



Background Paper
to inform
Combat Poverty Submission
to Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
on the development of the
Community Development Programme

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GLOSSARY

CDB – County and City Development Boards

The city and county development board is a local development body working for social, economic and infrastructural development in its city or county area, which co-ordinates the strategic work of all local government and state agencies, along with representatives of the social partners. CDBs are led by a member of local government and allow all the agencies to agree a common approach to local development priorities and delivery of public services. They draw up and work in partnership to a 10-year development plan.

Cohesion Process

The Cohesion Process began in 2003 when a review of local and community development programmes was initiated by the Government. The purpose of the review was to improve the delivery and outcome of services for local communities, to streamline structures, bring about improved co-ordination and control in the funding and operation of local development measures and enhance accountability among agencies and service providers.

Community Development Principles and Approaches

Community development empowers disadvantaged people and communities through supporting their involvement in shaping the decisions, policies and social and economic conditions that affect their lives, and it helps them acquire the skills and capacity to do this in an effective and equal way.

Community Development Programme

The Community Development Programme funds 185 community development projects that are focused on addressing poverty and disadvantage with a particular emphasis on addressing the needs of sectors vulnerable to poverty and exclusion. It

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is funded by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and is supported through regional and specialist support agencies.

Community Workers Co-operative (CWC)

The Community Workers Co-operative is a national association of people and organisations active in participative, community-based initiatives to address poverty and social exclusion. CWC seeks to promote co-operation and common action among those involved in community development work, as a means of achieving positive social change.

DESSA – Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency

DESSA is a national organisation, funded by the Family Support Agency, Citizens Information Board (formerly Comhairle) and government departments to develop and deliver social inclusion initiatives to people with disabilities and their families.

Endorsement Process

The Endorsement Process arose from a government directive requiring local community and development bodies to submit their plans to their city or county development board for approval or endorsement. The directive was part of a review of government supports for community-based work whose brief was to improve co-ordination, accountability and control over community development measures.

Family Resource Centres and Programme

Family resource centres are community-based organisations that work in a proactive way to identify the needs of families and their communities and to provide supports that address those needs. Through the Family Resource Centre Programme, the 100 centres that currently operate throughout Ireland are managed nationally and receive core funding via the Family Support Agency, which is a statutory body that works under the Department for Social and Family Affairs. FRCs are run by voluntary management committees with the support of regional and specialist support agencies.

FRC National Forum

The Family Resource Centre National Forum is a support network for family resource centres, which acts as a national representative voice and also provides practical supports to FRCs.

Host organisation

In 2004 the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs announced that all future community development projects would be 'hosted' whereby an existing organisation in the area such as a local partnership would act as host and would administer and manage the project, which would not set up as an independent company.

IACTO (Network of Community Training Centres)

IACTO is the national representative organisation for the voluntary boards of directors of community training centres (CTCs). It was set up in 2000. It provides management services to support the delivery of quality training outcomes and represents CTC boards in their employer function in collective negotiations with trade unions, statutory bodies and other groups.

Irish Travellers Movement (ITM)

The Irish Traveller Movement is a national network of people and organisations working within the Traveller community for full equality for Travellers in Irish life. Its membership, which is a partnership between settled and Traveller people, includes over 80 Traveller organisations.

Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP)

This is a series of measures, funded under the National Development Plan, to counter disadvantage and encourage equality and social and economic inclusion. It is managed by Pobal for the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and is implemented by local area partnerships as part of integrated local development plans. Actions tend to be organised into the categories of Services for the Unemployed; Community Development; and Community-Based Youth Initiatives.

Money Advice and Budgeting Service MABS

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) is a government-funded network of local centres set up to tackle problems of moneylending and indebtedness by giving people support and advice.

NAP/inclusion

Member states of the EU are required to draw up a two-year National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAP/inclusion). The plans are part of an ongoing EU commitment to make a decisive impact on poverty and social exclusion by 2010 in each member state. Ireland's current NAP/inclusion runs from 2006–2008.

National Women's Council of Ireland (An Comhairle Náisiúnta na mBan in Éirinn)

The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC) is a non-governmental organisation whose principal function is to promote equality for women in Ireland. It is the national representative body for women and women's organisations in Ireland.

NCCRI

The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism is an independent body, founded in 1998, to give expert advice to government and civic society on racism and interculturalism in Ireland.

New Communities Partnership (NCP)

New Communities Partnership (NCP) is a partnership of minority ethnic organisations that are working with other ethnic groups to support their communities.

Planet

Planet is the network and representative voice of the 38 area-based partnerships that are funded under the National Development Plan to promote social inclusion through the development of disadvantaged communities and areas. Planet itself is

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an independent network funded by its members and run by a voluntary management committee.

Rapid – AIT

RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning Investment and Development) programme is a government initiative, which targets 46 of the most disadvantaged areas in the country. The programme aims to ensure that priority attention is given to the 46 designated areas by focusing state resources from the National Development Plan and by bringing about better co-ordination and closer integration in the delivery of services.

The Area Implementation Team (AIT) in each area brings local state agencies and representatives of community groups together to prepare a plan identifying the needs of the area.

SIMS groups

SIMS (Social Inclusion Measures) working groups were established under the city and county development boards to co-ordinate at local level the delivery of social inclusion measures under the National Development Plan.

SPEAK

SPEAK (Strategic Planning, Evaluation and Knowledge) is a computer system and set of databases for self-evaluation by projects in the Community Development Programme and Family Resource Centres. Projects can create reports and enter their data into a national database for further analysis. It gathers quantitative data, e.g. time spent on different activities, and qualitative information, such as projects' affects on various issues in their area, such as education or community empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Combat Poverty intends to prepare a submission regarding the future development of the Community Development Programme (CDP) to the Minister and to the Department for Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Combat Poverty commissioned a piece of research in order to inform the development of this submission. This included a 'soundings' process with a range of stakeholders as well as a literature and documentary review of key relevant sources. This paper summarises the outcomes of this research.

The paper is structured as follows:

- Section One outlines the findings from the 'soundings' process. These are grouped under
 - (i) strategic issues
 - (ii) operational issues.
- Section Two outlines relevant themes from the literature review.
- Section Three summarises key messages and outlines implications for the development of the submission.

The Soundings Process

Telephone interviews were conducted with a range of CDPs, support agencies and related national organisations. Although representative sampling was not employed, for the purpose of identifying CDPs for inclusion it was agreed to include in the range the following variables:

- time of set up, i.e. older and newer projects
- geographic spread, including urban and rural
- generic as well as group-specific projects.

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An email was sent to selected organisations inviting them to take part. It also outlined the purpose of the process and how it would be carried out. This was followed by telephone contact to set up an agreed time for the interview. A minimum of three attempts to make contact were made before the proposed organisation was replaced with a similar or related one.

A semi-structured interview schedule was prepared. Interviews were conducted with:

- 13 CDPs
- 2 regional support agencies
- 2 specialist support agencies
- 8 national level organisations
- one expert in community development.

In total 29 interviews were set up and 26 were completed; three representatives proved to be unavailable at the agreed time. See Appendix for list of those interviewed.

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SECTION ONE

FINDINGS FROM 'SOUNDINGS' PROCESS

1.1 A NATIONAL PROGRAMME?

The CDPs and support agencies were asked if they or others in their projects felt themselves to be part of a national programme. The representatives of CDPs observed that this was a complex matter. A number had been on or currently were on the National Advisory Committee (NAC) and this gave them some sense that they were part of something bigger than their own projects. However, they expressed reservations as to the extent to which they actually felt part of a national programme. Generally they also felt that people who did not have this type of engagement were unlikely to see themselves as part of a bigger programme. Terms such as a 'bunch' or 'collection' of individual projects or 'a raggle-taggle of projects' were used to capture this sense of fragmentation and disjointedness.

Some did refer to the positive role played by the regional structures in contributing to a sense of belonging to a wider programme and also mentioned the positive role of their specific support agency in supporting this feeling.

The CDPs interviewed felt that there should be a greater emphasis on the national programme and the programme-level dimension needed to be strengthened. One representative of a regional support agency and one of a national organisation said that feelings were more mixed among CDPs regarding the programme level. They felt this applied mainly to some of the older CDPs, which had existed before being involved in the Community Development Programme and whose current funding was drawn from a large number of sources. However, the lack of a sense of there being a national programme was identified in the interviews as something that needed to be addressed.

1.2 STRATEGIC LEVEL ISSUES

1.2.1 Vision and Values

The majority of those interviewed felt that there was a lack of a shared vision for the programme at national level. The strength and distinctiveness of the programme was seen to lie in its espousal of community development principles. These include:

- empowerment,
- participation
- management and control by groups experiencing poverty and social exclusion
- flexibility in responding to locally identified needs.

There was felt to be an inadequate understanding and support for the principles and processes of community development at department level. Changes in personnel in the department due to the proposed decentralisation process were seen as having aggravated this situation in recent years. A number said that this movement of personnel was beginning to settle down and there were opportunities for consolidation.

Project work

A recurring theme from CDP representatives was that the work of the projects on the ground, which they felt to be considerable and which 'demonstrated tremendous value for money', was not valued or profiled by the department. Many of the support agencies and representatives of national organisations who were interviewed repeated this view. This was seen to lead to demoralisation and turnover among many staff and volunteers. Many of those interviewed referred to the different approach in the Family Resource Centre Programme, which was felt to be held in high regard at national level by its departmental sponsors. They also perceived that the work of other programmes such as the Partnerships, Leader and RAPID were also more valued and profiled.

Understanding core principles

Although community development principles and processes were referred to in the interviews as core elements of the programme, it was also acknowledged that among projects on the ground there were differences in how these principles were understood and applied. Some differences arose from the focus of the work as it was now envisaged at national or department level but there were also differences among projects on what they understood these entailed in practice. This was seen as a challenge to development at national level.

Those who were interviewed identified a spectrum of approaches among CDBs.

These included:

- CDPs that were mainly involved in service provision on the basis that 'no one else would do it'
- those providing services as a catalyst for the engagement of excluded groups with the purpose of building capacity
- those who felt service provision was to be avoided as much as possible because the core work of CDPs was 'to engage people with civil society through creating social capital and solidarity', with a view to changing the social conditions that cause poverty and social exclusion.

It was observed that projects might be on different points along the spectrum at different stages of development; many referred to projects being involved in a range of activities that included service provision but also capacity building and advocacy. Some interviewees expressed a concern that the service provision aspect had become so big it was in danger of crowding out capacity building and empowerment. Despite these observations, the interviews showed that all the CDPs saw community development principles and processes as central to what they were, despite challenges in terms of carrying them through. They were less convinced that this was the case in relation to the department and the programme-level managers.

