refreshed”, “relaxed”, “enlightened”, “relieved”, “motivated”, “optimistic”, “positive” and “empowered”

For more information on the Coming Home Weekends or to find out when the next weekend is happening, contact the Support Services Project Officer on 01 4783490 or email supportservices@comhlamh.org

DEBRIEFING

"Most aid/development workers report that, on the whole, their time overseas was a good experience, and they are glad they went. Despite this, most aid/development workers who work overseas for at least six months (as well as many of those who have shorter trips overseas) report that they find it helpful to receive a personal debriefing session on their return home. This is especially true of those who have had stressful experiences overseas, and those who find it difficult to readjust to their own culture after returning home."

- *Debbie Lovell Hawker - Clinical Psychologist with Interhealth*

Comhlámh distinguishes between three main types of debriefing:

- **'Operational' or 'programme debriefing'** is primarily concerned with the work performed and is conducted by someone who has been involved in managing the project or assignment. The aim is to learn what was done well, what could have been done better and what changes should now be made.
- **'Personal debriefings'** are concerned with how the whole experience, including the return home, was for the individual. This form of debriefing can help the individual process their experiences, cope with symptoms of stress and re-entry shock, and provide a sense of closure. Personal debriefings can be especially helpful for overseas volunteers and development workers as they can often feel isolated when they return home.
- A **'critical incidence debriefing'** is designed specifically for a person or group that have experienced a traumatic incident. It aims to help individuals cope with symptoms of stress and to speed up a normal recovery.

Some organisations offer debriefings to their returnees: check with your organisation or sending agency if the above services are provided for you.

Comhlámh offers a personal debriefing service to returned development workers and volunteers who have been overseas for three months or more. The debriefing sessions are one-to-one meetings and generally last 2-3 hours. They are held in private and are totally confidential. For more information contact the Support Services Project Officer on 01 4783490 or email supportservices@comhlamh.org.

Comment made by a recent returnee on a Comhlámh debriefing evaluation form:

If you were asked by someone returning from overseas whether to engage in a debriefing session, what would you tell them?

"Yes, every time. We bury things and try to ignore events that affected us without resolving them. They probably don't go away and arise the next time there is a similar situation, resulting in us feeling inadequate to do anything about things that disturb us. We all need to talk it through in an unreserved safe place. That way we get closure, we get answers and we get nourished by the experience, not squashed by it."

Anonymous feedback from an aid worker about personal debriefing:

"I thought beforehand that it was going to be a waste of time, but I found that actually it was very helpful to be able to talk about everything, however small, that had happened"

***- Taken from Debriefing Aid Workers and Missionaries:
A Comprehensive Manual (People in Aid, 2009)***



Participants and facilitators at the Coming Home Weekend, February 2009 in Dublin

FOR MORE ON REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK

- Knell, M., 2007. **Burn Up or Splash Down: Surviving the culture shock of re-entry.** UK: Authentic.
- Storti, C., 2001. **The Art of Coming Home.** UK: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Ward, C., Bochner, S. and Furnham, A., 2001. **The Psychology of Culture Shock.** Hove, UK: Routledge.
- Lewis, Tom J. and Jungman, Robert E. (Editors), 1986. **On Being Foreign: Culture Shock in Short Fiction.** Yarmouth, Maine, USA: Intercultural Press, Inc. Yarmouth, Maine, USA: Intercultural Press, Inc. Available on www.amazon.co.uk
- A university psychologist explains what culture shock is, how it manifests itself and how to deal with it. <http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/CGuanipa/cultshok.htm>.
- Lovell-Hawker, Debbie and Emmins, Ben, 2004. **Information Note: Effective Debriefing.** London, UK: People in Aid. Information sheet on issues to consider regarding debriefing. Includes a ten step guide to routine personal debriefing. Available as a free download on <http://www.peopleinaid.org/pool/files/publications/effective-debriefing-inote.pdf>



Aidan McGinley enjoys his first pint in a year after returning from Lesotho at a Coming Home Weekend in February 2009

Health Matters

CHECK-UP

With the excitement of returning home and the effort of getting back into the job market, a medical check-up may be low on your list of priorities. However, reintegration and adjustment to the many physical and psychological changes will be easier if you are in good physical health. It's important to get a check-up as soon as possible after you return.

Check with your sending agency as to whether you are still covered by medical insurance, and for how long. A visit to your family doctor is not usually adequate; the clinics listed at the end of this section have specialist experience as well as the facilities needed for lab tests.

A medical examination usually provides reassuring confirmation that you are in good health. However, it may occasionally reveal an unsuspected problem which would otherwise lie dormant for quite a while. Some people may be carrying unusual conditions like amoebiasis, giardiasis or intestinal worms. Remember that Hepatitis-A takes 3 to 5 weeks to appear, and Hepatitis-B as much as 6 to 25 weeks. You may also be deficient in micro-nutrients, for example calcium, iron or a vitamin. If you have returned from a malarial area you should normally be taking your pills for some weeks after departing the country, or in accordance with the manufacturer's or doctor's instructions.

TROPICAL MEDICAL CHECKS - CLINICS

Tropical Medical Bureau

1850 487 674 / www.tmb.ie

The TMB has a comprehensive website with information on many aspects of travel health. There are 11 clinics located in the Dublin area in addition to clinics in Bray, Carlow, Cork, Killarney, Galway, Gorey, Letterkenny, Limerick, Sligo and Waterford.

Dr Nancy Gallagher

Stephen Street, Dublin 2 / (01) 402 2337. Travel Health Centre, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

Travel Health Clinic

7 Dawson Street, Dublin 2 / (01) 663 4977 / www.travelhealth.ie

A General Practice clinic that specialises exclusively in Travel & Tropical Medicine.

The Mall Family Practice

Barrack Street, Sligo / (071) 914 2767

Dr S Hedderwick

Department of Infectious Diseases, Ward 7A, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, BT12 6BA / (028) 90 634 340 (048 from Republic of Ireland). Referral by GP necessary except in emergencies.

Dr Mary Horgan

Department of Infectious Diseases, Cork University Hospital, Wilton, Cork / (021) 492 2795. Referral by GP necessary.

Irish Society of Travel Medicine

www.istm.ie The Irish Society of Travel Medicine comprises a group of healthcare workers who are interested in providing a uniform high standard of service on all travel related health matters to anyone travelling to or returning from overseas.

HIV/AIDS

AIDS knows no social or geographical boundaries, and development workers are as susceptible to HIV infection as any other grouping of the population. Although no cure as yet has been found for AIDS, treatment can help to stall the onset of the syndrome and people can now live healthy lives for years with HIV.

If you feel you may have been exposed to the HIV virus (through unsafe sex, by receiving untested blood into your bloodstream, or by being injected with an unsterilised needle) you may want to have your blood tested for the presence of HIV antibodies. There are numerous centres which provide a fully confidential service, offering blood testing facilities, information and advice.

Don't allow yourself to be tested before considering the implications of the result with your doctor or a trained HIV counsellor. If you do test positive be assured that treatment and support is on hand.

Helplines

AIDS Helpline Dublin

Freephone 1800 459 459

Sexual Health Centre Cork

021 427 5837 / www.sexualhealthcentre.com / info@sexualhealthcentre.com

AIDS Helpline West

091 562 213 / www.aidswest.ie

AIDS Helpline Limerick

061 316 661

AIDS Helpline North West / Letterkenny

(074) 912 5500

AIDS Helpline Northern Ireland (Belfast)

(028) 90 249 268 (048 from Republic of Ireland) / Freephone (NI) 0800 137 437

Some useful websites

www.dublinaid alliance.ie

Working to improve conditions for people living with HIV/AIDS

www.openhearthouse.ie

Ireland's largest peer support network of HIV+ people

www.who.int

Includes a comprehensive A - Z on health topics

www.thebody.com

Basic information resource on HIV / AIDS

www.unaids.org

An international development perspective on AIDS

www.beaumont.ie

This Dublin hospital lists and has links to Irish hospitals, health boards, medical sites, directories and some relevant international health organisations.

COUNSELLING

The period after the return from an overseas assignment can be a fruitful time to engage in counselling. It provides an opportunity to work through some 'old' issues which may have come to the fore while overseas, or to talk out crises relating to the assignment, such as security problems, stress, trauma or illness. Appropriate counselling can be helpful in the process of re-adapting.

Comhlámh keeps a regularly updated list of fully accredited counsellors and can provide a financial subsidy towards counselling sessions for individuals who have spent 3 months or longer overseas. This service is offered in the strictest confidence. Some counsellors use different methods so you may wish to discuss the approach initially before deciding on a particular practitioner. If at any time you are uncomfortable with the approach being taken by a counsellor, do not hesitate to discuss this with her/him, and do not be afraid to walk away if the issue is not being resolved to your satisfaction. It is recommended that you contact a number of different counsellors so as to find one whose approach best suits yours. Contact Comhlámh's Support Services Project Officer in confidence for our list of approved counsellors or for further information on 01 478 3490 or email supportservices@comhamh.org.

