

Regional Seminars as part of Ireland's National Programme for the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

The Community Workers' Co-operative
The European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland
with the support of
The Community Platform



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*These regional seminars
are supported by*
the Social Inclusion Division,
Department of Community,
Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs



COMMUNITY PLATFORM
CHALLENGING POVERTY & INEQUALITY

Report

Acknowledgements

The Project Partners would like to acknowledge and thank the presenters, facilitators, note-takers and project co-ordinator for their time and work. We would also like to acknowledge the Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs for their obvious commitment to the process.

Finally we would like to thank all those that participated in the 2010 Regional Seminars – we hope that this intense consultation process indicates a new direction for dialogue that will result in better outcomes for all, surely a fitting legacy for the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

The Social Inclusion Division would like to acknowledge the work of the project partners, the Community Workers' Co-operative the European Anti-Poverty Network and the Community Platform.

The views expressed in this report reflect the views of the participants in the seminars and may not reflect the views of the Project Partners, the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Minister or the Government

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Acknowledgements | 1 |
| Summary of Key Messages | 3 |
| Section One: Background and Introduction | 6 |
| <i>Introduction</i> | <i>6</i> |
| <i>2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion</i> | <i>7</i> |
| <i>Irish National Programme</i> | <i>7</i> |
| <i>The seminars</i> | <i>8</i> |
| <i>Structure of Report</i> | <i>8</i> |
| <i>Feedback from Participants – Evaluation</i> | <i>9</i> |
| Section Two: Seminar discussion and feedback | 10 |
| <i>Child Poverty</i> | <i>11</i> |
| <i>Access to Decent Work and Learning</i> | <i>16</i> |
| <i>Access to services with a particular focus on older people</i> | <i>20</i> |
| <i>People with Disabilities</i> | <i>23</i> |
| <i>Plenary session</i> | <i>25</i> |
| <i>Seminar Conclusion</i> | <i>26</i> |
| Section Three: Conclusion | 27 |
| Appendix I Consultation, participation and methodology | 28 |
| <i>Consultation and participation</i> | <i>28</i> |
| <i>Methodology</i> | <i>28</i> |
| Appendix II Feedback from Participants | 1 |

Summary of Key Messages

As part of the Irish National programme for the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, a series of five regional seminars were organised by the Community Workers' Co-operative, the European Anti-Poverty Network and the Community Platform in conjunction with the Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Implementation body for the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

The objective of the seminars was to provide an opportunity for a range of stakeholders, including policy makers, community organisations and, in particular, those experiencing poverty, inequalities and social exclusion, to discuss the issues pertaining to poverty and social exclusion.

A number of key messages emanated from the discussions that were facilitated through the 2010 Regional Seminars held in Galway, Dundalk, Wexford, Cork and Donegal.

- **Consultation, policy and action**

The opportunity provided by the seminars to discuss a range of issues with a diversity of participants was welcomed. Particularly welcomed was the fact that the seminars were organised regionally, giving people the opportunity to participate without having to travel to Dublin, where the vast majority of such events take place. The commitment of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, displayed by their participation at the regional seminars, was acknowledged and participants hoped that this might indicate a real commitment to implementing the results of the consultation process in the lives of marginalised people, therefore securing a positive legacy from the European Year on Poverty and Social Exclusion.

Individuals and organisations want to have their voices heard, want to engage and want to share their experiences and expertise to inform policy development in order to secure better outcomes. However, participants were adamant that consultation must be reflected in policy and policy outcomes. Failure to do this has resulted in what became to be termed *consultation fatigue*, where the links between consultation, policy and actual improvements for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion are often invisible. Particular efforts should be made to include the voices and experience of those who have little voice or influence, such as children, older people and other marginalised and minority groups.

- **Intersection of issues**

It was generally acknowledged that there is a significant intersection between issues. For example, people with disabilities often experience poverty and lack of access to work and learning opportunities. The children of people with disabilities often experience child poverty. Members of the Traveller community often experience multi-dimensional issues, as do other minority groups. Locality, geography, ethnicity, gender and other factors and experiences can often have an exacerbating effect on poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

- **Policy and implementation.**

There was a general consensus throughout the seminars that while policy development and formulation is generally good in Ireland, there are often gaps between policy ambition and implementation. Improvements in this area, it was suggested, will require a holistic, comprehensive and strategic approach involving a range of stakeholders, the involvement of the communities and the community sector, and inter-agency approaches. Many examples of organisations and agencies working together to implement social inclusion policies were presented in the seminars. However, it was acknowledged that initiatives are very often dependent on locality and on individuals involved rather than a standardised approach to

interagency working across the country. There was a consensus that there remains room for improvement in this area and a strong suggestion that inter-agency approaches should be supported by Government and the leadership within agencies.

