WORLD AWARE EDUCATION AWARDS

TALES OF DISASTERS

Overall Project Summary

Tales of Disaster is a unique resource not only because it features puppets but also because its original target audience was children in South East Asia. With the production of support materials it has been adapted for use with children in Ireland. It connects children through a shared education experience and through creating a greater understanding of the realities of children's lives in different parts of the world.

The *Tales of Disasters* film series is a joint collaboration between Trócaire and No Strings, which makes life-saving puppet education films for children in developing countries.

Primarily, the aim of these films was to inform children and communities in countries like Indonesia, East Timor and the Philippines about how to be prepared for and stay safe during the region's all too frequent natural disasters.

In Ireland, Trócaire's education team saw the opportunity to take the films and develop them into a classroom resource for children in Ireland. An Irish primary school teacher was commissioned by Trócaire to write curriculum-based materials for the films to convey to Irish children some of the realities of life in regions like South East Asia.

While many of the key messages in the series address preparation and safety needs, the films also help to develop why natural disasters occur and the impact they have on communities. In the films, people work together and help each other; the vital role of trees and the natural landscape is highlighted and it's a little girl who takes the lead in organising warning signals and evacuation routes.

Sharing equally universal themes, a fifth film, *Two Gardens*, was commissioned by the Jesuit Refugee Service and added to the series. It explores peace-building issues in a region where tensions can escalate between communities, often because of the pressures exerted by the movement of populations due to poverty or crises like natural disasters. *Two Gardens* is about being open and kind to other people, even if they are different from you.

Trócaire launched the supporting materials for Irish Primary schools in September 2008. The materials are based on each of the films and include information sheets, questions on the films, case studies, activities and worksheets linked to the Irish Primary Curriculum. The DVD and support materials have been promoted through Conference workshops at the Human Rights Education Conference, St. Patrick's Education College, Drumcondra on Sept 20th and promoted to strategic contacts within the Primary sector such as the National Committee for Curriculum and Assessment and Initial Teacher Training Colleges. A mailing to Primary schools throughout Ireland promoting the resource has received a very positive response to date both in terms of the number of requests for the resource and subsequent comments on the materials.

> "Tales of Disasters is an engaging and innovative resource that brings the wider world into the classroom in a fun and novel way." *Fiona O' Dwyer, 6th Class Teacher, CBS Primary School, Limerick*

> "This is an excellent pack for communicating complex issues in an age appropriate manner to primary school children. The pack has been enthusiastically received by our student teachers and I believe it will provide an invaluable resource for all primary school teachers".
> *Dr. Anne Dolan, Mary Immaculate College of Education, Limerick*

The *Tales of Disasters* films – *Earthquake, Tsunami, Volcano, Flood / Landslide* and *Two Gardens* - treat issues sensitively, with all key messages informed by local partner experts working with Trócaire in South East Asia. They are culturally sensitive and while made in English, they are dubbed into local languages for distribution by trained staff, who deliver carefully planned follow-up activities.

Just as importantly, the films are fun to watch, both for children in South East Asia, Ireland and the UK. The characters are lovable and easy to relate to and children, whether Irish or Indonesian, enjoy the storylines and are always eager to know what happens next.

No Strings – www.nostrings.ie / www.youtube.com/nostringspuppets

No Strings is a unique collaboration between leading artists from the original *Muppet Show, Sesame Street, Fraggle Rock,* and an experienced humanitarian aid team.

It began five years ago, when emergency aid coordinator Johnie McGlade joined forces with Kathy Mullen and Michael Frith, former principal performer and executive vice president of Jim Henson's *Muppet Show,* each with an extraordinary background in using puppets and television both as entertainment, and education.

Johnie had been using an old puppet during his work in conflict and emergency zones around the world, and was always amazed at the draw it had. With a puppet on his arm, Johnie found himself much more able to catch a crowd's attention in displacement camps, for example, and share important messages – when people should expect to get food and water every day, where to find medical aid.
Why puppets? Puppets are something that children easily bond with and allow into their imaginative worlds. They remember the educational messages they represent in the context of something they feel safe with – even when they're dealing with situations that might provoke deep anxiety, like a tsunami, or an earthquake.

No Strings works by incorporating key messages sourced from experts in the field into engaging and dynamic scripts. These scripts and puppet character designs then go back to the field where, after a process of consultation and amendments, they are approved by these experts. The shoot then takes place and they are dubbed into local languages. Local partner experts are trained in how best to present the films and ensure children fully understand their messages and remember them in a carefully monitored process.

As well as the *Tales of Disasters* series, soon to be expanded with the addition of *Cyclone*, and a possible launch in Burma, No Strings has made a 30-minute film on landmine-awareness for children in Afghanistan.

Partnering again with Trócaire, No Strings is now making three HIV / AIDS films, exploring gender, stigma and prevention issues, for children in sub-Saharan Africa.

Trócaire - www.trocaire.org
Trócaire is an Irish NGO which supports long-term development and responds to humanitarian crises in the poorest countries of the world. An integral part of Trócaire's work, since it began in 1973, is its development education programme which aims to develop an understanding of the inequalities in our world among people in Ireland and the inherent responsibilities accompanying this understanding. Trócaire's development education programme has targeted many different sectors including adult education, trade unions, youth and early years, primary and post-primary pupils.

At Primary level, Trócaire produces theme-based education materials annually. The materials feature issues affecting people in the countries where Trócaire works. Work based on these materials can be submitted by schools for the *Trócaire Better World Award*. Trócaire also produces materials which link into specific strands of the Primary curriculum. The *Homes and Families in Peru* photopack supports the Geography syllabus, *Our World Our History* supports the History Syllabus and *Watoto, Children from Around the World* supports SPHE (Social Personal and Health Education).