Social Welfare

As an overseas volunteer, humanitarian or development worker, Comhlámh can assist you to protect your social insurance and pension rights while on assignment overseas. It is important to keep your social insurance record active during this time to ensure that you can claim social welfare entitlements on your return and in the future, including jobseekers benefit, maternity benefit and illness benefit among many others.

Most employers and employees (over 16 years of age) in Ireland pay social insurance (PRSI contributions) into Ireland's national Social Insurance Fund. This enables individuals to qualify for social welfare payments and the Contributory State Pension. In general, the payment of social insurance in Ireland is compulsory. It is extremely important that volunteers, humanitarian and development workers continue to make social insurance contributions for their time overseas to allow them full entitlement to benefits as provided for in the Social Welfare Acts when they are not subject to compulsory Irish social insurance.

There are three key ways in which this can be done depending on your particular circumstances. The first is the Volunteer Development Worker Scheme, a special arrangement put in place by the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA) to protect the social welfare rights of Volunteer Development Workers (VDWs). Comhlámh is responsible for administering the Volunteer Development Worker (PRSI) Scheme on behalf of Irish Aid. VDWs can qualify for 'VDW PRSI Credits' in respect of a period spent working in a developing country and any preparatory period beforehand up to a maximum of 5 years. These VDW Credits are normally "fully reckonable", which means they are treated as paid contributions by DSFA. To apply for the VDW Scheme you need to complete Part 1 of the PRSI 15 application form (at the back of booklet SW 15) and then pass it to your sending agency to complete Part 2 who should then send the form to Comhlámh to validate your assignment. The SW 15 booklet and PRSI 15 application form can be downloaded from www.welfare.ie. More information regarding eligibility for the scheme is contained in the booklet or from Comhlámh.

It is extremely important that either you or your sending agency inform Comhlámh immediately of the date of your return from assignment. Do not wait until you make a claim, as DSFA will not award your VDW Credits until they receive notification from Comhlámh and this may result in delaying your entitlement to social welfare payments. If you do make a claim for a social welfare benefit, remember to identify yourself as a Volunteer Development Worker when you lodge it in your local Social Welfare Office. A list of Social Welfare local offices by county can be found at www.welfare.ie.

For more information about the VDW Scheme contact Comhlámh on (01) 4783490, or supportservices@comhlahm.org. The Special Collection Section of DSFA operates the Scheme and can be contacted on (051) 356 011 or Special Collection Section, Social Welfare Services Office, Cork Road, Waterford.

If you are not eligible for the VDW Scheme it is possible to remain insured by paying Voluntary Contributions if you satisfy the qualifying conditions. Voluntary Contributions provide cover for long-term benefits such as pensions, but not short-term benefits such as those for illness, unemployment, maternity, occupational injuries and dental and optical treatment. For more information please see booklet SW 8 published by DSFA which is downloadable from www.welfare.ie, or email volcons@eircom.net or phone Voluntary Contributions Section of DSFA on (051) 356000 / (01) 704 3000. There are strict time limits in becoming a voluntary contributor, so you should look into this option as soon as possible.

A third option to protect your social welfare rights while on assignment is to be a 'posted worker', which means that you are retained on the Irish social welfare system and remain subject to Irish social insurance whilst serving overseas. Your sending agency must have a place of business in the State and you must remain under their direct control for the duration of your posting. While overseas, your sending agency will deduct PRSI from your salary and pay the employee and employer share to the Special Collection Section of DSFA. For further information please contact the Special Collection Section of DSFA on (051) 356 011 or Special Collection Section, Social Welfare Services Office, Cork Road, Waterford.

Citizens Information provides free, comprehensive and confidential information about Social Welfare online, on the telephone and face-to-face as well as publishing various information booklets. Please see www.citizensinformationboard.ie.

PUBLIC SERVANTS – PUBLIC SERVICES PENSION SCHEME FOR VDWS

Public Servants employed in the Republic of Ireland whose assignment is co-funded by Irish Aid may have their pension contributions paid while they are working overseas as a volunteer development worker, covering up to a total of two years service, if they meet certain conditions including: serving as a development worker for six consecutive months or more, being a public servant on an authorised leave of absence or a career break and already a member of a public service pension scheme at the start of the assignment. For further information please contact Comhlámh on (01) 4783490 or supportservices@comhlahm.org.

Time Out

Home is where I wanna be
But I guess I'm already there.

Talking Heads, Naive Melody

It is likely that many of you have come back to Ireland not because of the old job which you were so eager to return to, or the degree you were longing to complete, but because this is where you started out from - even if this doesn't feel quite like 'home' anymore. For many, getting stuck into a job or a course of study is the best way to re-settle, but for others taking time out before making a decision may avert a hasty commitment which could complicate the reintegration process further. Either way, it is important that you don't place yourself under too much pressure - take time to relax and explore the changed society you're returning to. You may need to make some radical decisions and changes in your life, so why not take the space and time out for yourself and experiment with the possibilities?

If you are keen to maintain a link with a particular overseas spot, then it is quite likely that you will be able to meet people from that area who live here. Getting involved as a volunteer in a local solidarity or country-specific group is another way to stay in touch or to continue with an element of development-related work if you so choose. There is an extensive list of solidarity and campaign groups in the Contacts section at the end of this book. Your local One World Centre or development education group (or university One World Society if you are a student) is a recommended point of contact.

You might argue that it costs money to enjoy the cultural scene or develop your talents but if you look in the right places you will discover that there is so much you can avail of for free. There's a lively cultural scene to hook into (see list following). On the other hand, you may wish to (re)explore Ireland's peaceful open spaces by doing some hill-walking or touring.

You may also be questioning the very basis of development or solidarity work, but try not to let that process isolate you from the debates and events which are going on, and with which you can engage if and when you feel ready. The important thing is to relax and take the time out to 'find your feet' and reacquaint yourself with home. For some ideas and starting points check out any of the websites, guides, publications and suggestions listed below:

INTERCULTURAL CONNECTIONS & DIMENSIONS

Information on Irish festivals, events, campaigns, cultural activities, entertainment and media

Fairtrade Fortnight - www.fairtrade.ie

Yearly event each February / March where individuals and groups around the country get involved in a range of activities to raise awareness about fairtrade issues. (01) 475 3515 / info@fairtrade.ie

Latin America Week - www.lasc.ie

Range of countrywide activities, courses and events in solidarity with the marginalised of Latin America and Ireland - held each year in the Spring. Contact the Latin America Solidarity Centre (LASC) for details. (01) 676 0435 / info@lasc.ie

Convergence Festival - www.sustainable.ie

A sustainable living festival celebrating green, healthy and ethical living. The event focuses on issues around ecological sustainability, and aims to provide information and entertainment. Details from Sustainable Ireland (01) 674 5773. The website can be used to subscribe to the Sustainable Ireland network e-bulletin.

Drogheda Samba Festival - www.droghedasamba.com

Summer festival - a celebration of Samba, Latin and African music and dance including workshops, gigs and a carnival parade. Contact (041) 983 8332 / 086 812 3310 or bconyngham@eircom.net

Spraoui Festival - www.spraoui.com

Waterford's outdoor Summer festival of international music, street theatre and street spectacle.

Africa Week - www.africacentre.ie

Series of events and activities during May & June, aimed at promoting African cultures, integration and Africa-Ireland links. For information contact the Africa Solidarity Centre at (01) 865 6951 / info@africacentre.ie

Dun Laoghaire Festival of World Cultures - www.festivalofworldcultures.com

World Music Festival celebrating the diversity of multi-faceted traditions locally, nationally and internationally. Contact the Arts office in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council for details. (01) 271 9555 / info@fwc.ie

Afri Famine Walk - www.afri.ie

A yearly global solidarity event which commemorates the Irish famine, as well as expressing solidarity and friendship with the people of today's world who continue to suffer famine, poverty, violence as a result of war, military suppression and injustice. (01) 8827563 / afri@iol.ie

VSI Volunteer Projects - www.vsiireland.org

Various ongoing volunteers projects to promote peace, social justice, sustainable development and intercultural understanding. (01) 855 1011 / info@vsi.ie

Action Week Against Racism - www.unitedagainstracism.org

European-wide Action Week Against Racism held annually March. Check the above website for details of events happening locally. +31 20 6834778 / info@unitedagainstracism.org

Activelink - www.activelink.ie

'Community Exchange' website and weekly email bulletin, listing events, campaigns and job opportunities in the community and voluntary sector.