- **Community Development is a focal point for addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality.**

Community development was acknowledged as a key approach to addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequalities in a specific way that emphasises participation, community empowerment and engagement. Community organisations (including those funded to now under the Community Development Programme), it was felt, are central to the promotion of community development within disadvantaged communities, with many participants stating their importance within the most marginalised communities. In addition, it was felt that, community development has a role to play (and thus be supported in the future) in enabling:

- Opportunities for capacity building through volunteering, mentoring, community education;
- Mechanisms for people from socially excluded communities to influence policy design and implementation;
- Bottom up approaches to identifying and addressing needs of communities in a way which is the most effective;
- Participation and the linking of local issues with corresponding regional, national and European concerns.

- **Equality and rights based approach.**

There was consensus expressed that an approach that addressed inequality and acknowledges the right to social justice, equality and dignity must underpin all interventions to address poverty and social exclusion. This, it was believed, will require a move beyond outmoded models such as the charitable approach (to, for example, anti-poverty) or the medical model (to, for example, disability and older people). Addressing social exclusion and inequality requires an analysis of the root causes addressing the resulting structural barriers to equality and social inclusion. Diversity (for example gender and other identity based diversities; geographical/spatial diversities; socio-economic status diversities) of experience and need needs to be part of this analysis and reflected in all areas and stages of policy development and implementation.

- **Flexibility in the development of services.**

There needs to be a greater coherence between services provided to socially excluded groups, requiring different agencies, including community organisations, to work together in a flexible way. Services should be designed and delivered in a person-centred way that can also take account of the particular needs of groups, e.g. ethnic minorities including Travellers, older people, asylum seekers, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people and people with disabilities.

- **Vulnerable groups need to be protected in times of recession.**

There was consensus that those who benefited least from the Celtic Tiger must be protected against the consequence of economic recession and should not be expected to bear the consequences of cutbacks to the same level as those who are better-off. The cuts to services experienced in the past period impact most on disadvantaged communities. It is crucial, it was stated, that in the current economic crisis, people from marginalised communities are not further excluded. Plans for addressing the crisis need to meet the needs of people from these communities. The prospect of deepening inequalities may have significant costs in terms of the loss of social cohesion.

The importance of community work with the most marginalised people and communities was emphasised and there was acknowledgement that over the past decades, investment in developing an infrastructure to empower and support those experiencing poverty and social exclusion to improve their life chances, to participate in society and actively influence the decisions that affect their lives has been made. This acknowledgement came with a caution that the cuts witnessed in the past two years particularly to community support infrastructure, threaten to undermine the progress that has been made.

Section One: Background and Introduction

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the proceedings and conclusions of five¹ regional seminars that were organised as part of the Irish National Programme for the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The seminars were organised by a partnership of community sector organisations² led by the Community Workers' Co-operative with the European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland (EAPN) and in association with the Community Platform ('the partnership') in response to a call to tender by the Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs³, which is the Implementation body for the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

In their application, the project partners noted a number of factors that informed their approach:

- The seminars were framed by the Irish national context in relation to progress in tackling poverty⁴.
- It is vital not to be complacent about the reduction in poverty rates and the immediate challenge is to secure the realisation of the targets set by the Irish Government⁵ despite the economic and social crisis facing Ireland. To that end, there is a growing realisation of the need to focus more on addressing the structural causes of poverty, exclusion and inequality.
- Though, as many have highlighted, those living in poverty are at risk of social exclusion and/or inequality and similarly those who experience social exclusion and/or inequality are at risk of poverty, it is crucial that the understanding of social exclusion and inequality is not confined to an analysis of poverty rates. Social exclusion and inequality are not always a consequence of poverty and require broader analysis and strategies to address them.
- Poverty and social exclusion are themselves complex phenomena and the intergenerational nature of poverty and social exclusion (where the chances of experiencing sustained poverty in adulthood are related to child poverty) has been and continues to be a particular challenge. Particular groups are more vulnerable to poverty and exclusion including: women, long-term unemployed, children, older people, people from disadvantaged communities, ex-offenders, people from ethnic minority communities including Travellers and migrants, lone-parents and people with disabilities. The cumulative nature of the effects and impacts of poverty, social exclusion and inequality is another challenge that will need to be addressed. There is a particular need to enable those affected to articulate their experiences and to have their issues addressed in a holistic way.