1.2.2 Focus and Direction

Service Provision Paradigm

Many of those interviewed stressed that there had been an increased emphasis at department level on service provision in recent years. This was also found at local level where other agencies, e.g. Health Service Executive, Vocational Education Committee, were seen to be looking to CDPs to deliver services to groups that they found hard to reach. Evidence of this emphasis included:

- Changing definitions, meanings and messages regarding the purpose of the Community Development Programme at department level
- The withdrawal of regional policy workers
- CDPs were seen as a source of levering in other funding – this mainly for service delivery
- Increased emphasis in review and evaluation on quantitative measures, e.g. the number of target groups participating in courses or using centres and services versus more qualitative developmental measures.

As already mentioned, many CDPs stressed that they saw a role for service provision but as a means rather than an end. This role includes:

- Acting as a gateway for individuals to access mainstream services provided by statutory bodies
- Capacity building, e.g. handing over the running and management of services to local people once established and supported through the initial phase
- Building confidence among local individuals and groups to go on to other forms of social engagement
- Building social capital and social solidarity.

Overall it was argued that CDPs and the Community Development Programme should not be primarily about service provision but about building capacity, empowerment and social change. The need to support people affected by poverty

Paper to Inform Submission to DCRGA regarding CDP Maureen Bassett, August 2007 and social exclusion so that they could influence effectively decisions that affected their lives was emphasised.

A concern also was expressed that CDPs were expected to respond to all possible issues and needs that arose in the area in which they operated. Although identification of local needs and responses to these were indicated as strengths of the programme, they were also seen as a potential weakness. Projects were being pulled in all directions and expectations of them had increased at national and local level, including from other programmes and agencies. It was stated that no additional resources had been allocated from programme level to implement and manage the growing work load, particularly for an increase in core staff. (See Section 1.3 Operational Issues and 1.3.1 Core Staff, where this issue is discussed in more detail).

Expansion of the Programme – Links to Equality

The fact that the Programme no longer supported the set-up of new projects was identified as an issue that needed to be addressed in future development. It was felt that this worked against the interests of new, emerging groups or communities in particular.

Travellers

It was emphasised that Travellers also needed more group-specific CDPs. It was observed by those working directly with Travellers that many generic CDPs either did not do enough work with Travellers or faced challenges in doing so. It was stated that very marginalised groups such as Travellers needed their own 'space' in which to develop first and that Travellers were dealing with issues that were distinct from other marginalised groups, such as lack of accommodation and access to clean water.

Group-specific CDPs

The issue of group-specific CDPs was raised by a number of interviewees. It was generally agreed that these were needed but that over time their members should be integrated into generic CDPs. However, this would not necessarily mean the ending of group-specific CDPs as there would always be new group members who would need to be engaged initially in a group-specific context.

Ethnic minorities

In terms of engagement of newer ethnic minorities¹ it was believed that both approaches would be useful. To have group-specific CDPs would be challenging, given the wide range of ethnic minorities now in Ireland but it was suggested that it should be possible for the larger ethnic groups such as Nigerians or Poles. The following specific issues were identified regarding the inclusion of ethnic minorities in CDPs:

- Work with sub-groups such as women and young people would be needed. It was observed that generally young people from ethnic minorities were not engaging in activities within communities
- Adequate resources would be required to ensure language was not a barrier. It was observed that the inclusion of language training under the heading of 'literacy' by the VECs was unhelpful
- Work with a group focus (as well as individual) would be required, i.e. support for group formation and development
- There should be work with existing ethnic lead organisations in communities – a recognition that many ethnic-led organisations are nationally rather than geographically oriented
- Relationships should be developed at national level with national organisations, e.g. the New Communities Partnership (NCP). (See 1.2.5 for discussion on how the lack of national structure inhibits this.)
- Advocate on behalf of ethnic-led organisations regarding lack of funding.

¹ The term 'ethnic minorities' is used throughout this paper as this is the term used in literature from the New Communities Partnership (NCP)

Gender equality

Some strategic issues were identified regarding women-focused CDPs, plus the need for a gender equality analysis at CDP and programme level. These included:

- A need for greater understanding at programme and project level of the complex nature of disadvantage and discrimination experienced on gender grounds
- Recognition that simply 'working with women' does not necessarily promote equality for women and that such work needs to be underpinned by a gender analysis that looks at the underlying causes of women's inequality
- The need to find innovative ways of incorporating awareness of gender equality. One CDP interviewed used a development education approach, which encouraged women experiencing domestic violence to examine the causes of male violence in a personal and a global context, helping to reveal its structural nature
- Promotion of women's participation at more influential and senior levels of decision-making was needed, particularly women experiencing multiple disadvantage, and this work needed to be resourced.

1.2.3 Poverty, Social Inclusion and Equality

It was stated that CDPs were contributing to the achievement of macro-level objectives on poverty, social inclusion and equality and that this had been demonstrated both through the 2002 evaluation and the use of SPEAK (where this had been used). The anti-poverty focus of CDPs was said to be one of their defining features which was shared by few other national community-based programmes with the exception of the Family Resource Centre Programme.

Reservations

However, the following reservations were expressed:

- The contribution of CPS to macro targets on poverty, social inclusion and equality was constrained where CDPs were overly focused on service

provision and had less time to devote to building the capacity of marginalised groups and to supporting their participation in decision making.

- Some tensions were identified between a focus on supporting individuals and the empowerment of groups; it was felt the latter was important in really contributing to the poverty and equality objectives. One representative of a national group observed that FRCs and CDPs shared these macro objectives but that the FRCs were more focused on the individual while CDPs were more focused on groups.
- The need to include a structural analysis of poverty into the work of the programme, including at project level, was emphasised.
- A few interviewees expressed the view that tackling poverty and social exclusion was the responsibility of government; they expressed concern that government and agencies might be passing off their responsibilities to CDPs, which had very limited resources. A number also stressed the need to be realistic about what CDPs could do in this regard.

Overall, the 'official push to service provision' and the lack of a national structure and profile for the programme were felt to be impeding work on the broader objectives. Those interviewed stressed that for CDPs (and FRCs) to contribute to tackling poverty and social exclusion, government departments needed to 'give us the tools of the trade' and 'act as willing partners'.

A number of other issues were highlighted:

- It is difficult to keep poverty and social inclusion objectives on local agendas because of lack of belief on the part of some local actors that poverty is still an issue (one national representative also made this point about the national level).
- Other organisations, structures and programmes, e.g. community fora and County and City Development Boards, are not necessarily mainstreaming poverty, social inclusion and equality.
- Reaching the most marginalised is difficult and requires a lot of resources.

- The nature of poverty is changing and in areas of concentrated disadvantage there are long-term inter-generational issues that need innovative approaches and intensive work
- In some rural CDPs there is resistance to the concept of poverty and an associated stigma and there is a need for work to increase understanding of the multi-dimensional and structural nature of poverty.

1.2.4 Leadership

National leadership

Most of those interviewed pointed to a lack of shared ownership and leadership of the programme at national level. Many expressed the view that the department was overly prescriptive and did not work in partnership with the other key stakeholders in terms of making decisions for the Programme. Many of the interviewees said the operation of the National Advisory Committee (NAC) reflected this.

A number questioned whether it was, in fact, advisory, stating that 'advice was not necessarily requested or listened to'; another observation was that it seemed to be more a conduit for 'handing down decisions' already made. However, a number of interviewees cited the more recent agreement on salary scales as a positive example of how things could work.

The lack of promotion of the programme at department level was also seen as a failure of leadership and ownership as it was felt that this contributed to a lack of national profile as well as an under-valuing of the work and the programme. In terms of gaining or retaining broader government support, it was felt that the cost effectiveness argument was not being promoted.

Overall, there were questions regarding commitment to the programme and the safeguarding of its integrity. A number of interviewees were concerned at the

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decision to promote the 'host organisation' concept² and felt this potentially undermined the core principle of local voluntary management control. The 'Endorsement Process' was also alluded to as potentially undermining autonomy.

In terms of sharing leadership of the programme, a number expressed the view that relationship building between the key stakeholders was required, particularly representatives of the department and of the CDPs and that such relationships would need to be based on trust and mutual respect. Some were unsure if the department wanted this partnership approach.

Internal leadership

Lack of leadership from within the CDPs themselves was also raised. The majority of the CDPs interviewed said the lack of a national representative structure was a barrier to the emergence of national leaders and a national 'collective voice'. Some concerns were expressed on the possibility of developing a leadership and structure that would reflect the diversity within CDPs. The diversity referred to included:

- the focus of work
- different contexts
- different stages of development
- different perspectives informing the work.

However, it was felt that it was important to attempt this. (See 1.2.6 where the question of structures is outlined in more detail below.)

1.2.5 Policy Influence

There are operational aspects to the policy role of CDPs at local and national programme level but many felt that this was a key strategic issue and therefore it is included here.

Programme Level

² See Glossary

On the question of influencing policy regarding the development of the programme, the majority of CDP representatives felt there was little possibility they could do so. The lack or weakness of a national structure was identified as key to this (see 1.2.6 Structures below). It was also observed that a previous review of the programme in 2003 in which they had participated had not been published and 'nothing had happened'.

The rest of this section deals with the role of CDPs in influencing wider social and economic policy.

National Level

Many believed that the insights gained from the work of CDPs on the ground – because of their unique position, working as they do with a wide range of groups and issues – should be fed into the formation and implementation of policy. One interviewee wondered how closely connected the Community Pillar was in this regard while another suggested that the programme should be represented in the Community Pillar.

Constraints

Despite this, many referred to constraints on CDPs in informing policy:

- They expressed the view that policy work was not seen by the department as legitimate activity for CDPs and it resisted the development of a policy infrastructure within the programme. They cited the removal of funding for regional policy workers as an example of this.
- The pressure to become predominantly service providers was aligned to this also.
- One interviewee said that the lack of technical support for the implementation of SPEAK was also an example of resistance to gathering policy lessons across the programme.

Generally, the question of the programme's ability to influence national policy was linked back to the lack of national structures and 'voice' as well as credibility and status. Some participants said the regional structures facilitated a policy role particularly when assisted through their policy workers. Some CDPs linked up with national level organisations, e.g. NWCI³, CWC, and ITM, to feed in policy learning from the ground.

Interviewees also referred to the resource implications of policy work which is time intensive, saying that, with limited core staff available and the increase in project management duties, little time was available for this work. Some felt that, if policy work were seen as central to the work of CDPs, it could be built into work plans and space made for it, rather than it being an 'add-on activity'.

Capacity issues were also raised particularly with regard to members of voluntary management. A number of people did refer to the positive contribution made by the *Having Your Say* Programme, in terms of supporting community and voluntary groups in policy work.

Overall, there was a sense that it was a weakness in the programme that policy learning was not being captured sufficiently and fed in at national level.