S.A.R.I. - www.sari.ie

Sports Against Racism in Ireland host a number of innovative and integrated core projects and events that address issues of racism and cultural diversity through the medium of sport, including Soccerfest, Ireland's largest intercultural football tournament for men and women. (01) 873 5077 / info@sari.ie

Comhlámh - www.comhlamh.org

Check out Comhlámh's 'upcoming events' listing which is used by the community & voluntary sectors. You can also sign up for our eLink newsletter which contains a host of information on upcoming events in the sector.

Metro Eireann - www.metroeireann.com

Monthly newspaper with news, events and ads focusing on multicultural Ireland. Online edition at: www.metroeireann.com

Hot Press - www.hotpress.com

Ireland's leading music, social and cultural magazine.

The Ticket - www.irishtimes.com/culture/

The Irish Times - www.irishtimes.com

Friday supplement to countrywide events and entertainment, see also the 'What's On' column. Other news-papers have their own events listings too.

Online restaurant guide - www.menupages.ie

Search by county, international food style and budget. Includes menus, prices, details of special offers and reviews by the public.

www.niceone.com

'Ireland's internet directory' with links to a wide variety of sites including extensive list of local newspapers, themselves a great source about local goings-on. Listed later in this book for its job-hunting section.

www.entertainmentireland.ie

As its name suggests this site is dedicated to entertainment. Comprehensive listings for cinema, TV, music, theatre, festivals, clubbing, comedy, restaurants and exhibitions.

www.culturenorthernireland.org

Information on cultural events and the arts in Northern Ireland.

Lives less ordinary: thirty-two Irish portraits

Kravis, J. and Morgan, P. 1999. Lilliput Press, Dublin. Thirty two people talk about their lives, providing an alternative view of the possibilities of life in Ireland.
www.lilliputpress.ie

Worlds Apart - www.rte.ie/radio1

RTE Radio 1 programme which examines global justice issues from the perspective of Ireland. Past shows can be downloaded and listened to.

Karen Coleman - www.karencoleman.com

The Wide Angle with Karen Coleman on Newstalk 106-108FM. Radio programme covering a broad range of current affairs topics including news on Ireland and around the world. Sundays 10.00 - 13.00.

Community Media Network - www.cmn.ie

A 32-country, not for profit organisation embracing all forms of media to support progressive development and social justice -has some interesting and useful links e.g. an A-Z of alternative print listings.

Near FM - www.near.ie

A community-owned, not-for-profit radio station on FM 90.3, broadcasting 24 hours a day to the Dublin North East area. Programming incorporates facilitating and supporting community development, providing access and a platform to a wide range of local groups.

www.indymedia.ie

A collective of independent media organisations and journalists offering grassroots, non-corporate coverage.



Memorabilia session at a Coming Home Weekend

Job Hunting

THE JOB MARKET

The job market seldom remains static, and if you aren't coming home to a job, it is one of the more significant changes you are likely to encounter on your return. Even though most jobs are not advertised in the national press, a good way to get a feel for what's currently on offer is to check the newspaper adverts. They'll also tell you what kinds of skills and experience are sought in specific vacancies. The Irish Independent jobs section comes out on Thursdays and is good for teaching posts; check the Irish Times on Fridays for their supplement, or their website at any time. The Sunday Independent also carries job adverts, particularly for medical posts. These should all be available in your local library, FÁS offices or on the web.

Recruitment agencies may be able to help, but they tend to specialise, so shop around for those which recruit in your sector (see some suggested websites in the list following). The big recruitment agencies are in any case good sources of free, generally high-quality job hunting guides.

The Internet can be used for free at most public libraries and is an increasingly important source of information about jobs. Many organisations include a vacancies page on their website, so if you know which sector interests you this is always worth checking for. Then there are recruitment websites of all types. Some are general, while some are dedicated to specific employment sectors (e.g. health, IT) or arrangements (part-time, freelance). A selection of current sites is listed at the end of this section. As the net is constantly evolving, this list does not pretend to be exhaustive; but it will provide a few starting points. There are also several dedicated guides to job hunting on the web.

CONTACTS AND NETWORKING

It is a good idea to let as many people as possible know that you are searching for work. Making contact with prospective employers face-to-face is recommended and more productive than sending CVs in the post or by e-mail. Don't be afraid to telephone or call into the organisations or companies you think you might like to work for and let them know that you are available. Try and get the name of an appropriate contact person, for instance a manager or personnel officer - someone who has the power to hire you. They will usually prefer you to make an appointment with them in advance of a meeting. Look at [The Monster guide to Jobhunting](#) and [What Colour is your Parachute](#) (see Useful Publications) for some suggested strategies when taking this approach.

If you find that you aren't making much progress in your chosen sector, it is

well worthwhile getting involved with organisations on a voluntary or internship basis if possible. This can give you a valuable insight into a sector if you're new to it; it can get you up to speed if you're returning; it fills what might otherwise look like a gap on your CV; and when paid vacancies do arise you are much better placed if people know your work and you know the organisation.

An excellent source of guidance in the job-hunting process is Eugenie Houstons's *Working and Living in Ireland*. This reference book is updated annually and provides current information about the Irish jobs market as well as hints about CVs, interview technique, etc. A companion volume, *Go Contracting in Ireland*, gives similar information for people wishing to do freelance work.

COMHLÁMH CAREERS AND COURSES LEAFLET

Comhlámh's *Careers and Courses Leaflet* is a useful starting point for anyone considering a career in a development-related area or for those who are already looking for a job in the sector. Whether you are trying to secure your first paid job, thinking of a career change or further studies, or simply want to know more about the opportunities available, you will find links and resources in this leaflet to point you in the right direction. Included is a list of relevant job sites, references to online resources and publications, listings of third-level courses in development-related areas in Ireland, contact details for many of the educational institutions which provide these courses and links to further details on short courses, evening courses and workshops. Download a copy from our website or contact the Support Services Project Officer (01 4783490 / supportservices@comhlamh.org) for a free hard copy.

SOME USEFUL WEBSITES

www.idealists.org - Career Centre

Visit Idealist.org's Career Centre at www.idealists.org/en/career/ for a wealth of information and free downloadable resources on careers in the non-profit sector.

www.wse.org.uk - World Service Enquiry

Information and advice for anyone interested to work or volunteer in international development, including a careers advisory service, career coaching and assistance with CVs and cover letters.

www.prospects.ac.uk

'Special Interest Series' of booklets covers a variety of topics from advice on getting jobs to tips on working overseas – available to order at a minimal cost from www.prospects.ac.uk (click on 'order publications' at the bottom of the page) or for free in most college career-guidance services.

www.irishjobs.ie/Work_Wiseadvice and www.nightcourses.com/careers-toolkit

Tips on job-hunting, drafting your CV, cover letters, interview skills, career change etc. Practical information about working in Ireland.

www.gradireland.com

Irish internet directory with comprehensive list of education links. Jobs, postgraduate study and career advice for students and graduates in Ireland.

www.migrantproject.ie

Crosscare Migrant Project is an information, advocacy and referral agency for migrants in vulnerable situations. The project provides services to intending, existing and returning Irish emigrants, as well as immigrants and members of new communities in Ireland. 01 873 2844 / migrantproject@crosscare.ie

www.migrantproject.ie/returning_to_ireland.htm

This site provides links to free practical factsheets on topics such as accommodation, health, tax, pensions, social welfare, education etc. to help migrants thinking of returning to Ireland.

www.citizensinformation.ie

Citizens Information is an Irish eGovernment website provided by the Citizens Information Board. The site provides information on the social and civil rights of everyone in Ireland, including accommodation, housing, healthcare, education, political system, your rights etc.

www.irishlinks.co.uk

Moving and returning to Ireland - information and advice on moving, jobs, property, money, and other categories.

www.mindtools.com

Contains a wealth of information on building essential skills and tools for a successful career.

GENERAL JOB AND RECRUITMENT SITES AND DIRECTORIES

The following websites are useful to jobseekers:

www.irishtimes.com/jobs

The Irish Times recruitment section

www.fas.ie

FAS Employment Services. Click on 'jobseekers' link or freephone 1800 611116

www.niceone.com

Ireland's internet directory with hugely comprehensive list of links of jobsites, recruitment agencies and related resources.

www.topjobs.ie

For jobs in all sectors all over Ireland.

www.irishlinks.co.uk

Has links to some Irish job and recruitment sites.

www.jobs.ie

Search by country or job type.

www.monster.ie

Some more useful sites

www.recruitireland.com

www.employireland.com

www.irishjobs.ie

www.jobfinder.ie

www.irelandhiring.ie

www.nixers.com

JOB SITES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY SECTORS

www.Comhlámh.org/jobs-noticeboard.html

Comhlámh's online jobs noticeboard with vacancies in the community, voluntary and development sectors. Also sign up for Comhlámh's eLink newsletter for regular updates.

www.activelink.ie

Listings of jobs in the community, voluntary and development sector. Sign up the weekly jobs bulletin.