¹ While initially four regional seminars were to be held, it was decided to hold a fifth seminar in the autumn of 2010 in Donegal, on the basis of feedback received over the course of the project.

² See section two for further information on the process involved and rationale for the call to tender for independent organisations to organise this element of the Irish National Programme.

³ Then the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

⁴ The at risk of poverty rate, for example, fell from 18.5% in 2005 to 14.4% in 2008 and the consistent poverty rate fell from 7% to 4.2% in the same period.

⁵ To reduce the number of people experiencing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016

2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

2010 was designated by the European Commission as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The objective of the designation was to reaffirm and strengthen the EU commitment in the Lisbon strategy to 'make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty'. The principal aim was to raise public awareness of poverty and social exclusion in Europe and convey the message that they are obstacles to social and economic development.

The four main objectives of the Year are:

1. Recognition of the right of people in poverty and social exclusion to fully participate in society;
2. Shared responsibility and participation by promoting public support for social inclusion policies emphasising collective and individual responsibility in combating poverty and social exclusion;
3. Cohesion by promoting a more cohesive society, where no one doubts that society as a whole benefits from the eradication of poverty;
4. Commitment of all actors as real progress requires a long term effort involving all levels of governance.

As part of the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, countries throughout Europe were expected to organise activities and initiatives to reflect the objectives.

Irish National Programme

In Ireland, the Social Inclusion Division was designated as the National Implementing Body (NIB) for the 2010 Irish National Programme. A National Advisory Body, with representatives of all the main stakeholders, was established to advise the NIB on all aspects of the programme for the Year and its implementation.

The Irish Programme was devised to reflect the *lifecycle approach* and the priorities in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016. The structure of the Irish Programme involves four elements/four cross cutting themes:

1. Child poverty;
 2. Access to quality work and learning opportunities for people of working age;
 3. Access to services for older people;
 4. People with disabilities.
- Consultation and participation were underpinning principles of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010) as well as being implicit in all of its objectives;
 - One objective of the Irish National Programme was to develop and test best practice models to ensure that a voice is given to people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and those who work with them in policy development and implementation;
 - It was envisaged that robust participative structures would be a legacy of the 2010 Year.

A number of events and initiatives were planned and supported throughout Ireland to observe the 2010 Year. A significant element of the Irish National Programme was the design and delivery of a number⁶ of regional seminars. Consultation and participation are underpinning principles of the Year and the regional seminars were seen as an important mechanism to achieve that objective.

⁶ Initially four and finally five seminars as one was added as a result of feedback received over the course of the project it was decided to hold a fifth regional seminar in autumn 2010 in the northwest of the country (Donegal).

The seminars

The seminars were organised on a regional basis and located in Galway, Cork, Wexford, Dundalk and Donegal. The seminars were designed to reflect the themes of the 2010 Year and each included workshops on the themes outlined above.

Attendance from a diversity of interest was encouraged by the seminar organisers including people and communities experiencing poverty, social exclusion and inequality; local community and voluntary organisations; representatives from statutory agencies and government departments.

In line with the goals of the year the project partners placed significant importance and emphasis on providing the opportunity for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion to participate.⁷ A number of other factors were also considered crucial including:

- A commitment to participants that the information provided would be used constructively and consistently to inform all levels of policy review, design and implementation.
- The development, as part of the legacy of the 2010 Year, of models of good practice for participation of excluded groups in policy design and implementation
- The link between the regional seminars and the annual Social Inclusion Forum (SIF).

It was generally envisaged that the annual Social Inclusion Forum would build on the approach of the regional seminars to focus on the experience of people living in poverty and the organisations that work with them to generate a shared understanding of how poverty, social exclusion and inequality could be collectively addressed by all stakeholders, including the Government, policy makers, those experiencing poverty and the organisations that work with them.

Structure of Report

This report comprises five sections and appendices. The report commences with an overview of key messages arising from the regional seminars.

Section one sets the context for the seminars, offering background information on the EU2010 Year itself and an overview of the Irish National Programme.