Local Level

Most of the CDPs interviewed did try to contribute to policy at local level, although they indicated they were limited by time and resource issues. Other issues related to trying to support voluntary management members to take on representational roles (See 1.3.3 Supports and 1.3.4 Involvement of Volunteers) and access to relevant structures.

SIMS groups

³ See Glossary

In terms of access, SIMS (social inclusion measures groups) were mentioned in particular. A number of CDP representatives said that they had had to lobby for a number of years to gain a seat on their SIMS group. They pointed that many SIMS groups had no representation from groups working directly on the ground while partnerships and other programmes such as RAPID were allocated seats.

CDBs

The openness of some CDBs to involving or consulting in a meaningful way with CDP representatives was raised by some. Sometimes this was linked to levels of understanding of community development and the broader issue of poverty and social exclusion. It was also said that all community and voluntary groups were 'lumped together' without an understanding of the great diversity that existed in focus and approach in their work.

Community Fora

The community fora were sometimes cited as another example of this lack of understanding. Reference was made also to the under-developed nature of the poverty and social inclusion dimension among many of these.

Representation issues

Another issue was the challenges of 'representation' itself. This included the lack to date of clear mechanisms for members of CDPs (and other locally based projects) for guiding this, e.g. how the representative is to be chosen from across a number of CDPs, as well as the lack of mechanisms for decision-making and feedback. It was felt that members of committees such as SIMs sometimes did not understand these challenges and often they expected decisions to be made on the spot. The practice of introducing items not on the original agenda was also mentioned.

It was suggested that policy work should be done in a cross-organisational way as the issues confronting CDPs also concerned others working on the ground including FRCs. A number of CDP representatives mentioned work they were doing in this regard. One model – developed by South Dublin Community Platform – was

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highlighted because it was deemed to have done this in a constructive way.
Originally this had employed a worker but this was no longer resourced.

Regarding influencing the policy of agencies such as the HSE and VECs, many CDPs said that positive working relations had been developed locally with frontline staff in statutory agencies but questioned the level of understanding of issues at higher levels in such organisations.

1.2.6 Structures

National Structures

Lack of a national profile, credibility and clout; of a collective voice; of ability to influence either the direction of the programme or relevant national policy – all these were linked to a lack of leadership and national structures. Although most interviewees cited the lack of national structures as a key issue, there was some diversity in what was understood by these. As already mentioned, the NAC as it was constituted before it was replaced by the Consultative Panel was regarded as inadequate to guide the strategic development of the programme.

Interviewees proposed structures that fell broadly into the following categories:

- a) A representative structure such as a forum or network made up mainly of CDP representatives which would draw on more formalised regional structures
- b) A department-level structure that would guide the programme, made up of key stakeholders and working to a partnership model, e.g. a vastly improved and strengthened NAC or a national office on the lines of the Family Support Agency with a board.

Each of these will be discussed more fully below.

Representative structure (a)

The majority of CDPs interviewed (nine out of 13) said that a national representative structure was required. The functions suggested for this structure included a policy role; promoting and profiling the CDP programme and its work at local level; and a formal mechanism to communicate to the department on the programme's operational and strategic issues. It was suggested that the department would need to recognise and resources this structure and some raised the possibility of CDPs contributing to it also. It was indicated that it would need a small team of workers and that the national structure should draw on more developed and formalised regional structures. It was also proposed that capacity building would be required to ensure the participation of members of voluntary management committees.

Many stressed that the independence and autonomy of this structure would be key to its success.

Challenges

Among the challenges identified were the question of the location of the national office and associated issues of travel time for representatives of CDPs from different regions. It was also recognised that such a structure had been attempted some years ago but it had not proceeded because of resistance by some CDPs. However, many felt that it was now time to proceed with such a plan. They felt that the Family Resource Centre Programme had outstripped the Community Development Programme and that was due in part because it had formalised structures. A number of possible models of national and regional networks were suggested as worth examination, including the FRC National Forum, MABS, Planet and IACTO (Community Training Centres⁴).

Of the remaining four CDPs interviewed, one was ambivalent about the establishment of a national structure but did agree there was a need for a bridge between CDPs and the department that would be able to influence the department; another felt that a strong regional structure with good representation of volunteers

⁴ See Glossary

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should develop first. A third CDP felt that a statutory agency was needed on the lines of the FSA, which would work according to community development principles.

Of the eight national organisations that were interviewed, seven felt a national level representative structure was needed. This was also mentioned by the expert on community development and the two regional support agencies. A difference in emphasis arose in that three of the national organisations felt that this structure should be concerned mainly with issues relating to the programme and act as a mechanism to communicate with the Department but should not act as a 'collective voice' on wider policy issues. They felt it would be better if these were fed through to national level organisations working on the issues because these issues were wider than the Community Development Programme. A number also said that a national level structure would assist in building relations with other national level organisations.

Operational level structure (b)

Many CDPs, including those that wanted a representative structure, saw the need for a mechanism at department level. Few specified the exact type of mechanism; two mentioned an office on the lines of the Family Support Agency and one mentioned a strengthened NAC on the lines of the Drugs Strategy model. The rest mainly referred to the need for a more inclusive partnership structure that would have the power to influence the direction of the programme. It would deal with operational issues and would advise and be listened to by the minister and the department. They also said that this structure should defend and promote the vision of the programme also.

Among the national organisations three believed that the programme would benefit from a statutory agency on the lines of the Family Support Agency. Such an agency would ensure commitment, leadership and increased profile at this level and would act as a bridge to the department. It would be important that the board of such an agency included a range of perspectives including a strong CDP representation. The dialogue arising from such a structure, both of itself and in its communication with the national representative structure mentioned above, 'would open up both sides

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and create a sense of vibrancy, rather than the sense of powerlessness which currently exists among many CDPs'. One of those organisations that recommended a statutory agency stated that its success would depend on the 'political will of the department'.

Rather than a statutory agency, two other national organisations proposed strengthening the National Advisory Committee of the CDP Programme. This should include broadening the membership to include more national level organisations, taking a partnership approach and agreeing clear terms of reference. Its key role would be developing a strategy and guiding the direction of the programme. It would also ensure that policy learning from the work on the ground was captured and used to influence policy in a range of government departments.

One interviewee also highlighted the need for a more 'formal bridge' at departmental levels between the FRC Programme and Community Development Programme.

Regional Structures

Interviewees saw a strong link between the development of national structures and the further development of regional structures. They highlighted a number of issues: Broadly there was agreement that regional structures were needed and that they should be more formalised and supported. CDPs that were interviewed observed that there was a lot of inconsistency across the regions at present with some more developed and cohesive than others.

Dublin was felt to have specific issues regarding a regional structure. One view expressed was that it was dominated by one CDP and did not reflect the diversity of CDPs in the region and another view was that this structure had become too 'politicised' and that an independent chairperson was needed.

Regional meetings

People said that there was a broad range of reasons why CDP representatives attended regional meetings. These included support and sharing experience; for some it was a way of 'stepping out of the day-to-day issues and looking at the bigger picture'. A number saw the regional structures or meetings as having a role in the policy arena, in the creation of a 'voice' and a profile. They were also a way for the group-specific CDPs to share their perspectives and expertise and a point of linkage for specialist support agencies.

In a number of areas the regional support agencies play a significant role in convening and supporting regional meetings and regional level activity and this was mainly welcomed by the CDPs interviewed. The point was made, however, that it was important that support agencies did not overly lead but rather gave support.

Challenges

Some of the challenges to participation in regional structures were time, distance and the difficulty in getting voluntary management members to attend. It was felt that, for the regional aspect to develop, it would need to be built into work plans so that participation was not seen as an 'add on'.

Another key issue was resources. It was suggested that a networking budget be allocated to all CDPs. One person observed that when the financial resources originally available to regional networking had been removed, volunteers had become less likely to attend.

1.3 OPERATIONAL ISSUES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

1.3.1 Core Staff

The operational issue mentioned most by CDPs interviewed was that of the 'two core staff' rule. Quite a number stressed that this did not take into account the scale of operations of many CDPs and, in particular, the burden of managing simultaneously a number of sub-projects, e.g. childcare, youth services, day care. The result was

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that CDP co-ordinators were line-managing a large number of staff and there was no time for other important aspects of CDP work, such as development work, networking and policy work. It was argued that the number of core staff should be related to the scale of the CDP.

The point was made that the department and other agencies were pushing for CDPs to take on services but were not putting in the resources to manage these. It was stressed that the department and statutory agencies were benefiting from the delivery of services by CDPs without providing the level of resources needed.

The degree to which CDPs should be involved in service delivery is a strategic issue within the programme, which has already been discussed.

The fact that CDPs have multiple funders and therefore multiple sets of accounts was another operational issue. This is putting pressure on administrative staff and for many CDPs a part-time administrator is no longer adequate.

A number of issues that have already been highlighted have staffing implications including policy work, the need for more intensive support for volunteers, development and outreach work.

1.3.2 Funding

A number of CDPs raised the fact that national programme funding only constituted about one-third of their total funding. However, many also referred to the importance of the core CDP funding in leveraging other funding.

Some CDPs referred to the lack of 'programme funding' in 2007 and indicated that this was causing major difficulties. CDPs were under pressure to work with more and more groups, e.g. asylum-seekers and refugees, without getting additional resources. Although funding was being provided by other agencies and sources it was often for a limited period and this did not allow for long-term planning and

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development; often it does not cover management costs. Some CDPs said that they were now beginning to charge administration fees but felt they would benefit from guidelines on this.

1.3.3. Supports

Role of Regional Support Agencies

CDPs' comments

The majority of the CDPs interviewed (nine of 13) were happy with the role that their regional support agency played.

These CDPs made the following points:

- Regional support agencies were particularly useful regarding the development and support of management committees
- One CDP observed that joint training across projects was useful in sharing experience and networking
- Support agencies played an important part in relation to regional networks
- Many of this group still felt that additional funds should be given directly to CDPs to buy in specialist training and support.

The remaining four CDPs interviewed had more mixed feelings regarding the role of regional support agencies. One view expressed was that they suited the early stages of a project's development but, after this, projects had more diverse and specialist needs and the training and support budget probably would be better going directly to the CDPs.

Regional Support Agency comments

The two regional support agencies interviewed felt that it was useful for projects to have an independent organisation with whom they could work in identifying support needs and that the process worked on the basis of a 'collaborative partnership'.

There were mixed feelings regarding the monitoring role. One view was that this worked fine, while the other person interviewed was less convinced about including this aspect in the role of support agencies. They identified some gaps that needed attention, e.g. human resources and also the need for a lot more work with volunteers, including a high level of intensive support.