Dochas Wednesday's News

A weekly e-newsletter which is an invaluable source of information on jobs and events in the development sector in Ireland. Sign up on the Dochas website www.dochas.ie.

The following sites are useful for information on positions outside of Ireland:

Relief Web - www.reliefweb.int

Charity Job - www.charityjob.co.uk

Bond - www.bond.org.uk/jobs.php

Eldis - www.eldis.org/go/jobs

Dev Net - www.devnetjobs.org

Alertnet - www.alertnet.org/thepeople/jobs/index.htm

Civicus - www.civicus.org/vacanciesandinternships

Idealist - www.idealists.org/if/as/Job

InterAction - www.interaction.org

One World - www.uk.oneworld.net/section/uk/jobs

Also worth checking out are individual organisations' websites under the jobs section.

JOB SITES FOR OTHER SPECIFIC SECTORS OF EMPLOYMENT

www.ateamhealthrecruitment.com

Healthcare placements in Ireland according to geographical and professional preferences.

www.onassignment.com

Providing skilled temporary professionals to clients in the life sciences, healthcare industries, engineering and IT industries.

www.itstaff.ie

Contract and permanent staff for IT market.

www.farmersjournal.ie

Click on the classifieds at the top of the page and then check under the recruitment section for agriculture jobs in Ireland.

www.educationposts.ie

Teacher recruitment site (all levels, posts in Ireland and overseas) approved by DES, CPSMA, C of I, Educate Together, IPPN.

www.irishfreelance.com

Useful site aimed at freelance and contract professionals from all fields.

USEFUL PUBLICATIONS

What Color Is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters & Career-Changers.

Bolles, Richard Nelson. 2010. UK, Ten Speed Press. The definitive guide to finding your 'life mission' and the job which goes with it.

The Right Person for the Job: International Volunteering and the Australian Employment Market.

Brook, J., Missingham, B., Hocking, R. & Fifer, D. 2007. Australian Volunteers International. Research demonstrating that time spent volunteering overseas should be seen as an investment in developing critical skills rather than a break from the workforce. Downloadable from www.australianvolunteers.com.

Careers and Courses Information: third-level, post-graduate studies and careers in development related areas.

Comhlámh. 2010. Available directly from Comhlámh and downloadable from our website www.comhlamh.org

The Monster Guide to Jobhunting: Get the Perfect Job, Double Click.

Chapman, Andrew. 2001. Great Britain, Pearson Education Ltd.

Returning to Ireland: A Practical Guide to Accommodation, Health, Tax, Pensions, Social Welfare. Ireland.

Emigrant Advice and the Dept. of Social and Family Affairs. 2003. Available from publishers and as a free download from www.emigrantadvice.ie/emm/return.pdf

The Inner Game of Work: Overcoming Mental Obstacles for Maximum Performance.

Galloway, Timothy, W. 2003. Texere Publishing.

Take Charge of Your Career ... and Find a Job You Really Love!

Grace, Corina. 2009. The Essential Handbook for Job Seekers and Job Changers. The Liffey Press.

Portable Careers: Surviving Your Partner's Relocation.

Greenbury, Linda R. 1992. London, Kogan Page. An excellent reference book for everyone on the move - single or attached.

The Idealist Guide to Nonprofit Careers for Sector Switchers and The Idealist Guide to Nonprofit Careers for First-time Job Seekers.

Idealist.org, 2010. Available to download for FREE at www.idealist.org/ sectorswitcher and www.idealist.org/beginacareer.

Net That Job! Using the world wide web to develop your career and find work.

Krechowiecka, Irene. 2002. London, Kogan Page.

Working and Living in Ireland.

Houston, Eugenie. 2001. Ireland, Working and Living Publications. Continually updated electronic versions of the Working and Living titles can be bought online at www.workingandliving.com

Changing career to change your life.

Houston, Eugenie. 2000. Houston, Kathleen. 2000. Surrey, Trotman.

From here to e. Equip yourself for a career in the wired economy. Khoo, Lisa. 2001.

Great Britain, Pearson Education Ltd.

Living & Working in Ireland : A Survival Handbook. Living and Working Guides.

Laredo, Joe. 2001. London, Survival Books Ltd.

The Ethical Careers Guide: The definitive guide to careers with a conscience.

New Internationalist. 2006. New Internationalist Ltd.

A New Earth: Create a Better Life.

Tolle, Eckhart. 2009. Penguin.

A NOTE ON VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering can be a good way to get to know an organisation while doing something worthwhile and building relevant experience. Many of the websites and e-newsletters listed above contain information about volunteer vacancies relating to the community and development sectors. You could also visit www.volunteeringireland.com and www.volunteer.ie for information on volunteer opportunities and placements in Ireland.

If you are thinking of volunteering overseas again it might be worth considering what your motivations and expectations are and whether you are ready for another overseas assignment. Could it be the case that you are attempting to escape the challenges of resettling? Comhlámh's Volunteering Options programme was designed to help Individuals think through some of these issues, to explore the options available and to promote good practice in volunteering overseas. The Volunteering Options programme has an excellent website, a comprehensive book and they run regular information sessions, group workshops and one-to-one advisory sessions. See the Back in Action section towards the end of this book for further details.



Tribal drumming workshop with returned development workers and volunteers, December 2008

Further Studies

For reasons of career change or self-development, further study on return may be the thing for you. Postgraduate, degree, diploma, certificate and non-formal courses are all available. Full-time, part-time, distance, evening, on-line courses to suit everybody abound.

Many returnees report a desire to deepen their understanding of development, or to specialise further within their work sector. A period spent studying after your return to Ireland can also allow for a gentle re-introduction to the rapidly changing society you left behind, without the pressure to throw yourself immediately into the jobs market or the feeling that you are completely losing your connection to your time overseas. It can also be the gateway to a career in development work or a related area.

DEVELOPMENT-RELATED STUDY

If you want to pursue a course of studies in this area, there are many possibilities: courses in development studies, development education, community and adult education, equality and intercultural studies, community and youth work, humanitarian aid and sustainable development, are just some of the options available. As well as in Ireland there are a vast number of courses in Britain and elsewhere.

The Comhlámh Careers and Courses Leaflet provides suggestions on a range of study options and contact details for a host of institutions and course providers in Ireland and the UK. Please contact Comhlámh for a free copy, or view this leaflet on the Comhlámh website.

INFORMATION ON DEVELOPMENT-RELATED STUDIES

Careers and Courses, Comhlámh 2010

A comprehensive listing of third-level and post-graduate studies in development related areas in Ireland and information on careers in the development sector. Available online at www.Comhlámh.org or contact Comhlámh for a free hard copy.

Development Education in the Tertiary Sector in the North and South of Ireland.

Centre for Global Education, 2008. Information on courses and modules of courses that relate to international development in the tertiary sector. Downloadable from www.centreforgloaleducation.com. Hard copies available from Comhlámh.

Activelink, www.activelink.ie/content/training

Training courses and workshops in non-profit -related areas on this regularly

updated website. It is also recommended that you subscribe to the free weekly Activelink Community Exchange and Activelink Jobs and Volunteering e-newsletters for news on jobs, courses, events and other news in the community and development sectors in Ireland.

Dtalk, Development Training and Learning Programme. www.dtalk.ie

Dtalk is a training and learning programme offering a broad range of short courses and workshops for development workers active in international development.

COMHLÁMH COURSES AND WORKSHOPS

Comhlámh organises forums, workshops, weekend and night courses on a variety of development-related topics, depending on members' interests and demands. Courses are currently available in the following areas.

- **Skills in Development Education** - for trainers and facilitators to learn about the participatory methods used in development education
- **Options and Issues in Volunteering for Development** - a one day workshop for anyone considering volunteering overseas in a development context
- **Trade Justice** - a course for anyone who wants to know more about international trade and development justice and globalisation
- **What Next? How to Work for a Better World** - this course is designed for anyone interested in practical ways in which to contribute to global justice and sustainable development in their everyday lives
- **Explore Global Issues and Diversity through the Arts** - skilled arts facilitators demonstrate how to use a variety of art forms, including music, drama and visual arts, to explore diversity and global development issues with children
- **AGM and Annual Development Forum** - Comhlámh holds a development forum annually, typically on the day of our AGM, where we host keynote speakers and workshops on topical issues relating to social justice and sustainable development.

STUDY IN OTHER AREAS

For information on courses in more general subject areas the internet is probably the best place to search. Most web directories dedicated to further study or university websites have a search facility which allows you to search by course or subject area. See the following section for a starter selection of sites and publications on further study generally.