Section two elaborates on the discussions relating to the four themes across the workshops, stressing key recommendations for actions to make a difference to socially excluded groups.

Section four provides an overall conclusion, summarising key messages.

Section three gives a brief conclusion to the project.

⁷ See Appendix I for a detailed outline of the methodology and approach used.

Feedback from Participants – Evaluation

Evaluation forms were circulated at each of the regional seminars. There were a total of 67 evaluation forms⁸ completed and collected. The majority contained very positive comments about the seminars and the opportunity they presented to discuss poverty, social exclusion and inequality. Many participants commented on the importance of such events and complimented the supports in place to ensure that a marginalised voice could be heard. The regional nature of the seminars was commented on with many pleased at the opportunity to attend a seminar locally, without having to travel to Dublin. Participants also felt that the themes of the workshops were useful, though some commented that they would have liked the opportunity to attend more than one.

There was a sense that the seminars were timely, given the restructure of the Community Development Programme and the fear that essential services may be cut in the budget. Overall it was felt that the seminars provided a useful opportunity to share concerns and information. Facilitators were praised and their skills commended, given the diverse nature of the workshops.

Very few negative comments were received. Of those received, many were not directed at the seminar itself but with what came to be termed ‘consultation fatigue’. These comments often featured alongside the hopes that this was not another ‘talk shop’ and that the issues raised would be listened to and acted upon. A few of those who responded noted the absence of policy makers, the Minister and local representatives leading to speculation about their belief in the process of consultation. This view was not shared by all participants however and a number commented on the usefulness of the presence of the Social Inclusion Division. There was a mixed response to the presentations in the workshops, with some being seen as more relevant than others.

⁸ See appendix III for full participant feedback

Section Two: Seminar discussion and feedback

Each of the seminars commenced with brief presentations by the project partners and the Social Inclusion Division. These presentations set the context of the seminars and the 2010 Year. The opening session also included a welcome note from the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs Minister Pat Carey T.D. Participants were then invited to participate in one of four workshops in which they had indicated an interest at the time of registration. The concluding session was chaired by a representative of the region in which the seminar was located and the Chairperson took the feedback from each of the workshops and a response from a representative of the Social Inclusion Division and the project partners before thanking people for their participation and closing the seminar.

Each of the workshops were facilitated by a member of the project partner team and commenced with a presentation by a representative of a statutory agency of government department of an example of good practice on the theme of the workshop. Participants were then asked to consider a series of questions before agreeing feedback to the plenary. A summary of each workshop discussion is outlined below.

The views expressed here reflect the views of the participants in the seminars and may not reflect the views of the Project Partners, the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Minister or the Government.

Child Poverty

Presentations

The workshops on child poverty were facilitated by Anne Costello (Community Platform). The presentations on good practice included:

Galway **The New Way of Working- An Initiative to Promote School Attendance**

Bridget McGreil, National Education Welfare Board, Regional Manager, Galway and Iggy Keane, Assistant National Co-Ordinator, School Completion Programme

Dundalk **The New Way of Working- An Initiative to Promote School Attendance**

Michael Doyle, National Education Welfare Board, Regional Manager, Dundalk and Denis McCarthy, Regional Manager, Home School Community Liaison Programme

Wexford **Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision Making: Reaching out to the Seldom Heard – the Experience of Wexford Comhairle na nÓg**

Olive McGovern, Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and Kieran O’Donoghue, Ferns Diocesan Youth Services

Cork **The Free Pre-School Education Initiative – Cork’s Experience**

Catherine Hynes, Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and Kathryn O’Riordan, Cork County Childcare Committee

Donegal **The New Way of Working: An Initiative to Promote School Attendance.**

Colette McGlynn, National Education Welfare Board

Summary of discussion

Issues & challenges

- **Early education and childcare.**

There was a general recognition of the value of high quality early years education from the perspective of child wellbeing. From a socioeconomic perspective, it was also acknowledged that high quality early years education programmes contribute to children’s outcomes in education, social integration and economic performance as adults. The resourcing of quality early education is critical to breaking cycles of poverty, educational disadvantage and social exclusion.

The Free Pre-school Intervention was welcomed. However, concerns were expressed about the quality of training of pre-school providers and it was stated that there is a need to consistently ensure quality.

Participants stated that uptake of the free pre-school year is significantly lower in disadvantaged areas and greater efforts are required to increase provision and uptake of quality pre-school education in harder to reach communities. In addition, a concern was expressed that reductions to subventions to community schemes will have a detrimental impact on advances to date.