Other points

Some of the points raised above were mirrored by observations from other interviewees. A number stressed that regional support agencies (RSAs) played an important role. Other points included:

- The functions of RSAs were not defined clearly enough
- There is a need to take account of the life cycle of projects; the model currently being used is more suited to the early stages of development
- The different and changing contexts of many CDPs needed to be taken into account, e.g. in Dublin the emphasis is on regeneration and this needs specialist support
- A pool of specialist supports that is available to all is needed
- More direct funding to CDPs is needed for specialist supports
- There is a need for more capacity building for volunteers.

Regarding the monitoring role of support agencies, one person (from a CDP) felt that this should be removed. One regional support agency representative referred to the challenges of this role and one representative of a national organisation (previously employed in a CDP) also felt this should be removed.

A representative from a Traveller project argued that an additional training and support budget was needed for Traveller projects because of the slow and intensive nature of the work.

Role of Specialist Support Agencies (SSA)

The CDP representatives interviewed did not refer to the specialist support agencies. Two support agencies were interviewed⁵. However, the representative of one had only started working with the agency and indicated that she had a limited input to make.

Issues identified:

- Inadequate level of resources to support all CDPs

This issue⁶ was raised by an SSA and also by a national level organisation. One of the agencies interviewed said they could draw on the wider resources of the organisation in implementing the support role. However, this was not the case for the other agency.

- Awareness of the role and services of specialist support agencies

It was felt there was not enough understanding of the SSAs at local CDP level.

- Work with people with disability

One agency that deals with disability referred to having to 'sell' the need for work on this area. This agency felt there was resistance among some CDPs because they saw it as the remit of the HSE and were reluctant to take it on. Some CDPs had issues about inaccessible premises but the agency representative felt that this in itself was not enough reason not to work with people with disability. This interviewee also felt that this response showed a limited understanding of the range of disabilities in the community.

Although the growing demands on CDPs were recognised, it was felt that CDPs are 'about social inclusion' and could act as a pathway to other services by building confidence and through creating 'visibility' for people with disability. Also it was felt that empowering people with disability to become active members of CDP management committees would contribute to their inclusion in society and to their ability to influence decisions that affect them.

⁵ It is likely there are specific issues relating to other SSAs that are not reflected here as they were not interviewed

⁶ This point was stressed by DESSA, who have made a submission to the Department for development of their service

The representative of this agency recognised that CDPs needed support and again highlighted the limited resources available to it to do this work with 185 projects.

- Working with ethnic minorities

Similarly, it was felt that supports were needed for CDPs that work with ethnic minorities and new communities and that this was part of the work of the Community Development Support Unit (CDSU) under the auspices of NCCRI. It was also observed that they needed support in promoting anti-racism. To promote this work, the CDSU produced an anti-racist code of practice, called *National Community Development Programme – Equality in Community Development: an Anti-racist Code of Practice* (1999). The specialist support agency concerned with this area suggested that the SSAs should link together on cross-cutting factors.

Two representatives of national level organisations observed that the support work for inclusion of ethnic communities in CDPs needed to be broadened beyond anti-racist training.

Technical Supports

Eight of 13 CDPs mentioned (without prompting) the SPEAK⁷ package. All saw it as being problematic and a key issue was the lack of technical support. One person observed that it was not as 'user friendly as implied' while another referred to the amount of time needed to implement it.

Three of the national level interviewees broadly felt that SPEAK or something equivalent was needed to collect data on the work of the CDPs in a standardised way but that a high level of technical support was needed for this.

Other Issues

⁷ See Glossary

The issue most referred to under this heading was the need for more resources to support volunteers. This was not simply a matter of training, although this is important, but intensive one-to-one support and mentoring were also needed and this required extra resources. A few specialist areas were mentioned as needing more support, e.g. financial, legal and human resources.

Some groups also have additional support needs, e.g. in literacy and language. It was also felt that the level of work required with more marginalised groups, e.g. Travellers, required even more resources for support work.

1.3.4. Involvement of Volunteers

The theme of the role of volunteers⁸ and the voluntary management committee arose throughout the interviews. Volunteers were seen as the ‘backbone of the CDPs’ and doing tremendous work, which was not always acknowledged and valued by the department or other agencies. However, certain challenges were identified in relation to the role of volunteers:

- The changing nature of Irish society, resulting in people having less time
- The need for employers, as part of corporate social responsibility, to recognise the importance of voluntary effort and to be prepared to give employees time off
- Department officials and other statutory agencies needed to be more realistic in their expectations, in terms of availability, interest and capacity
- The changing role of management committees and associated ‘professionalisation’. This was linked to fears about financial and legal responsibilities among some members of voluntary management

⁸ The use of the concept of volunteers was queried by some interviewees because in the past because, in their view, they would have been referred to as ‘community activists’. It was felt that this was linked to what they considered the de-radicalisation of the Community Development Programme. It was also suggested that involvement of local people should be placed within the frame of active citizenship not volunteering.

- Capacity-building is highly intensive and needs considerable resources both in terms of involvement in CDP management and in wider arenas
- An over-reliance on paid staff to carry the representational role
- A resistance or lack of capacity on the part of some to go beyond the local and to be involved in the 'bigger picture'. However, it was also stressed that members of marginalised groups needed to be supported to reflect on the work and the issues that they deal with and to develop the analytic skills that allow the structural aspects to be revealed, in a way that is accessible to them.

Individual barriers to supporting members of management and others to take on wider roles were identified, including confidence, knowledge and skills. A range of systemic barriers were also identified, including;

- access to structures
- culture and ethos of these structures when they are accessed, e.g. the format of meetings, use of exclusionary language, lack of equal respect and lack of understanding of community development.

Literacy and language were also identified as issues; language can refer to English not being people's first language and also the complex language associated with many of the issues under discussion. Other practical matters, such as transport, support for care roles and expenses associated with participation, were cited as issues also.

The idea of progression routes for volunteers also was mentioned. It was suggested that it was often best to start small, e.g. on sub-groups within a project, and to offer ongoing support to help volunteers to move on to other levels, first within their own project and then into the wider arena. Mentoring was seen as particularly important in this process but it required a lot of resources.

A number of CDPs mentioned accreditation of training as a way of encouraging participation; others felt that it was important to have a choice on this as not

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everyone wanted accreditation. One interviewee expressed concern that some funders were now only prepared to fund accredited courses.

1.3.5 Endorsement Process

The issue of endorsement⁹ was raised by a number of those interviewed. Its introduction was felt to have a strategic significance as it was felt to indicate a lack of understanding of community development as it potentially challenges the autonomy of the local management committee.

The following issues were also raised about the operation of the endorsement process:

- Variable application across City/County Development Boards (CDBs)
- Some CDBs' lack of understanding of community development including the micro-geographic nature of much of the work; the fact that a number of community projects offer similar services or activities does not necessarily mean duplication
- Resources and capacity available to CDBs to engage in this process
- The one-year nature of the process versus the three-year plan that is submitted to the department
- The time involved and the duplication of work
- Why other programmes such as partnership companies do not have to go through a similar process.

1.3.6 Cohesion Process

A number of CDPs interviewed referred to this process, which is currently under way and said that CDPs were concerned about its impact on them. It was also indicated that CDPs were attempting to input into this at local level and that this was not

⁹ See Glossary

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always welcomed. For some, the resistance to their input was an indication of the lack of value and recognition for CDPs' work at local and national level.

1.3.7 Local Networking

Most CDPs highlighted considerable networking work carried on locally. A number were 'drivers' of 'service provider networks' over one or more counties and these included statutory, voluntary and community organisations. Some projects referred to networking with other CDPs, e.g. in clusters in south Dublin and a Traveller CDP referred to networking with other Traveller CDPs. Many also referred to linking with other programmes, e.g. Partnerships, RAPID, CLAR and Leader. This work was seen as very valuable but with time and resource implications.

Many CDPs saw the work they did on SIMs and other cross-sector bodies as part of their networking.

1.4. ROLE OF COMBAT POVERTY

The majority of those interviewed were very positive regarding the historical role of Combat Poverty in relation to the Community Development Programme.

Many CDP representatives expressed regret that the more hands-on role had been removed. A number observed that some of the problems in the Programme, such as the weakening of the community development approach, stemmed from the reduction or removal of Combat Poverty's role. A few wondered if the fact that Combat Poverty had a less hands-on role had resulted in it being less in tune with issues on the ground.

Most felt that Combat Poverty still made an important contribution through the production of resources and associated training; dissemination of research, information and analysis; conferences and seminars; the work with local authorities

Paper to Inform Submission to DCRGA regarding CDP Maureen Bassett, August 2007 and representation on the National Advisory Committee. The *Having Your Say Programme* was mentioned by a number of people as a valuable contribution.

A few other observations regarding Combat Poverty's current role included:

- A need to roll out more training with the policy pack
- The need to ensure materials and information were accessible to management committees, including funding application forms

Potential Future Role

The majority felt that Combat Poverty should continue to play a role into the future. Many referred to a more specific role for the Agency, particularly in relation to learning policy from the programme. This work included providing a space for reflection; the gathering and analysis of learning and its dissemination to the CDPs, the sector and also to policy-making arenas. Other CDPs saw this more as a support role in partnership with the proposed national representative structure.

It was stressed that Combat Poverty should work to ensure that an anti-poverty and equality focus be retained and strengthened within the Community Development Programme at national level. A number felt that it could use its position as a statutory agency, with a remit for the elimination of poverty, to advocate for the programme and its achievements, and to highlight its potential to make a major contribution to tackling poverty and social exclusion.

It was also emphasised that Combat Poverty should advocate for safeguarding the community development principles and approach within the programme. Other specific roles identified for Combat Poverty included:

- Continued support for capacity building on policy work for CDPs
- Commissioning and disseminating research relevant to the Community Development Programme, as well as providing technical support to CDPs on the commissioning and use of their own research
- Continued production of resources.

One interviewee felt that Combat Poverty should take on the role of national programme management and another suggested it could have a more direct advisory role to the department on the Programme.

SECTION TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

'The Community Development Programme was established in 1990 in recognition of the role of community development in tackling poverty' (Nexus in association with Farrell Grant Sparks Ltd., 2002¹⁰). The number of projects has grown from 15 in 1990 to 83 at the outset of the evaluation process in 1999 and to 185 in 2007.

(i) 1990—2000

The Nexus report highlights in the broader context some of the changes that occurred between the setting up of the Programme in 1990 and 2000. At the beginning of the period the following held true:

- The start of the Poverty 3 Programme
- Partnerships companies were being set up; the original CDPs made a significant contribution to their establishment
- There were high concentrations of economic deprivation and high levels of long-term unemployment
- There was little recognition of the role of community development as a response to poverty. The emphasis was on targeted delivery of services and the involvement of community organisations in the delivery of these.