GENERAL STUDIES

www.fas.ie

Website of FÁS, Ireland's national training and employment authority. Click on links to training information on home page, or freephone 1800 611 116 for information

about courses and careers. Course vacancies can also be viewed on the touch screens in your local FAS centre.

www.cao.ie

For undergraduate third-level study in Ireland.

www.gradireland.com

Irish internet directory with comprehensive list of education links. Jobs, postgraduate study and career advice for students and graduates in Ireland.

FUNDING

At the time of publication of this edition of the *Coming Home Book*, the criteria to be eligible for the Higher Education Grants Scheme and Maintenance Grant included a residency requirement. If you are unable to meet this requirement because you have been serving overseas as a volunteer development worker then Comhlámh may be able to provide you with a supporting letter asking the Department of Education and Science, Local Authority or Third Level Institution to exempt you from it (after validating your assignment). We may also be able to issue a supporting letter for a family member if their parent or guardian was or is serving as a VDW and they do not meet a residency requirement for this reason. In all cases the final decision regarding eligibility for Grants rests with the body you are applying to and not Comhlámh. For further information please contact Comhlámh on (01) 4783490.

UK and overseas

www.postgrad.hobsons.com A guide to postgraduate study in the UK. Information on pre-degree, degree or postgraduate programmes as well as on studying and living in the UK. The AGCAS (UK-based Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services) Special Interest Series of booklets provide an excellent starting point for exploring hundreds of potential careers. Each booklet provides valuable advice about specific occupations including qualifications and skills required, relevant postgraduate or vocational courses, funding information, potential employers, working conditions, case studies, etc. Available to order for minimal cost from www.prospects.ac.uk (click on 'order publications' at the bottom of the page) or for free in most college career-guidance services.

www.prospects.ac.uk is the official graduate careers website with lists of postgraduate study and research resources for Britain and overseas.

www.icdl.open.ac.uk is the website of the International Centre for Distance Learning. Has an extensive database of UK courses and programmes taught by distance learning. The database contains over 5,000 learning opportunities from more than 300 providers.

Back In Action

When you arrive back to family and friends, all the TV images of the so-called ‘developing world’ are being thrown at you and tested against your particular experience. People want to know “is it really like that?”, ‘that’ in most cases being some version of the latest media horror story, or, perhaps, the ‘poor but happy’ cliché. Your own images of the developing world will have changed drastically since you last watched Irish and British TV, and you will probably have begun to question both the stereotypes you brought there with you and the explanations of under-development and poverty which went with them. You need time and understanding to begin to sort it all out.

As an organisation originally founded by returned development workers, Comhlámh was specifically set up to address these needs and may make a natural point of contact for you. In addition to supporting returned development workers and volunteers through offering services such as Coming Home Weekends, debriefing and counselling services, career and further studies information, Comhlámh empowers individuals to work for a just and equitable world.

MORE ABOUT COMHLÁMH

Today Comhlámh is a dynamic, independent membership organisation working together with development workers, volunteers and activists. We are committed to advocating for a just and equitable world, setting standards and promoting good practice. Ours is the belief that people acting in solidarity can change the structures of global injustice and poverty. Through awareness raising, research, education and training we empower individuals to take effective action to address global inequality.

Comhlámh’s mission is to challenge our society on the root causes of global poverty and inequality and empower people to demand equity in global relations. We advocate for active citizenship and critical engagement, challenging perspectives in a spirit of partnership that respects and promotes diversity and interculturalism. Underlying principles in achieving these are to invest in people, to be accountable and to promote sustainable development and respect for human rights.

CURRENT COMHLÁMH PROJECTS AND WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Comhlámh presents a wide variety of platforms through which you can use your overseas experience to inform and guide others, ranging from writing for our publications or websites, giving inputs in our educational workshops, courses and events, taking an active role in our campaigning activities and getting involved in or setting up on of one of our volunteer groups. For example, by participating in the Options and Issues group you can draw on your experiences to promote responsible and responsive volunteering by assisting others considering volunteering overseas and by connecting with other returnees to advocate for best practice. Our social events throughout the year also present an opportunity to meet like-minded people and share experiences. We rely on our members and volunteer groups to inform and sustain many of our activities and to infuse them with energy and commitment. New members and volunteers are always welcome to get involved. New groups emerge according to the interests and energies of our members. See below for more information on our activities, volunteer groups and membership.

Support Services

As the Association of Development Workers in Ireland, supporting and engaging returned volunteers and development workers to reintegrate into Irish society and to continue working for a just and equitable world from home is core to our work in Comhlámh. Our range of support services include Coming Home Weekends, personal debriefings, careers and courses information, a counselling service, information on social insurance, social and networking opportunities and training in development education and facilitation. Further details on all of the above can be found throughout this book, on our website or by contacting supportservices@comhlamh.org.

Development Education

Development Education is about exploring development issues through participatory learning approaches with the aim of changing attitudes and promoting positive changes in society locally and globally. Comhlámh runs a variety of courses and workshops for people interested in building their knowledge and skills to work on development and social justice issues. We also host forums and debates on a diverse range of contemporary issues in development, such as our annual development forum and the First Wednesday Debates, a series of lively debates held on the first Wednesday of each month during the autumn and spring, upstairs in the Bewleys Café theatre in Dublin. More details can be found under the Further Studies section of this booklet or on our website.

Index

Comhlámh produces Index, the Irish Newsletter for Development Education Exchange, for those involved in development education to share perspectives about

their practice. Hard copies are distributed to our members and pdf copies can be downloaded directly from our website. The Index Contacts List, updated annually, contains contact details for all organisations working on development and global justice issues in Ireland.

What Next? A practical guide to continuing development work in Ireland

This booklet is designed for anyone interested in practical ways in which to contribute to global justice and sustainable development in their everyday lives. The publication includes a wealth of information and ideas ranging from simple lifestyle changes that can make a difference, such as shopping ethically, investing our saving in ethical funds or engaging in ethical tourism, to more substantial commitments such as e-volunteering, ethical entrepreneurship, campaigning and activism, working and studies in the development sector. It also includes links and websites to consult for further information on all of these topics.

Campaigns

Comhlámh is committed to the principle of education leading to action. Most of our campaign work focuses on the issue of Trade Justice. This work involves engaging and campaigning on EU trade policy, working with partners and networks such as the Bloom Alliance and the Trade Matters Alliance, facilitating an active volunteer campaign group and running a popular course for anyone interested to learn about Trade Justice.

Focus Magazine

Focus Magazine is Ireland's leading magazine on global development issues. Since 1978, Focus has been making links between the situation in Ireland and in the South, with a view to challenging assumptions, and promoting understanding, interest in and action on development issues among a broad public. In particular, it aims to provide alternative views to those expressed in mainstream media. Focus is produced quarterly and distributed by a volunteer group to all Comhlámh members, recently returned development workers and various bookshops, classrooms, coffee shops, community groups and other spaces around the country.

Focus Magazine Volunteer Group

You can become involved in the production of Focus Magazine contributing ideas for topics, angles or people we could interview for articles, or become involved in the editorial group and organise the production, writing and editing of articles. Comhlámh relies on volunteers all over the country to distribute Focus in their local areas, pubs, library, staff room, class room, coffee shops etc. New volunteers are always warmly welcomed.

Volunteering Options

Comhlámh can provide information and advice to people thinking about

volunteering overseas in developing countries. Comhlámh have developed of a Code of Practice for sending organisations and a Volunteer Charter for volunteers to promote good practice in volunteering in the developing world. If you are thinking of volunteering overseas again or if you would like to pass on your experiences to others consult the website detailed below for more information and details of upcoming information sessions and workshops.

Volunteering Options Resources

The Volunteering Options website - www.volunteeringoptions.org - contains information for people before, during and after their volunteer placement, as well as a searchable database of over 115 organisations that arrange international volunteer placements. Other sections include links to relevant resources, including the Volunteer Charter and Code of Good Practice for Sending Agencies, and information on upcoming courses and events relating to overseas volunteering. A Volunteering Options book, *Working for a Better World: A Guide to Volunteering in Global Development*, (2nd edition) is also available and can be bought directly from Comhlámh or alternatively it is for sale in most major bookshops, including Easons, and for purchase via www.amazon.co.uk.

Options and Issues in Development Volunteer Group

The Options and Issues Group includes returned volunteers and development workers and focuses on developing and facilitating Comhlámh's Options and Issues in Global Development courses. These courses are aimed at anyone interested in volunteering for development overseas or in Ireland. The course aims to critically examine the role of the development worker / volunteer, motivations and expectations and the types of agencies and projects out there. It also offers participants an opportunity to meet with returned volunteers and those working in global development in Ireland. Participating in the group offers you the opportunity to develop your facilitation and training skills, work in the field of development education, as well as input into the development of the course content.

e-LINK Newsletter

Comhlámh's free e-newsletter is called e-LINK and is compiled and issued approximately every month. It contains information on news, upcoming events and courses from Comhlámh and the wider sector. Sign up to the distribution list on our website www.comhlahm.org.