Worryingly for many participants, expenditure cuts to services for children are predominantly in the areas of prevention and early intervention. This, participants agreed will have huge long term implications

Examples of good practice such as 'school book rental scheme', participants stated, are not being mainstreamed. These are initiatives that would save money in the long term.

- ***Increasing number of children living in poverty.***

Concerns were expressed about the number of children living in poverty in Ireland and suffering exclusion from meaningful engagement in society. The perception amongst participants was that there is a gap between policy aspirations and outcomes. It was suggested that greater collaboration between policy makers and implementers at all levels is important for successful outcomes. Further, children, their families and community representatives must be involved in identifying the issues and solutions to issues identified.

- ***Recession, cuts and increased risk of poverty for children.***

There was a perception that the incidence and depth of child poverty could increase in the current economic climate due to cuts to essential services and income supports for families. There was a strong belief that such cuts are not inevitable and calls were made to the Government to make children one of its priorities. The perception of current Government policies was that they were prioritising the financial and banking crises and this was criticised. Participants argued that the Government should prioritise the elimination of child poverty.

- ***Constitutional Referendum***

Participants at all seminars argued that children's rights are paramount to any debate on the topic of child poverty and the proposed Constitutional Referendum on children should be prioritised.

- ***Child poverty usually exists in the context of family poverty.***

There was a consensus view that poor children live in poor families, and poor children often live in disadvantaged communities where they often do not have access to quality services. Therefore, it was argued, responses must result in strengthening families and communities, e.g. we must ensure that families have adequate income, good living conditions and appropriate supports.

Community Development Projects and Family Resource Centres were identified as vital community anchors and described as the 'glue' that can hold the children in disadvantaged families together, linking them into services and providing the services where necessary. Responses to child poverty must be cognisant of the changed context including increase in marital breakdown, bullying (cyber and other forms), addiction etc. Mothers experiencing poverty are under huge stress and lone parents are amongst those at greatest risk and must be adequately supported.

- ***Ensuring adequate supports for targeted and 'special needs' provision in all schools.***

Education is key to moving out of poverty and improving quality of life and life chances. There was considerable concern about the impact of cuts, including for example cuts to the School Completion Programme (SCP) and also to Special Needs Assistants supports. The fact that many children experiencing disadvantage do not go to DEIS schools was also highlighted and these other supports are important to ensuring they have real opportunities and outcomes from their education.

- **Health and social services.**

Social services, especially those provided by the HSE, often have long waiting lists making them difficult to access at critical times in a child's life. Inequalities in health care are also, it was argued, clearly evident, and serious issues for children in relation to child protection persist. Where the necessary services are not accessible, children and young people become more vulnerable. On a related point, there was also concern around advertising standards and the impact of advertising on vulnerability of children.

- **Community based supports and services.**

Young people who may be reluctant to engage with statutory services will sometimes more readily engage with community based services and supports. Cuts to the community infrastructure impact on the capacity to deliver accessible, appropriate services to children experiencing poverty and their families. Furthermore, youth and community organisations support children and young people to articulate their needs and to have their voices heard, which in turn leads to more effective policy and service development. Cuts to the community infrastructure threaten to undermine progress made and will have negative, longer term consequences.

- **Early school leavers.**

Despite the best efforts of services such as the Educational Welfare Board, early school leaving continues to be a problem, as do literacy issues, with approximately 11,000 children leaving school before completing their Leaving Cert. While there is not a database of children who leave school before starting second level education, it was estimated that each year, between 500 and 800 children never start second level. The transition from primary to secondary school is a critical phase.

A wide range of factors, it was stated, impact on early school leaving such as discrimination, poverty, accommodation, bullying, intergenerational issues, low expectations of achieving outcomes. The wider socio-economic and social factors must be addressed in order to address the problem of early school leaving.

- **Youth Services.**

The strengths and weaknesses of targeted provision were discussed. Anecdotal evidence indicates mainstream youth services need to better support and include young people from minority groups, including Travellers for example. It was acknowledged that there is a need for targeted projects also but that children and young people can be stigmatised when they avail of targeted initiatives and greater efforts are required to address this issue.