The Nexus report highlighted changes in the environment between 1990 and 2000, including:

- Unprecedented economic growth
- Failure to rectify concentrations of poverty, which was acknowledged in the National Development Plan 2000—2006

¹⁰ Nexus Research, Farrell Grant Sparks Ltd (2002). *Evaluation of the Community Development Programme*. Dublin: Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs.

- Inequalities in wealth and opportunities
- More formalised relationship between the State and the community and voluntary sector.

(ii) 2001—2007

A recent survey of economic and social trends (Harvey, 2006¹¹) highlights the following issues:

2.1.1 Demographic

- The country underwent rapid demographic change – the population reached 4,234,925 in Census 2006, the highest since 1861
- A high rate of immigration; 186,000 people in the period 2002—2006
- The numbers seeking asylum peaked in 2002 (11,634) and has fallen sharply to 4,323 in 2005. The largest group are Nigerians
- An ageing population like other European countries. The present level of older people of 11.2 % is expected to rise to 14.6% in 2021. The Implications are contested regarding pressure on social spending, e.g. young migrant population, healthier older people
- Population growth is not evenly spread, with a shift to the East and low levels in the rural North-west and a hollowing out of inner-city areas, although Dublin shows the opposite trend.

2.1.2 Economic

- Ireland is the richest nation state in the EU, other than Luxembourg, based on income per head
- There has been a 4% growth rate each year over the past ten years with low government debt and an exchequer current account surplus

¹¹ Harvey, B. (2006) *The Bigger Picture: A Social Trends Analysis Report for Crosscare*. Dublin.

- Employment growth of 8.6% at peak and now at 2%; women's employment (57%) is now above the European average
- Unemployment is the lowest in Europe at 4%; long-term unemployment of 1.4% is concentrated in areas of multiple disadvantage.

2.1.3 Social

- There has been a plateau in the Irish rate of relative poverty, making it among the highest rates in Europe
- The persistence of poverty among groups that historically have been at risk
- The situation of two-parent families has improved where one or more parents has found work
- There is increased risk for older people especially those living alone or dependent on a state pension
- There is worsening stress for particular groups including long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, lone parents without work and people living in areas of geographic concentrations of poverty
- Extreme poverty persists for homeless people and Travellers
- The situation for those who can't afford home ownership is worsening
- There is increased imprisonment, in bad conditions
- There are complex trends in drug use
- People with disabilities have longer life spans

Harvey also highlights that there is an ongoing debate among those concerned with social policy, which is summed up as 'Boston versus Berlin'. The latter emphasises a rights approach, which he points out is part of a European trend to gradual extension of rights. The current challenge is to build up what are seen as social rights for disadvantaged groups to ensure social, economic and political emancipation.

However, he also points out that the Irish government is slow to participate in this trend of embedding social rights within constitutional and legislative instruments, e.g.

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the Disability Bill 2001 and resistance to the NESF recommendations regarding older people.

He also highlights the view held by many that Irish social policy is moving towards the market-led approach, as exemplified in the areas of pensions, health and housing. He cites as an example the level of investment in health which, at 7.3% of GDP, is low compared to the EU average of 8.7%. The 2006 Euro Health Consumer Index placed Ireland 25th and last in the EU regarding quality of health services.

However, other viewpoints cite the emphasis on the need to tackle poverty and social exclusion reflected in recent macro-level policy documents such as the National Development Plan 2007–2016, the partnership agreement *Towards 2016* and the NAPS/Inclusion. There are some reservations with regard to the level of commitment to implement these through specific policies.

2.2 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT – VISION AND PURPOSE

This section briefly reviews current definitions of community development and also the vision and purpose of community development within the Community Development Programme, as included in Programme documents. Since the beginning of the Community Development Programme, community development has been seen as a key tool in tackling poverty and disadvantage (Nexus report, 2002). As Motherway (2006)¹² points out, it has become central to many anti-poverty programmes and is a major component of Irish social inclusion policy. However, as he and others emphasise, community development is a contested concept and there are varying definitions of it.

Combat Poverty defines it as

. . . a process whereby those who are marginalised and excluded are enabled to gain in self-confidence, to join with others and to participate in

¹² Motherway, B. (2006) *The Role of Community Development in Tackling Poverty*. Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency.

actions to change their situation and tackle the problems that face their community (Combat Poverty, 2000, cited in Motherway, 2006: 11).

People's capacity to influence policies and programmes that affect them is also emphasised as follows:

. . . a key mechanism for advocacy and building capacity of the most vulnerable to participate in and develop analysis of the range of issues policies and programmes that affect them (Combat Poverty, 2003a, 6).

Others also emphasise the link to active citizenship, e.g. Lee¹³ who argues that it is rooted in a broad understanding of citizenship that sees people as having a right to influence and participate in the decisions that affect them (cited in Motherway, 2006).

The link to social change as highlighted in the Combat Poverty definition above is also stressed by many commentators. In a Northern Ireland context it has been defined as follows:

. . . a synthesis of struggles of people to obtain their rights through community action and the participation of people in a relationship with the institutions of government . . . As a concept, community development is about change for social justice (cited in Community Work Education and Training Network, 2005, 41¹⁴).

As highlighted earlier, the focus on a rights framework has increased. The linking of development, including community development, with the achievement of rights is also a recurring theme.

¹³ Lee, A. (2006) *Community Development: Current Issues and Challenges*. Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency.

¹⁴ *Looking Back to See Forward* (2005) Belfast: Community Work Education and Training Network.

A recent report published by Border Action¹⁵ (2007) emphasises the emerging realisation that development and human rights are inextricably linked. The authors refer to the increasing acceptance of the principle that the enjoyment of all human rights is both the means and the goal of development and that a human rights-based approach 'is the scaffolding of development policy'. The authors go on to refer to a view that is gaining support, which is that a rights-based approach:

. . . involves not charity or simple economic development but a process of enabling and empowering those not enjoying their economic social and cultural rights to claim their rights (Schabas and Fitzmaurice, 2007, 26).

Combat Poverty (2003b) also stresses the link between the realisation of rights and poverty and development:

People in poverty experience not only income inadequacy or material deprivation but, powerlessness, voicelessness and the experience of shame, humiliation and exclusion in political, social and cultural contexts (Combat Poverty Agency, Submission to Human Rights Commission, 2003b¹⁶).

Thus a whole range of rights are denied. Combat Poverty goes on to state, 'poverty prevents people from being agents of their own development'.

Lloyd stresses the need for development of a rights-based approach to community work as follows:

Rights-based approaches will lead us towards new goals which will be contested. There will be a shift from consensus and negotiation to rights that are not negotiable and we need to be prepared for that and to begin to develop different strategies and different language around that (Lloyd in CWC, 2003, 53).

¹⁵ Schabas W. and Fitzmaurice P. (2007) *Respect, Protect and Fulfil*. Monaghan: Border Action. Border Action is jointly managed by Combat Poverty and Pobal (formerly ADM Ltd)

¹⁶ Submission to the Human Rights Commission on Joint Committee Pre-Consultation document, on an All-Ireland Charter of Rights.

The concept of sustainable development is another theme that recurs in the literature. UNECE (United Nations Economic and Social Council) identifies the following key themes associated with sustainable development in local and global contexts:

- poverty alleviation,
- citizenship
- peace
- ethics
- responsibility
- democracy and governance
- justice
- human rights
- gender equality
- cultural diversity (UNECE 13/2005/3/rev.1, 2005, 4).

The Irish National Sustainable Development Strategy 1997 affirms that meeting the needs of the present in a sustainable way involves equity in access to and use of resources, as well as equitable opportunities in decision making (CWC, 57).

Thus the elimination or alleviation of poverty is placed at the heart of sustainable development. The former secretary-general of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, speaking at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa in 2002, stressed that the world today was facing the twin challenges of poverty and pollution and that we needed to usher in 'a season of transformation and stewardship' (cited in CORI, 2007).

This is also reiterated by CORI (2007) in its discussion of sustainability. This states that conventional economic models of development or progress fail to meet the needs of millions and millions of people and that this failure is evident 'even within better-off countries such as Ireland'.

Regan (2003) makes a direct link with community development, stating that 'sustainable development is community development with a strong environmental dimension'. He goes on to state:

Community work (*sic*) would acknowledge that economic activity and development is essential to a sustainable society, but this must be responsible activity based on social, economic and cultural rights, not economic development for its own sake and at all costs (CWC, 2003, 58).

2.3. DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The following indicates an ambiguity within current Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs documents on the programme, as well as a potential weakening of the vision and purpose of the programme since 1999.

Mee (2007)¹⁷ highlights that the definition of 'community' underlying the Community Development Programme has changed over time. He cites from the National Handbook for the Programme, published in 1999, as follows:

- "challenge the causes of disadvantage and poverty"
- "developing awareness of the nature, causes and extent of poverty through ... lobbying"
- "contributing to the policy-making process by campaigning and making recommendations on specific issues"
- "Influencing change in structures, policies and processes which contribute to poverty and exclusion" (National Handbook of Community Development Programme, 1999).

However, he goes on to outline how a recent communication (February 2007) from DCRGA to all community development projects outlined:

¹⁷ Unpublished brief document provided to the author of this report by Morgan Mee of West Training; this does not claim to be a comprehensive analysis of Programme documents but does highlight some interesting issues.

[CDP] “is funded to deliver government policies and provide services in the public interest and it is essential that this is done in an equitable, transparent and non-partisan way”.

The emphasis on service provision in this statement has been highlighted by many commentators, as well as by those interviewed for this paper; one person interviewed classed this as the ‘service provision paradigm’. Many see this as undermining the community development approach and principles that are meant to underpin the programme as well as weakening the potential for community development as a core approach in tackling poverty and promoting social change and justice.

However, Mee’s analysis of the changing emphasis in programme documents also highlights that the current Code of Practice for the programme, which is part of the funding contract between DCRGA and projects, states:

- community development seeks to challenge the cause of disadvantage and poverty and to offer new opportunities for those lacking choice, power and resources
- CDPs have a role to play in “influencing change in structures, policies and processes which contribute to poverty and exclusion”.

The document review carried out for this paper identified that the DCRGA Background Paper (for the current consultation process) states the following:

Community development seeks to challenge the underlying causes of disadvantage resulting from the effect of poverty and exclusion. It aims to offer new opportunities for those lacking choice, power and resources. Community development involves members of a community working collectively in assessing needs and identifying the changes necessary to improve conditions, and making these changes happen. People use and develop their skills, knowledge, experiences and common purpose in order to improve the quality of their own lives and the good of their community.

The emphasis on ‘challenging underlying causes of poverty’ as well as ‘working collectively to bring about change’ plus the focus on ‘choice, power and resources’ are nearer to the original understanding of the programme as outlined in the 1999 Handbook, although they are not as explicitly strong in emphasising structural change and influencing policy-making processes through campaigning.