Online Discussion Forum

Talk About Development is an online space where anyone interested in achieving a more just and equitable world can share ideas and information, discuss their opinions, ways to take action and debate issues relating to global justice and development. Visit www.talkaboutdevelopment.org to get involved.

MEMBERSHIP OF COMHLÁMH

We include in our membership anyone interested in working towards a more just and equitable world. If you have worked overseas in a development capacity (as a volunteer, development worker, humanitarian worker or missionary) for more than three months you are entitled to free membership of Comhlámh for a year from the date of your return. To avail of your free membership contact info@comhlamh.org. If you are not a recent returnee you can sign up for membership on our website, www.comhlamh.org. Our membership rates are very reasonable and include reduced rates for anyone who is overseas, unemployed or an asylum seeker. All members receive regular copies of Focus and Index publications, discounts on courses, invitations to social events, access to development education and campaigning opportunities and lots more. Your membership also entitles you to a vote at the Annual Comhlámh AGM.

One world centres and development education groups

There are a number of centres and groups throughout Ireland promoting development education and campaigns. Contact your local group or organisation for details on their activities and resources (see list in Contacts section at end of the book).

Solidarity and campaign groups

There are many groups set up to maintain contacts between Ireland and particular regions (country-specific groups), as well as groups set up to campaign on particular issues (issue-specific groups). Whatever specific interest you may have, whether it is the debt crisis, Fairtrade initiatives or climate change, there is likely to be a campaign group of interest to you out there. Again, see the Contacts section for a comprehensive list of these groups.

Other possibilities

If you don't feel ready to commit yourself to a group but would like to try out some short-term volunteering then your local volunteering centre should be able to provide you with a selection of one-off jobs. Contact Volunteering Ireland or Volunteer Centres Ireland (details in Contacts section) for information on local centres and online lists of volunteer vacancies in the work sector(s) of your choice.

Coming Home Stories

“

Elaine O'Brien

“The work was challenging but rewarding, the people extraordinary and the way of life an inspiration.”



Elaine O'Brien with children from St. Teresa's School, Somerset East, South Africa

For two years I was blessed to experience life in South Africa. From the moment I stepped off the plane in Port Elizabeth to my farewell celebrations I was fully living in the moment.

I was in a fortunate position to have received a preparation programme over a period of 6 months through Viatores Christi. They also offered tremendous support while I was in South Africa. I was director of the Catholic Schools' Office in Port Elizabeth. My main responsibilities were managing finances received from the Department of Education, coordinating development programmes for staff of 25 schools and monitoring building maintenance of each school. The schools I looked after were a mix of urban and rural. The geographical spread was the Southern area of the Eastern Cape. It is a truly beautiful part of the world.

The work was challenging but rewarding, the people extraordinary and the way of life an inspiration. I gave my all to my role, however what I gained from the experience will stand to me always. I must admit, I feel in terms of self development I gained far more than I could ever personally give. I owe so much for what I gained.

It was exciting coming home. After the 'honeymoon' period of being home I did feel isolated and struggled to find my role in Irish life. The Coming Home Weekend organised by Comhlámh was my 'life line'. The support from the organisation as well as other returned volunteers was second to none. I'm still trying to find my way but the journey is made so much easier having a network of people to lean on.

“

Brian Lowney

“I seem to be a little emotional trying to filter out a few of the many memorable episodes from such an amazing experience.”



Brian Lowney with the 'Commercial Cats', a soccer team from St. Joseph's Commercial School, Tanga, Tanzania

As I sit down from my 'hectic Irish life' to somehow write a small piece on the four years I spent in Tanzania, I seem to be a little emotional trying to filter out a few of the many memorable episodes from such an amazing experience.

I worked as an English teacher in Tanga, a small city on the Indian Ocean in Tanzania. Picture postcard setting: palm trees, beautiful calm waters, friendly laid-back people but not without its challenges: the heat, humidity, mosquitoes among others. You think you will miss certain things from home while overseas but you surprise yourself at what you actually miss and what you do not miss. Equally surprising for me are the things I miss from Tanzania but more importantly perhaps the things I never imagined I would miss. 'Coming Home' presents challenges: catching up on lost time with family and friends, settling back into work, fitting in with the daily grind that is 'modern society', trying to reconcile what was left behind and what is now in front of you. At times overwhelming and at other times the perfect opportunity to remember what I learned overseas and how I have changed.

Comhlámh, in general, and the Coming Home Weekend in particular has afforded me the opportunity to re-live, appreciate and re-invest my overseas experiences – both good and bad. The Coming Home Weekend was a fantastic opportunity to exchange stories and share experiences with other returned overseas workers in a relaxed and understanding atmosphere. It was also great fun! Taking comfort in the knowledge that 'Coming Home' is a transition not dissimilar from the transitional journey from home to the new life overseas, I can embrace the new challenge of (re)living in Ireland.

“

Aoife Mac Manus

“I wasn't ready to leave.
I was achieving things.”



Aoife McManus on assignment in Ghana

Iwent to Ghana for two years. Officially I was a teacher trainer in a training college. Unofficially I did a million other things. I found my first year in West Africa challenging, a little confusing, and sometimes lonely. But, by the time my second year rolled around I was settled, productive and having the craic. I belonged.

I used to ride my motorbike back to Navrongo into a magnificent sun setting over a rust and green African savannah, dotted with the bright colours of locals making their way home. I had conversations with my friends, over cold beers and goat kebabs, in the dark, about serious things – dictators, poverty, what the theme tune to the Smurfs was, all sorts.

I miss the adventure of everyday living there. Never knowing what's going to happen next, be it ten-hour tro tro breakdowns on the side of the road, a mouse in the loo or a bat in my bed with me.

I had projects funded by groups at home that were yielding results. People had benefited from my being there. I wasn't ready to leave. I was achieving things.

I was very aware of the potential problems associated with returning home from two years away and so visited home twice to make sure I was in touch with what was going on here and those I care about. I can't imagine how I would have felt if I hadn't.

Despite having a wonderful family and great friends, I cried for months when I came home.

Talking at some volunteer days for Comhlámh and doing their Coming Home Weekend has helped a lot. I've stayed involved in small ways. I'll be involved in a big way again sometime. Watch this space...

“

Don Lucey

“I can definitely say that the new family arrivals, the Masters course and the help from Comhlámh, were just what the doctor ordered to cure those coming-home blues.”



Don Lucey at Amabeere Crater Lake in Fort Portal, Western Uganda.

After managing the construction of over thirty new schools in war-torn Southern Sudan and spending almost four years in the sticky and humid climate, the time had come for me to return home to Ireland. While I drank my last Nile Special beer in the dusty and colourful local watering hole, my expatriate colleagues reminded me that reintegrating back into Irish society would be difficult.

The one big change that I noticed on my return home was the fact that I now had a mini-army of seven nephews and one niece whereas I had none before I went to Africa. After spending some time with my new family, I started a full-time Masters course in Dublin. I also signed up for the Comhlámh Coming Home Weekend. I can definitely say that the new family arrivals, the Masters course and the help from Comhlámh, were just what the doctor ordered to cure those coming-home blues.

I find reintegrating back into Irish society easier than what my African colleagues had predicted. I put this down to doing what I love and keeping myself busy. I have met some wonderful people through my new studies and through the many Comhlámh events such as the Coming Home Weekends. The Comhlámh events are an opportunity to meet and share with other development workers who can relate to the positive and negative experiences of development work.

So, keep yourself busy if you have just returned home to post-Celtic tiger Ireland and you will beat the homecoming blues. Start doing what you love and enjoy the journey and the people you meet along the way.

“

Martina Shanahan

“I felt very valued by
the communities
I worked in”



*Martina Shanahan with the Bagaia community
in Timor Leste.*

I loved being a development worker in Sudan: I loved the discussion on development, I enjoyed being in the field and I got a fantastic buzz when funding was awarded for proposals I had written; I felt very valued by the communities I worked in and I really loved the children.

I was very uncertain about my future when I returned to Ireland and just felt this overwhelming feeling of being lost. I became very stressed, job interviews were a disaster, I was just so unfocused. I had been sheltered from family issues when I was away, and felt overwhelmed when I came home. I felt extremely isolated and lonely. I finally got a job and joined a musical society, and as I began to rebuild a life and friendships in Ireland, I eventually felt more and more settled and began to enjoy life again.

I found the Comhlámh Coming Home Weekend a very liberating experience. It was such a relief for me to understand that many others get this feeling of loss and uncertainty and I felt energised in the safe forum created within the Coming Home Weekend. I felt as though a weight was taken off me and I felt less intense about my experiences in Africa and the experience of coming home. Soon I was ready to go again, equipped with more knowledge about myself and what I want in the future.