- **Child poverty and inequality.**

Children's risk of poverty is linked to other inequalities they experience, including on the basis of identity and discrimination. Traveller children for example, may live in very poor accommodation which impacts on their access to and outcome from education; children of LGBT parents are often invisible; children including Irish children living in direct provision hostels do not have access to child benefit. The gap between the lifestyles and outcomes between children living in disadvantaged areas and more affluent areas persists.

- **Children in direct provision.**

Poverty was expressed as a major issue for children in direct service provision centres. Parents receive only €9.60 a week for each of their children when they are living in direct provision. Concern was expressed about the financial impact of denying children whose parents are seeking asylum in Ireland the right to child benefit payments. Children of asylum seeking parents

are often unable to afford to participate in extra-curricular activities or invite school friends to their homes, adding to their sense and reality of exclusion. Food, accommodation, heating, electricity and basic toiletries are provided to those in the asylum seeker community. However the limited diet available to children in the centres was raised as a serious issue. The refusal to allow children of asylum seeker parents to continue in education post Leaving Certificate was identified as demoralising for the young people and a loss for society.

RESPONSES

In developing policy and practice responses, participants strongly advised policy makers to take the following into account:

- Addressing child poverty requires a holistic approach and joined up thinking and action. A response to child poverty cannot be reduced simply to education and school attendance, which while important, only forms part of the picture.
- A range of Government Departments and officials at the most senior levels must continue and embed collective efforts to address poverty and inequality. Inter-departmental and inter-agency cooperation at national, regional and local level is important to the successful design and implementation of policy objectives. Community organisations and people experiencing issues must be included in the development and implementation of inter-agency approaches.
- All children are equal in the eyes of the law. This is enshrined in the Constitution and also in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This must be respected. In this context, reference was made to the need for Constitutional Referendum on children that the Government committed to in November 2006. Appropriate Constitutional amendment will help secure robust safeguards for all children and is important to ensuring standards for the protection of children.
- Child poverty can only be addressed in the context of efforts to eliminate family poverty. There is a need to strengthen families and communities. Poorest families and communities cannot withstand any further cuts to incomes and services. Family diversity must be recognised and respected.
- Early intervention is critical to addressing child poverty and inter-generational issues.
- Community infrastructure and supports need to be maintained. CDPs and FRCs are mechanism through which statutory agencies target communities and in some instances resource programmes. There is a real danger that the changes to the CDP programme will reduce its effectiveness.
- Affordable, high quality childcare must be available, as a key strategy to overcoming children poverty.
- Adequate and appropriate accommodation must be guaranteed for all children living in Ireland. It is unacceptable that Traveller children are forced to continue to live in sub-standard accommodation, in some cases without the most basic of facilities; for respite to be considered a luxury; for children to live in hostels including asylum seeker hostels.
- Ensuring equal access to and outcomes from education means addressing the other issues that impact on education including intergenerational issues and supports for parents, accommodation and finance issues.

- Appropriate supports must be provided to ensure children with 'special needs' enjoy their right to an education.
- The transition from primary to secondary school is a critical phase and must be recognised as such in practice. Subventions for After School Projects which currently end at age 12 should be extended to 15 years.
- Mainstream and targeted approaches are necessary. However, there is a need to consider how to address and overcome the stigma that has come to be associated with some targeted initiatives.
- The voice of the child, including the voices of children living in poverty, needs to be heard and responses implemented.

Access to Quality Work and Learning Opportunities

Presentations

The workshops on access to decent work and learning were facilitated by Paul Ginnell (EAPN). The presentations on good practice included:

Galway *Profiling Exercise undertaken of the Unemployed in Ireland*

Barry Kennedy Regional Manager Department of Social Protection

Dundalk *Initiatives for working age through RAPID*

Jerry Murphy Programme Manager Pobal

Wexford *Activation*

Evelyn O'Donnell Employment Support Services, Department of Social Protection

Cork *Social Inclusion Model Pilot*

Ann Gilton FÁS

Donegal *Activation*

Máirín Haran, Employment Support Services, Dept of Social Protection

Summary of Discussion

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- ***Link between education and employment – quality outcomes***

There was a consensus amongst participants that there is a clear link between educational outcomes and access to quality employment. While this is a persistent issue, it is particularly evident at this time of recession where there is more competition for jobs and certain sectors, e.g. services and construction, have been particularly badly hit. It is likely to become even more of an issue as the focus of economic growth turns to the 'smart economy'.