Mee identifies that this view is echoed in the National Development Plan (2007–2013). This includes a reference to CDPs acting to:

Resource disadvantaged communities to have their voice heard in relation to the issues that affect them and to influence local actions to tackle disadvantage.

It goes on to describe the central focus of the programme as:

The central focus of the [programme] funding for 2007–2013 will be the mobilisation of the capacity of communities to participate in mainstream local development, tackle disadvantage by locally tailored solutions and the provision of training and education as well as supporting people to engage in enterprise and employment opportunities.

Finally, Mee also highlights that the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion (2007–2016) (Nap/inclusion) refers to the fact that a ‘revised’ programme will operate after 2007. Below is a very brief description of what the role of that programme will be:

To “support a wide range of self-help activities designed to improve quality of life for individuals and groups in disadvantaged communities”.

These statements also contain ambiguities. The NDP emphasises a policy voice albeit in relation to ‘local actions’, while the Nap/inclusion appears to emphasise fitting in with ‘mainstream local development’ rather than shaping it. The statement in the Nap/Inclusion appears to see a very limited role for the programme with an emphasis on ‘self help’.

2.4 ANTI-POVERTY, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EQUALITY

As highlighted above, community development and the Community Development Programme and projects have been seen as key tools in tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion and equality. The Nexus evaluation (Nexus, 2002, 48) confirmed their effect in this regard. It highlighted that projects that were well established showed 'extremely impressive' results in the development of local infrastructure, partnerships with statutory agencies and mainstreaming of new responses to social exclusion. It concluded there was 'clear evidence of real improvements in living conditions' resulting from this.

Motherway (2006), although he acknowledges that it is still very difficult to measure the poverty impacts of community development, concludes that there is considerable evidence of the impact of Irish community development programmes. He also notes that data exists (including data from SPEAK) that has not been adequately analysed. However he also points out that:

Most discussions of impacts tend to focus on self-help and community action and of personal benefits such as education, employment or access to benefits. There is little discussion of impacts in terms of political influence or structural change (Motherway, 2006, 42).

He states that there is a need for the further development of indicators and evaluation frameworks sensitive to the qualitative and developmental nature of community development and guided by community development principles. He points out that these must satisfy also the needs of policy makers for 'evidence'. He concludes that, although this potentially entails difficulties and challenges, the importance of 'good quality impacts evidence' means this work needs to be progressed.

The changing nature of poverty is a challenge to community development groups and others involved in local anti-poverty work. This includes inter-generational aspects of poverty and the need for innovative approaches to engage 'hard to reach

Paper to Inform Submission to DCRGA regarding CDP Maureen Bassett, August 2007 groups'. A recent report (Bassett, 2007) emphasises the central role of outreach strategies and their slow and labour intensive nature.

Without funding earmarked for targeted strategies like outreach policies and special support we will not correct the ongoing reproduction of inequalities. (Belanger cited in Bassett, 2007, 38)

2.4.1 Equality

The Community Development Programme is also concerned with promoting equality among different groups and people who experience poverty and social exclusion because of unequal treatment.

The draft publication, *Standards for Community Work* (CWC, not yet published) includes equality and anti-discrimination as core values and state that community workers have a responsibility to challenge discrimination.

The 'soundings' process highlighted equality issues in relation to women, ethnic minorities, Travellers and people with disabilities. These are dealt with briefly here.

Gender

The 'soundings process' raised the need to include a gender analysis in the programme and projects. It was stated that simply working with women without such analysis would not necessarily promote greater gender equality. The literature confirms this. A recent study (Bassett and Quinlan, 2006, 56) of participation of women from a RAPID area in West Dublin stated that:

The research highlighted the central importance of a gender-analysis approach. Unless the systemic and structural nature of women's inequality is examined and addressed, it is unlikely actions will have long-term impact. In the context of RAPID areas, this analysis also needs to take account of other structural inequalities including socio-economic status, race, ethnicity and so on.

Connell (1995) highlights that working with men without a gender analysis that includes an exploration of the foundations of women's inequality and the role of patriarchal systems in this potentially can reinforce or create inequality for women.

The need for a gender analysis in relation to policy is also stressed. A publication entitled *Gender Mainstreaming the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme 2000–2006* observes:

The socially constructed roles and the social, economic and cultural values associated with these roles impact on education, health, welfare and employment policies and, importantly, can, if unchecked, affect the way we implement associated policies. In other words, the lack of a gender analysis can have a negative effect, it can lead to discrimination, albeit indirect discrimination (ADM, 2000, 9).

A specific example of this is highlighted in a recent study of domestic violence in the west of Ireland (O'Connor Wilson Associates, 2005, 5), which was carried out on behalf of CDPs and the regional support agency in Galway and Mayo. It highlights the links between domestic violence experienced by women and economic deprivation.

The women provided evidence of the complex overlap between violence against women and economic dependence, poverty and structural poverty, for example, lack of access to private or public transport compounded the difficulties facing women subjected to violence.

The continued inequality experienced by women in senior and powerful decision-making structures both at national and local levels (NWCi, 2002) is also relevant to the Community Development Programme. It is worth noting in this regard that, while 12 of the 13 CDP co-ordinators interviewed were women, the CEOs and co-ordinators of the national level organisations were men, with the exception of the representative of the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi).

*Race and Ethnicity*¹⁸

Community development is seen as a mechanism for addressing issues relating to ethnic minorities and new communities. Frazer (2001) states:

Community development is about addressing the powerless and isolation of individuals and ethnic groups experiencing poverty; it is about ensuring that the collective voice of minorities is heard; it is about a community development process that builds social capital of ethnic groups so that they can develop the organisations and networks that allow them to influence and change their day-to-day lives; it is about influencing and changing public policy . . . it is about building social solidarity and a respect for difference and diversity in society; (cited in Rourke, 2002, 17).

Frazer also goes on to stress the need to challenge racism.

The report cited above examined the community development supports needs of 'new communities'. It concluded that accommodation was needed 'between the community development experiences of these groups and the types of community development structures which exist in places like the inner city of Dublin'. The following issues were identified:

- A need for recognition of the role and potential of community development
- A need also for multi-dimensional, inter-agency strategies and approaches
- The diversity of groups and ethnic minorities within 'new communities'
- Different concepts and understanding of community development
- Funding of community development within 'new communities'
- Capacity building and participation of 'new communities' in community development programmes and actions.

¹⁸ The emphasis in this section is on 'new communities'. The programme also addresses issues in relation to Travellers who are an ethnic minority although not officially recognised as such.

Despite a desire and aspiration on the part of local community development projects to address interculturalism, racism and the more active participation of asylum-seekers, refugees and migrant workers, this 'has not generally translated into concrete interventions and actions', the report noted. This situation may have changed in the interim as the report is now five years old. However, the blocks identified in the research to this type of engagement probably still have relevance.

They include:

- insufficient skills, understanding and knowledge
- belief that work should concentrate on more permanent residents
- feelings that the support and development needs of 'new communities' is a huge issue, beyond the capacities of local community development projects
- lack of resources and personnel.

As already indicated in the discussion on gender analysis above, the need to address cross-cutting factors is also highlighted in the literature.

A recent report of the proceedings of a seminar, entitled *The Needs of Black and Minority Ethnic Women Experiencing Male Violence* (Bassett, 2006, 23)

highlights:

. . . the issue of male violence against women cuts across all divides including class, race, ethnicity, ability, disability, etc. and that a shared analysis is important while still acknowledging the diversity of experience and the need for specific responses.

It also stressed that black minority ethnic (BME) women and the organisations that represent them must be involved at all stages in the development of services and strategies to address the issue. The role of AkiDwA in particular was highlighted.

The importance of this solidarity between groups composed of or working with different ethnic groups, as well as between these groups and those working with the general Irish population, was also raised.

Disability

Groups such as DESSA that work on disability issues stress the need for an analysis that is based on a 'social' rather than a 'medical model' of disability to underpin the work. In their view, a medical model means placing disability within a framework of health and social care¹⁹. This medical model has unpinned Irish

. . . 'provision, within this framework provision has been delivered through informal support systems provided by the family or within institutions and by service providers. The focus is on alleviating the effects of "impairment" rather than on "enabling abilities to be utilised and developed through access and inclusion"'.

Thus the problem is located within the disabled person and solutions are also focused there. A social model, on the other hand, identifies the 'problem' of disability as the barriers created by society that block 'full and equal participation'. The solution, then, is to remove these.

DESSA also states that the 'social model' analysis needs to be placed within a rights and equality framework. It highlights that, when people with disabilities began to organise and dialogue among themselves and with the rest of society, a challenge emerged to the charity approach that had informed work on disability. It further emphasises that *A Strategy for Equality* was published in 1996 and accepted by government. The emphasis was on the full participation of people with disabilities in political, economic and social life. The social model of disability is strongly rooted in community development principles of inclusion, change and empowerment. Thus, DESSA emphasises the importance of the CDP programme in contributing to the achievement of a commitment within the current social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*, which states:

Every person with a disability would be supported to enable them, as far as possible, to lead full and independent lives, to participate in work and in society and to maximise their potential. (Cited in DESSA, 2006)

¹⁹ DESSA (2006) Proposal to DCRGA on social inclusion of disabled people in Irish society. Dublin.

They also go on to highlight that under the Disability Act 2005, many government departments have prepared sectoral plans on Disability. While the DCRGA has not done so they have made commitments within the Local Government Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP), Community Development Programme, the Dormant Accounts and the Rural Transport Initiative.

Disability groups stress the need for greater support for CDPs so that they are in a position to ensure that people with disabilities have equal opportunities to be involved in projects.

Other grounds of equality are not dealt with here, including age, family and marital status, religious affiliation and sexual orientation, but any development of the programme would also need to take these into account.

2.5 STRATEGIC CHANGE – MOBILISING ACTORS

As already highlighted in earlier discussion, the mobilisation of people affected by poverty and social exclusion was identified as a core element of community development approaches. The purpose was to support them to have a say and an ability to influence policies and programmes that affect them. Both the soundings process and the literature review raised a number of issues in this regard.

2.5.1 Increased Opportunities

Both the soundings process and the literature review identified increased opportunities for the community and voluntary sectors to engage with the State, nationally and locally (Harvey, 2006). One such opportunity is the emphasis on social partnership, through the National Social Partnership Agreement (although considerable difficulties are highlighted in this regard) and also through mechanisms put in place to oversee the development and implementation of national strategies. These include:

- the Primary Health Care Strategy and the National Drugs Strategy as well as programmes like RAPID and its Area Implementation Teams (AIT).
- The consultation process and subsequent report on Active Citizenship and the proposed national office are also seen as offering opportunities.
- At local level the establishment of County and City Development Boards (CDBs) with associated Strategic Policy Committees and Social Inclusion Measures groups, as well as the establishment of community fora, are noted.