After two more years overseas working in post-Tsunami Sri Lanka, I decided to finally return home for good. I was offered a position with Irish Aid where I met my husband Michael. In 2009 Michael was posted to Timor Leste and so we decided to set off for a new horizon. I now work for Australian Volunteers International, supporting volunteers with their assignments in local governance, rural livelihoods and health. I place a strong emphasis on the preparing volunteers for the coming home experience.

“

Donncha O'Donnchadha

“The inevitable return to my old job was fast becoming a very daunting and real prospect on the horizon.”



Donncha O'Donnchadha with children and staff from the Umoza Street Children's Project, run by St. John of God in Mzuzu, Malawi

I recently returned from my second stint in Malawi, where each of my work experiences was as different as the location I lived in, the rural versus the urban, both having their own allure. The country and the people had grown on me. When it was time to go home I was happy with what I had achieved. As my plane landed a week before Christmas I witnessed the funny season in full swing. It seemed not much had changed since I left.

Suddenly as the New Year approached and the weather deteriorated all was not so good. The mood changed to gloom and doom. What seems to matter to people here in the financial recession fades into insignificance when I put it into the perspective of what is happening in any developing country. The inevitable return to my old job was fast becoming a very daunting and real prospect on the horizon. On arrival to work I discovered all had changed, the new computer system was totally alien. My work colleagues were very sympathetic and really assisted me. Work in itself was a great distraction in my life and is helping me adjust.

My Malawian friends keep in touch with the advent of better communications, sms and internet. I can communicate across the continent just as if I was sitting with them watching football or discussing issues. I know that in time the cold weather and getting up in the darkness of the morning will become the norm. Believe it or not the one area I hope gets easier is food shopping. After having to do without so much for long, the overwhelming choice makes me feel like a child in a toy shop! The Comhlámh Coming Home Weekend was a comfort zone where I met likeminded people who actually know what I had been through.

Contacts

For telephone numbers in Northern Ireland the NI prefix is provided. To call these numbers from the Republic use the prefix 048 instead of 028.

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

See also 'Resource Centres' below

80:20

Designing and delivering educational projects about various issues.

St. Cronan's Boys National School, Vevay Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow. (01) 286 0487 / info@8020.ie / www.8020.ie

Centre for Global Education

Enhancing awareness of international development issues.

9 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1FY. (028) 90 241 879.

Info@centreforglobaleducation.com / www.centreforglobaleducation.com

Concern Worldwide

Working to eliminate extreme poverty and suffering.

52-55 Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2. (01) 417 7700

47 Frederick Street, Belfast BT1 2LW / (028) 9033 1100

info@concern.net / belfastinfo@concern.net / www.concern.net

Connect World

Promoting better media coverage of international development Issues.

Unit A, Windmill Office, Roe Lane, Digital Hub, Dublin 8. (01) 480 6222 /

Infoconnect-world.net / www.connect-world.net

EI Salvador Awareness

Romero Centre for Development Education, Arts & Awareness.

St. Clare's Convent, 101 Harold's Cross Road, Dublin 6W. (01) 496 4138 /

romero@connect.ie

Galway One World Centre

Empowering people on a local and global level.

Bridge Mills, Dominick Street, Galway. (091) 530 590 / info@galwayowc.org /

www.galwayowc.ning.com/

Kerry Action for Development Education (KADE)

Developing people's skills, knowledge and understanding of the world.

11 Denny Street, Tralee, Co. Kerry. (066) 718 1358 / kade@eircom.net /

www.kade.ie

Latin America Solidarity Centre (LASC) & Latin America Week

Challenging injustices in Latin America and Ireland.

5 Merrion Row, Dublin 2.

(01) 676 0435 / info@lasc.ie / www.lasc.ie

One World Awareness Society

Mary Immaculate College, South Circular Road, Limerick. (061) 204 915 /

delia.connor@mic.ul.ie

Partnerships Ireland-Africa

Knockbreague, Newport, Co. Mayo. (098) 41036 / teresaosullivan@eircom.net

Trócaire

Working for a just world.

Maynooth, Co. Kildare. (01) 629 3333 / info@trocaire.ie / www.trocaire.ie

UCC One World Society

Promoting awareness of global issues within the student body. Accommodation and Student Service, College Road, Cork. oneworld@societies.ucc.ie / www.ucc.ie/oneworld

Waterford One World Centre

Development education centre that informs its community.

18 Parnell Street, Waterford. (051) 873 064 / info@waterfordoneworldcentre.com / www.waterfordoneworldcentre.com

CAMPAIGN GROUPS

Afri

Responding to injustice in the world caused by war and other violent conflict.

134 Phibsborough Road, Phibsborough, Dublin 7. (01) 882 7581 / afri@iol.ie / www.afri.buz.org

Africa Centre

Supporting African communities and coexistence in Ireland.

9c Abbey Street Lower, Methodist Church Building, Dublin 1. (01) 865 6951 / info@africacentre.ie / www.africacentre.ie

Amnesty International Irish Section

First floor, Ballast House, Aston Quay, Dublin 2. (01) 863 8300

www.amnesty.ie / info@amnesty.ie /

Bloom Movement for Global Justice

An alliance of campaigning organisations working for global justice.

www.bloommovement.org / bloommovement@gmail.com

Comhlámh Trade Justice Group Group

campaigning for just and sustainable global trade policies and practices.

For more information contact Comhlámh on 01 4783490 / info@Comhlámh.org / www.Comhlámh.org/get-involved-active-groups-trade-justice-group.html

Debt and Development Coalition Ireland

Committed to addressing the injustice of the debt crisis

Unit F5, Spade Enterprise Centre, North King Street, Dublin 7 / (01) 617 4835 / campaigns@debtireland.org / www.debtireland.org

Ethical Development Action

Facilitating volunteer-led activism in Cork to address issues of global inequality.

021 4504093 / www.edacork.org / edacork@gmail.com

Fairtrade Mark Ireland

Carmichael House, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7. (01) 475 3515 / info@fairtrade.ie / www.fairtrade.ie

Feasta - the Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability

14 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2. (01) 405 3615 / feasta@anu.ie / www.feasta.org

Irish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

P.O. Box 6327, Rathmines, Dublin 6. (01) 288 4189 / irishcnd@ireland.com / indigo.ie/~goodwill/icnd.html

Irish Congress of Trade Unions Global Solidarity Project

ICTU 31/32 Parnell Square / (01) 889 7777 / congress@ictu.ie / www.ictu.ie/globalsolidarity

Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Raising awareness of the Palestinian people and culture.

Room 5, 64 Dame Street, Dublin 2.

Latin America Solidarity Centre (LASC)

Challenging injustices in Latin America and Ireland.

5 Merrion Row, Dublin 2. (01) 676 0435 / info@lasc.ie / www.lasc.ie

Oxfam Ireland

9 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2 / (01) 672 7662 115 North Street, Belfast BT1 1ND / (0044) 28 9023 0220 www.oxfamireland.org / info@oxfamireland.org

Peace and Neutrality Alliance

Dalkey Business Centre, 17 Castle Street, Dalkey, Co. Dublin. (01) 235 1512 / pana@eircom.net / www.pana.ie

Stop Climate Chaos

A coalition of civil society organisations campaigning to ensure Ireland plays its part in preventing runaway climate change.

www.stopclimatechaos.ie / info@stopclimatechaos.ie

Trócaire

Working for a just world. Maynooth, Co. Kildare. (01) 629 3333 / info@trocaire.ie / www.trocaire.ie

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS

Friends of the Earth Ireland

9 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2. (01) 639 4652 / info@foe.ie / www.foe.ie

Irish Woodworkers for Africa - T/A Just Forests

Taking a livelihood approach to forest conservation.

Rathcobian, Rhode, Co. Offaly. (046) 973 7545 / (086) 804 9389

Northern Ireland Environment Link

The forum for environmental issues in Northern Ireland.

89 Loopland Drive, Belfast BT6 9DW. (028) 90 455770 / info@nienvironmentlink.org / www.nienvironmentlink.org

Stop Climate Chaos

A coalition of civil society organisations campaigning to ensure Ireland plays its part in preventing runaway climate change. www.stopclimatechaos.ie / info@stopclimatechaos.ie

Sustainable Ireland Cooperative

15-19 Essex Street West, Dublin 8. (01) 674 6396 / sustainable.ireland@anu.ie / www.sustainable.ie

The Village - Sustainable Projects Ireland Limited

Housing development for ecological, social and economic sustainability.

Main Street, Cloughjordan, North Tipperary. (0505) 42833 / info@thevillage.ie / www.thevillage.ie

Voice of Irish Concern for the Environment

9 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2. (01) 642 5741 / avoice@iol.ie / www.voiceireland.com

SOLIDARITY GROUPS

Afri

Responding to injustice in the world caused by war and other violent conflict.