2.5.2 Reality versus Rhetoric

However, many commentators equally point to difficulties in the model of social partnership and of policy making and implementation, as well as in practices relating to inclusion for the community and voluntary sectors, in particular for marginalised groups.

Harvey (2006) points to what he sees as a redrawing of the boundaries between the state and the voluntary and community sector, with 'the Government halting and in some respects reversing the progress made by voluntary and community groups in negotiating a consultative role with the State'.

Motherway (2006) cites Meade, who argues that the right to participate in national social partnership is gifted by central government and that there is a 'consensus imperative' that quells radicalism.

Lee (2006) identifies a number of trends that could undermine the potential for real change, including a shift to partnership and consensus building and an emphasis on the local level. Key issues relating to these include:

- Partnership has had some good results but has led to a reduction in collective action and a lack of debate on the continuation of poverty, inequality and social exclusion and on the strategies required to tackle these

- The factors that give rise to poverty generally are neither created nor solved at local level. Therefore there is a need for strong links between local action and decision making at national level.

While Lee emphasises the fact that the push for integration at local level is not reflected at national level, Ó'Riordáin (2006, 43) highlights the lack of linkage between national level decision making and local implementation:

Local authorities, area-based partnerships and other public service delivery bodies do not see themselves as involved in national policy formulation. Therefore they sometimes put interpretations on national policy expectations which may be in direct contrast to the national agenda on poverty and social inclusion. The result is an inadequate incorporation of the national policy framework into both state agencies and local and regional authorities. This, in some cases, can result in a local interpretation of the policy that from the national perspective may be inappropriate.

All of these factors make policy influence a real challenge for community development groups. Motherway cites Shaw who argues that people are being drawn into bureaucratic structures that are often the opposite of what they claim to be: 'They often turn out to be managerial procedures rather than democratic processes'.

2.5.3 The Question of Legitimacy and Support

Within the Community Development Programme, the lack of recognition for policy work and for advocacy and campaigning as core concerns of the programme and its individual projects is emphasised by many commentators. According to Airey (2006) respondents in her research stated that there was a definite pressure from funders and the State for them not to engage in policy work, which 'often means simply campaigning on issues of poverty, access, discrimination and rights'.

Airey's study also highlighted concerns expressed by representatives of CDPs and FRCs who were interviewed, which were summed up as follows:

Because policy work is political, all THAT environment must be considered. There's that fear – you don't bite the hand that feeds you . . . it's risky. The area can be demonised (Airey, 2006, 59).

A number of those who were interviewed for this paper also alluded to similar fears and the risks that being critical of local policies and processes would result in their projects being labelled 'trouble makers'.

Lynam (2006) links the official push within the programme towards service provision as the core activity to a reluctance on the part of projects to engage in policy and advocacy for 'fear that their funding may be in jeopardy if they are over critical of government policy'.

2.5.4 The Question of Access

In addition to the weaknesses in the institutional frameworks already highlighted, including lack of policy integration between local and national level and the weak system of local government generally, the overly centralised nature of the system and the question of access were also identified as issues that affected CDPs' ability to input into policy at local level.

Centralisation

Airey's study identifies the overly centralised and top-down nature of the policy system as a block to participation. Respondents in the study say there is no real way of feeding up into policy. One interviewee commented: 'You are pushing a trickle of water against a flood coming down'. The differences within and between departments is also highlighted in terms of access.

Access

There is no automatic access to local mechanisms such as CDBs, SPCs or SIMS groups. Regarding SIMS groups, the soundings process for this study showed that CDPs often had to lobby for access while other programmes with less direct hands-on contact with the issues, such as partnerships, were automatically given a place.

One mechanism to which CDPs have access is community fora. However, a number of commentators have identified a weak focus on poverty and social inclusion in some fora (Cosgrove, 2006).

2.5.5. The Question of Supports

The resource-intensive nature of policy work is highlighted. Airey's study pinpoints the lack of resources, including staff, skills and funding, as a block to participation. This was confirmed by the interviewees in this study. The withdrawal of support for regional policy workers was seen to be particularly damaging. However, a number of regional support agencies continue to employ policy workers.

A report published by the South and Mid West Community Development Support Agency (Smith and Associates, 2005) expresses the view that supporting the capacity of communities to influence change in government policy at local, regional and national level is core to the agency's work. It has developed an implementation plan 2005–2008, to guide this work.

Airey's study highlights the need for continued support for the national anti-poverty organisations. This is based on the evidence of her study which recognised the positive role they played in supporting the policy work of projects. She also refers to other studies that also confirm this contribution.

Volunteers

The need for intensive support to help volunteers participate first within CDPs and then at policy level is emphasised. In a study carried out by West Training and Development Ltd. (2003), these supports are summarised as follows:

- Adequate allowances for all 'out of pocket' expenses
- Provision of 'shadow' support
- Provision of mentoring programmes
- Proactive recruitment of under-represented groups
- Induction programmes with an emphasis on community development principles
- Acknowledgement and celebration of volunteers' contribution
- Training and capacity building including for roles on management committees
- Realistic time demands
- Support from employers for leave from work and action at national social partnership level to gain this
- Option for accreditation for training undertaken; one model would be similar to the ECDL, with work broken down into skills and different levels within each skill. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) should be recognised. The regional support agency should take the lead and pilot such an initiative.

Employer role

This study (2003, 36) also suggested that the role of volunteers as employer, with responsibility for financial and legal matters, should be considered. Often these roles were of little interest to volunteers and were time intensive. It proposed that alternative approaches to employment be considered. These included:

- Direct employment of staff by DCRGA
- Employment through a state agency at regional level and managed locally by volunteers
- That staff be employed at regional or county level through an independent voluntary structure and managed at local level by volunteers.

SECTION THREE

IMPLICATIONS FOR PREPARATION OF SUBMISSION

3.1 CORE MESSAGES

The insights of the people interviewed for the soundings process were largely confirmed by the literature and documents reviewed. A number of strong messages emerged, which have implications for the development of a submission. The core message was the need to re-assert the primacy of community development principles and approaches within the programme. The understanding of community development that was most emphasised was one that stressed:

- Empowerment
- Participation of the most marginalised in shaping decisions that affected them
- Building social capital and solidarity
- Supporting collective action
- Promoting human rights and equality.

Another equally strong message to emerge was:

- The need to develop the programme at national level based on a partnership approach between the department and CDPs as well as other key stakeholders
- To promote the programme and its achievement
- To capture policy learning to influence policy change.

The following section outlines key messages under the headings of Strategic Issues and Operational Issues used in Section One. It also outlines issues to consider in the preparation of the Combat Poverty submission.

3.2 STRATEGIC ISSUES

3.2.1 The Vision and Purpose of the CDP

The strongest message emerging from the research process was the perception that there has been a significant change in terms of the understanding of the vision and purpose of the programme at departmental and programme management level, which is also reflected in other national policy documents. This change has been in train for some years now. The most significant aspect of this has been a shift to a 'service provision paradigm'. Related to this has been a weakening of the vision and role for the core community development approach, which is intended to empower those affected by poverty and social exclusion to contribute to policy and advocate for structural change to tackle poverty and social exclusion at local, regional and national levels.

However, ambiguities were also identified with sometimes dual or contradictory understandings of vision and purpose being demonstrated. Although these were mainly at national programme level, there was also evidence of differences at project level.

All this has resulted in dilemmas for CDPs at local level in balancing the demands created by the service provision paradigm with work to build capacity, support empowerment and contribute to other strategic change activities such as policy development.

The Combat Poverty submission should take account of the need to:

- Re-assert the community development approach and principles as core to the programme as well as one of its key distinguishing characteristics
- Challenge the 'push to service provision' as the predominant function
- Recognise that in some cases service provision is part of a community development approach but not an end in itself
- Recognise the reality that many CDPs are now heavily involved in this area
- Consider how this can be accommodated in a reformed programme with a strong community development approach

- Review the scale of service provision at individual project level, including the degree to which these are about empowerment and capacity building
- Emphasise the part community development and the programme have to play in contributing to tackling poverty and social exclusion
- Highlight inconsistencies at programme level in terms of messages about vision and purpose
- Ensure community development principles underpin how the programme is managed and are reflected in all processes, policies and practices
- Promote a rights-based approach to community development as well as the contextualising of community development within the broader concept of sustainable development.

3.2.2 Focus and Direction

In addition to the issues highlighted above, the main message here was in relation to the decision to close the programme. However, issues relating to 'host' organisations and the 'endorsement process' were also identified.

The Combat Poverty submission should take account of the need to:

- Reconsider the decision not to support the set-up of new projects in light of the needs of 'new communities' as well as groups such as Travellers and women; also the potential need in emerging geographic areas in light of demographic shifts
- Ensure that the autonomy of CDPs is respected and consider whether autonomy can be retained with the 'host organisation' approach as well as the 'endorsement process'.

3.2.3 Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion and Promoting Equality

The strongest messages here related to the need to re-assert the contribution of the programme to tackling poverty and social exclusion and to promoting equality, as well as the need to re-emphasise the structural nature of poverty and inequality and to

increase understanding among key stakeholders regarding this. There were also messages in relation to the need to strengthen the programme in terms of the wider equality agenda.

In its submission Combat Poverty should take account of the need to:

- Re-assert the contribution of the programme to tackling poverty and social exclusion and promoting equality
- Consider the need to develop indicators for the above, in partnership with CDPs and other key stakeholders, that are in keeping with the developmental nature of community development
- Support the introduction of a standardised data collection system such as SPEAK, although only after lessons from the current review are assimilated
- Ensure that adequate technical support and resources are allocated to its implementation
- Re-emphasise the structural nature of poverty and inequality and the need to increase understanding among key stakeholders; especially at department and programme level, at local authority level as well as at the level of senior management in statutory agencies
- Promote a rights approach to analysing and tackling poverty and inequality
- Acknowledge the changing nature of poverty, including the inter-generational aspects, and the associated need for innovative approaches. These should include outreach as a core strategy that has resource implications and not an 'add on' activity.
- Review the contribution of the programme and local CDPs to the wider equality agenda, e.g. gender, ethnicity/race, disability, sexual orientation, age, family status, marital status and religious affiliation
- Strengthen structural analytic approaches to the equality agenda in the work of CDPs (as well as at programme level) including the following:
 - A need for gender equality analysis that takes women's historical and current inequality as a starting point
 - the need for inclusion of a 'social model' of understanding disability
 - the inclusion of anti-racist and intercultural analysis

- Support the development of cross-cutting analysis as well as related responses and ensure there is adequate support for them
- Take account of specific proposals in this paper regarding particular groups, e.g. ethnic minorities and people with disability.

3.2.4 Policy Role

The messages regarding a policy role for the programme and CDPs at local, regional and national level included some that related to the wider policy arena and some that were related more specifically (although not exclusively) to CDPs.

Messages on wider arena

Regarding the wider arena, the strongest messages included:

- difficulties in current models of social partnership ('consensus imperative')
- difficulties in the model of policy making both nationally and locally, including the centralised nature of policy making as well as lack of integration at national level
- lack of integration between national and local levels in term of policy implementation
- a redrawing of boundaries between the State and the voluntary and community sector in relation to the latter's policy role.

Messages on CDBs

The messages relating more directly to CDPs (although often shaped by the above) included:

- the sense that policy making was not seen as a legitimate activity for CDPs
- lack of access to policy-making structures
- inadequate understanding within some policy making fora of poverty and social exclusion as well as community development
- the resource-intensive nature of policy work
- the lack of a policy infrastructure
- lack of support for the work

- capacity issues and constraints regarding the involvement of volunteers.

The Combat Poverty submission should take account of the need to:

- Re-assert policy influence and policy work as a core function of CDPs
- Support the development of a policy infrastructure for the programme, including regional policy workers
- Acknowledge and support the intensive nature of building volunteers' capacity in policy work
- Ensure mechanisms are in place at national level to capture and use policy learning
- Promote the legitimacy of CDPs' role in local policy structures based on parity of esteem
- Address access issues such as representation on SIMS groups and SPCs as well as such participation issues as organisational cultures and practical supports
- Address and strengthen the focus on poverty, social inclusion and equality in community fora and CDBs
- Develop greater understanding at local authority level of the challenges facing CDPs when taking on representational roles
- Rebuild commitment to the community and voluntary sectors as policy partners, e.g. full implementation of the commitments in the White Paper on the Community and Voluntary Sector
- Continue to support national anti-poverty organisations
- Emphasise the wider role of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs regarding policy making and implementation and the need to address institutional weaknesses
- Ensure equality of access and participation in policy structures for different groups, e.g. women – particularly women experiencing multiple disadvantages – Travellers, members of other ethnic communities and people with disability.

3.2.5 Development of the Programme – Leadership and Structures

The strongest messages here included the lack of a sense of there being a national programme aligned with the wish for this to be developed; only a very small minority of those interviewed (two) had reservations about the development of the programmatic dimension.

This weakness was seen to be closely aligned to the lack or the nature of national leadership at departmental level and the nature of the structures in place to guide the development and implementation of the programme. Leadership was also seen to be lacking from within CDPs, as well as structures to support this.

The submission by Combat Poverty should take account of the need to:

- Build 'political will' to promote and develop the programme based on community development principles and approaches
- Promote the programme and acknowledge its achievements
- Build support and parity of esteem for the programme among other national programmes and agencies
- Build morale among CDP staff and volunteers
- Recognise the diversity that exists among CDPs
- Respect the autonomy of CDPs to identify local needs and responses
- Develop trust and respect between department and programme managers and CDP representatives
- Develop a shared vision, leadership and ownership of the programme particularly between programme managers and CDP representatives
- Ensure openness to working in full partnership with CDPs and their representatives on the part of the department and programme managers
- Put in place a new structure at department level to develop and manage the programme, either on the lines of the Family Support Agency or a structure that has clear terms of reference, powers and resources. Its functions should include:
 - programme development
 - programme promotion

- policy learning

Its composition should include a strong level of representation from CDPs as well as other relevant national stakeholders

- Support and resource the development of a national representative structure made up predominantly of CDP representatives including staff and volunteers (the decision on whether to proceed with this will rest with CDPs)
- Support and resource the development of more consistent regional structures with clear terms of reference.

3.3 OPERATIONAL ISSUES

3.3.1 Core Staff

The key message here was that the 'two-worker rule' did not take account of the scale of individual CDPs, increased managerial and administrative demands as well as emerging needs such as asylum-seekers, refugees and migrant workers.

The Combat Poverty submission should take account of the need to:

- Recognise the increased scale of some CDPs and the demands this makes in terms of line management of staff, overall management and administration. In some cases, this can be linked to a greater service provision role, therefore consideration of this needs to be within the wider context of a reformed programme that no longer 'pushes service provision' as a core activity or as an end in itself
- Acknowledge the time-intensive nature of many aspects of community development work including:
 - support for volunteers
 - development work particularly with 'hard to reach' groups or new groups
 - outreach as a core activity with staffing implications
 - networking
 - policy work

- Recognise the diversity that exists between projects and their staffing needs. This includes scale of operations; stage of development; focus of the work; and groups with whom engaged, e.g. more marginalised groups need greater support.

3.3.2 Funding

The key message here related to the importance of 'programme funding', as well as the increased demands on CDPs from programme level to work with more groups and issues but without additional supports.

The Combat Poverty submission should take account of the need to:

- Recognise the importance of 'programme funding' and the need for clear criteria, openness and transparency regarding the granting of this
- Review the level of overall funding needs in light of increased costs, changed circumstances and new demands
- Consider managerial and administration costs where CDPs are delivering services on behalf of statutory agencies. As with the question of staffing above, this issue is complicated by the need to reduce emphasis on the service provision role.

3.3.3 Supports

The key messages in relation to supports included:

- the need for an additional budget to be paid directly to CDPs for specialist supports and for mentoring of volunteers
- the need to increase resources to specialist support agencies and the need for increased technical supports.

The Combat Poverty submission should take account of the need to:

- Redefine the role of regional support agencies, taking into account the 'project cycle' concept and the workability of the monitoring role. It should also take

account of specific context needs such as regeneration and concentrated populations of asylum-seekers as well as the role in the development of regional structures and in policy work

- Consider whether a range of options is possible regarding how CDPs secure support, e.g. the possibility of more established projects having all or some of their support budget paid directly; having a pool of specialist supports accessible to all; additional support budget paid directly to CDPs
- Acknowledge the resource-intensive nature of support required for volunteers plus the additional resources needed when working with more marginalised groups, e.g. Travellers
- Review the resourcing of specialist support agencies, taking into account the emphasis on the role of CDPs in promoting macro-level equality objectives
- Promote the services of the specialist support agencies, including the rationale for their service to CDPs
- Consider the role of SPEAK following the current review
- Acknowledge the need for other technical supports including financial, legal, human resources, translation and policy.

3.3.4 Involvement of Volunteers

The strongest message emerging here is the fact that volunteers are the backbone of CDPs and that their contribution needs to be acknowledged and valued at department and programme level.

Another strong message referred to above is that support for volunteers, particularly those from marginalised groups, in order to support their progression to representative roles, demands resources.

In its submission Combat Poverty should take account of the need to:

- Promote an approach that situates the voluntary effort involved in CDPs within an active citizenship framework that is concerned with the promotion and achievement of rights for self and others

- Acknowledge the importance of an ‘empowerment’ rather than a ‘charity’ model of volunteering
- Acknowledge the challenges and constraints facing volunteers and those that support them and stress a realistic approach as to what is possible
- Recognise the challenges facing voluntary management committees with increased professionalisation and the demands and fears attached to being company directors
- Consider the recommendations made by the West Training study regarding alternative structures for employing staff and managing finances and legal matters (See 2.5.5. The Question of Supports).
- Emphasise the systemic barriers to wider participation, as well as individual and practical barriers, and the need for change in systems and organisations as well as support for individuals
- Acknowledge the gender-specific barriers to participation particularly at higher levels as demonstrated by women’s under-representation at these levels
- Promote and support key strategies required at individual level such as:
 - proactive recruitment of under-represented groups
 - induction
 - progression routes
 - capacity building
 - mentoring
 - accreditation including an Accredited Prior Learning (APL) approach (although retain individual choice regarding accreditation)
 - financial supports
 - support of employers for employee time off
- Promote and support strategies to change systems and organisations, e.g. the development of policies and practices regarding involvement of members of marginalised groups in decision making and representative structures; building organisational commitment at senior level; training and capacity building to support implementation of these policies
- Emphasise the importance of support for full participation of the most marginalised groups

- Ensure any development of programme structures includes supports for the inclusion of volunteers.

3.3.5 Endorsement Process

The key message here, of a potential threat to the autonomy of CDPs locally, has already been outlined. Messages regarding operational matters have been outlined also.

The Combat Poverty submission should take account of the need to:

- Consider the advisability of retaining the Endorsement Process in light of the need to develop a partnership approach between the department and CDPs on the direction and operation of the programme as well as the importance of safeguarding local autonomy. This is also relevant to the introduction of the concept of 'host' organisations
- Review the process also from the perspective of operational difficulties that have been experienced, including variable approaches at local authority level; capacity and resource issues for local authorities; mismatching between three-year project plans and the short-term nature of action plans; and, duplication of work for CDPs.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This is a crucial time for the development of the Community Development Programme and there appears to be great potential for it to move forward in a partnership approach that involves the department and programme managers, CDPs and other key stakeholders.

There are also challenges to this and much will depend on the 'political will' to realise this potential, as well as the need for 'letting go' of historical tensions and for rebuilding trust between the key stakeholders.

This section has attempted to be as comprehensive as possible in drawing messages and implications from both strands of the research process²⁰. A small number of other issues could inform the submission, including consideration of the Cohesion Process and its impact on CDP s and the programme, and the need to resource and support local networking.

The implications for the submission regarding the future role of Combat Poverty also need to be considered.

The contribution of those who agreed to participate in the interviews has been invaluable and their commitment and insights will inform the Combat Poverty submission. Ultimately it is hoped that the submission will help shape decisions regarding the development of the Community Development Programme

²⁰ For more specific detail a consideration of the whole paper is encouraged

APPENDIX: List of Organisations Interviewed

Community Development Projects

1. Ballybeg CDP, Co. Waterford
2. Ballyphehane Togher CDP, Co. Cork
3. Bantry and District CDP, Co. Cork
4. Ennis CDP, Co. Clare
5. Harmony CDP, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
6. Lourdes Youth and Community, Dublin 1
7. Parkside CDP, Co. Mayo
8. Ringsend Action Project, Dublin 4
9. Ronanstown CDP, Dublin 22
10. Roscommon Women's Network, Co. Roscommon
11. South West Wexford Development Group, Co. Wexford
12. The Bridge CDP, Newbridge, Co. Kildare
13. Waterford Travellers CDP, Co. Waterford

National Organisations

Cáirde

Community Workers Co-operative

Family Resource Centre National Forum

Family Support Agency

Irish Travellers' Movement

National Women's Council of Ireland

New Communities Partnership

Nexus Research

Planet

Regional Support Agencies

South and Mid-West Community Development Support Agency

West Training Development Ltd.

Specialist Support Agencies

Community Development Support Unit, NCCRI

DESSA

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