134 Phibsborough Road, Phibsborough, Dublin 7. (01) 882 7581 / afri@iol.ie / www.afri.buz.org

Africa Centre

Supporting African communities and coexistence in Ireland

9c Abbey Street Lower, Methodist Church Building, Dublin 1. (01) 865 6951 / info@africacentre.ie / www.africacentre.ie

Akidwa

African Women's Support Group 29 Gardiner Place, Dublin 1. (01) 814 8582 / info@akiswa.ie / www.akidwa.ie

Al Nisa Women's Group

Uniting and organising Muslim women in the community
c/o 46 Mount Eden Park, Belfast, BT9 6RB. (028) 90 22 8135 / www.al-nisa.org.uk

Amnesty International

Exposing the truth, speaking out and seeking change
1st floor, Ballast House, Aston Quay, Dublin 1. (01) 863 8300 / info@amnesty.ie / www.amnesty.ie

ARCSS - Asylum Seeker & Refugee Counselling and Support Service

ARCSS Project Worker, Mosney Centre, Co. Meath. (041) 982 9780 / arcss@spirasi.ie

Banúlacht

Women in Ireland in Global Solidarity.
20 Lower Dominick Street, Dublin 1. (01) 872 3090 / info@banulacht.ie

Belfast Islamic Centre

Meeting the needs of a growing Muslim community
38 Wellington Park, Belfast BT9 6DN. (028) 9066 4465 / info@belfastislamiccentre.org.uk / www.belfastislamiccentre.org.uk

Bosnian Community Development Project

40 Pearse Street, Dublin 2. (01) 671 9202 / bosnian_cdp@hotmail.com

Burma Action Ireland

Informing the Irish about the situation in Burma and seeking their active involvement
P.O. Box 6786, Dublin 1. (01) 286 0497 / (087) 126 1857 / info@burmaactionireland.org / www.burmaactionireland.org

Chinese Welfare Association

Supporting Chinese people living in Northern Ireland
133-135 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HP. (028) 9028 8277 / www.cwa-ni.org / contact@cwa-ni.org

Congo Irish Partnership

19 Belvedere Place, Dublin 1. (087) 748 8558 contact Blaise Tangamu / cip_ireland@yahoo.co.uk / blaise@vodaphone.ie

Cuba Health & Education (CHE) Project

15 Merrion Square, Dublin 2. (01) 843 6448 / 087 6785842 cubasupport@eircom.net

East Timor - Ireland Solidarity Campaign

Suite 16, 3rd Floor, 24 - 25 Dame St, Dublin 2. www.freedom.tp/ireland/etisc

Focus Ireland

Advancing rights and opportunities for homeless people
9-12 High Street, Dublin 8. (01) 881 5900 / www.focusireland.ie

Front Line

International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders.
16 Idrone Lane, Off Bath Place, Blackrock, Co Dublin. (01) 212 3750 /
info@frontlinedefenders.org / www.frontlinedefenders.org

Integrating Ireland

The immigrant network 17 Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2.
info@integratingireland.ie / www.integratingireland.ie

Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Raising awareness of the Palestinian people and culture Room 5, 64 Dame Street,
Dublin 2. (01) 677 0253 / supportpalestine@ireland.com / www.ipsc.ie

Irish Refugee Council

Pursuing fair public policy to those seeking refuge.
2nd floor, Ballast House, Aston Quay, Dublin 2. (01) 764 5854 /
info@Irishrefugeecouncil.ie / www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie

Irish Sudanese Solidarity Group

3 Belgrave Road, Rathmines, Dublin 6. (01) 498 3926 / issgroup@eircom.net

Islamic Cultural Centre

19 Roebuck Road, Clonskeagh, Dublin 14. (01) 208 0000

Latin America Solidarity Centre (LASC)

Challenging injustices in Latin America and Ireland 5 Merrion Row, Dublin 2.
(01) 676 0435 / info@lasc.ie / www.lasc.ie

National Women's Council of Ireland

Representing women's issues of statutory and non-statutory bodies. 9 Marlborough
Court, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1. (01) 878 7248 / info@nwcii.ie / www.nwcii.ie

Nigerian Support Group (formerly ANASI)

Contact Chinedu Dibo.

Oi-Wah Chinese Women's Group

c/o Chinese Welfare Association, 133-135 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HP.
(028) 90 288277

Pavee Point Travellers' Centre

Promoting travellers human rights. 46 North Great Charles Street, Dublin 1.
(01) 8780255 / pavee@iol.ie / www.paveepoint.ie

Peru Support Group

c/o All Hallows College, Gracepark Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. (01) 852 0740 /
jjspring@allhallows.ie

Refugee Information Service

Specialist information service to asylum seekers.

18 Dame Street, Dublin 2. (01) 645 3070 / info@ris.ie / www.ris.ie

Residents Against Racism

Fighting against racism in Ireland.

c/o 12a. Brunswick Place, Dublin 2 (087) 666 2060 / (087) 797 4622 / residentsagainstracism@eircom.net / www.residentsagainstracism.org

Sierra Leone - Ireland Partnership

221 Palmerstown Woods, Clondalkin, Dublin 22. (087) 996 7990 / slip@gofree.indigo.ie

Sligo-Kitwe Co-operation Link Committee

Enriching understanding of both communities c/o Sligo Corporation, Town Hall, Quay Street, Sligo. (071) 916 3614 / www.sligokitwe.ie

Spiritan Asylum Services Initiative (SPIRASI)

Humanitarian, intercultural NGO enabling specialist service s. 213 North Circular Road, Phibsborough, Dublin 7. (01) 838 9664 / info@spirasi.ie www.spirasi.ie

Sport Against Racism in Ireland (SARI)

Cultural integration and social inclusion through sport 20 Upper Baginbun Street (top floor), Dublin 4. (01) 668 8869 / info@sari.ie / www.sari.ie

Support for Afghan Further Education (SAFE)

'Tara', Ballyfad, Gorey, Co. Wexford. (0402) 37018 / kabul@indigo.ie / www.safeafghanistan.ie

Tibet Support Group 14a

Whitepark, Arklow, Co. Wicklow. (086) 867 2408 / tibetire@indigo.ie

Tools for Solidarity

Unit 1B1, Edenderry Industrial Estate, 326 Crumlin Road, Belfast BT14 7EE. (028) 9074 7473

West Papua Action

Bringing Irish awareness and concern to West Papua.

134 Phibsborough Road, Dublin 7 (01) 860 3431 / wpaction@iol.ie / www.westpapuaaction.org

Women's Aid

Domestic violence service in Ireland.

Everton House, 47 Old Cabra Rd, Dublin 7. (01) 868 4721 /

Helpline 1800 341 900 / info@womenaid.ie / www.womensaid.ie

RESOURCE CENTRES

In addition to the following resources, most of the One World centres and Development Education groups listed above have resource libraries with borrowing facilities.

Irish Aid Volunteering and Information Centre

27-31 Upper O'Connell Street, Dublin 1. www.irishaid.gov.ie/centre/ / irishaidcentre@dfa.ie / 1890 252 676

Kimmage Development Studies Centre

Facilitating education / training courses for development professionals Kimmage Manor, Whitehall Road, Dublin 12. (01) 406 4386 / info@kimmagedsc.ie / www.dsckim.ie

Multicultural Resource Centre

Supporting ethnic minority communities and individuals 9 Lower Crescent, Belfast BT7 1NR. (028) 90 244639 / nathalie@mrcr-ni.org / www.mrcr-ni.org

Trócaire Resource Centres

12 Cathedral Street, Dublin 1. Mon - Sat 09:30 - 17:30. (01) 874 3875 / resources@trocaire.ie 9 Cook Street, Cork. (021) 427 5622 / corkinfo@trocaire.ie 50 King Street, Belfast BT1 6AD. (028) 90 808030 / infoni@trocaire.ie

UCD Development Studies Library

University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4. (01) 716 7560 / sally.corcoran@ucd.ie / www.ucd.ie/library/

Volunteering Ireland

Volunteer Resource Centre Coleraine House, Coleraine Street, Dublin 7. (01) 872 2622 / info@volunteeringireland.ie / www.volunteeringireland.ie

Volunteer Centres Ireland

A national organisation with responsibility for developing volunteering nationally and locally established by member volunteer centers. There are 20 member volunteer centers throughout Ireland. See www.volunteer.ie to find your nearest volunteer centre. info@volunteer.ie / 01 799 4519

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To join Comhlámh visit the ‘Join Us’ section of our website – www.Comhlámh.org



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Aston Quay
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 478 3490

Fax: 01 478 3738

Email: info@comhlamh.org

www.comhlamh.org

www.volunteeringoptions.org

www.talkaboutdevelopment.org



Irish Aid

Department of Foreign Affairs
An Roinn Gnótháí Eachtracha

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