The reality is that certain communities experience lower levels of educational attainment and there is an intergenerational pattern. Where these patterns continue, someone must be held accountable. A number of steps need to be taken to address inequality in educational outcomes. The importance of early years care and education was highlighted in this regard as well as flexible approaches and support for alternative educational routes.

- ***Structural issues and issues for particular groups***

Structural issues in both education and employment were highlighted including racism and discrimination. It was pointed out that discrimination in employment and access to services is against the law. However, these issues persist at a structural level and need to be addressed at a structural level. We also need a mechanism to record barriers to participation in education and employment.

Certain groups experience specific issues or have specific needs that should be considered in developing policy and implementation. The specific needs and contributions of particular groups - for example of ethnic minorities including Travellers and migrants, women, people with disabilities, GLBT people, older people, unemployed, younger people, early school leavers, lone parents - need to be recognised and accommodated.

There are also differences in experiences between those who are recently unemployed and the long term unemployed. Long term unemployment has an impact on people's confidence and self-esteem which in turn affects their chances of accessing employment. The 'new' unemployed who have lost their jobs in the current recession have diverse educational experiences, with some very high skilled while others may have left school early to take up employment. There was a sense that it may appear more economical to focus on the employment needs of the 'new' unemployed and there was a strong message that we must keep a focus on the longer term unemployed and on resolving intergenerational issues. There is a need to prioritise and focus resources on those with greatest need and most distant from the labour market which include some newly unemployed with lower education and skills levels.

- ***Literacy***

Poor levels of literacy persist as a major impediment to employment and learning opportunities. There was a consensus that the relatively poor levels of literacy are evidence of weaknesses in the education system. Addressing literacy issues must be a priority if quality learning and employment are to be realised. Participants stated that unless this is addressed, a 'smart economy' cannot become a reality and there is likely to be further marginalisation of those most distant from the labour market. Measures for prevention need to be built into the education system from the start with an effective, supported system for early years care and education.

- ***Poverty trap***

Some participants pointed out that jobs available to people who are welfare dependent or who have had fewer opportunities for education are often short term and low paid. Taking up employment under such conditions offers little security and has an impact on entitlements. This makes the persistence of poverty traps a serious concern. The solution from the perspective of those experiencing these poverty traps is not to reduce benefits but to ensure that everyone has an adequate income to enable them to live in dignity.

- ***Childcare***

The importance of quality childcare provision was acknowledged as a pre-requisite to enable many to access learning and employment opportunities. The improvements in provision over the recent past were acknowledged. However, access to affordable, flexible childcare remains an issue in some areas, and while an issue for all parents on lower incomes, the fact that it impacts particularly on mothers and lone parents trying to access the labour market was highlighted.

- ***Right to work and education for asylum seekers***

The needs of those seeking asylum were highlighted in a number of the seminars. It was pointed out that members of the asylum seeking community do not have the right to work or to access third level education. Many participants believed this places them in a situation of dependency and forces them to live in poverty and called on the Government to change this policy.

- ***Transport and access to education, employment and support services***

There was consensus that access to education, employment and support services are crucial for all. The geographical differences in relation to the capacity of people from different communities to access education, employment and related services were highlighted. Lack of services and lack of access to transport (particularly in rural areas, for older people and for people with disabilities) are key elements of people's experience of social exclusion. Some participants noted that this is often seen as a rural/urban issue but, it was pointed out, it is more complex than this. In some areas, for example, there are no third level institution or little community infrastructure. Similarly jobs may be concentrated in specific areas. Greater access locally both to education and employment would improve conditions. In the interim, access to transport is crucial especially for those in rural areas and those who do not have private transport.

- ***Employment strategy***

There was a consensus that there is urgency in relation to job creation and the Government and statutory agencies were urged to develop and implement a clear policy with regard to employment creation.

RESPONSES

In developing policy and practice responses, participants strongly advised policy makers to take the following into account:

- ***Build on success***

There was a strong message that we should build on what has been successful in the past. Many of the participants highlighted the fact that there has been a failure to capitalise and build on successful initiatives all around the country, and called for successful pilot initiatives to be mainstreamed.

The role of the community and voluntary sector was acknowledged as important in supporting communities to access education and employment as well as designing and creating appropriate, flexible and sustainable training, education, employment and enterprise locally. Cuts on community sector/role of community sector in supporting education, employment and enterprise will, it was stated, have a long term impact and must be avoided. Alternatively, it was stated, the Government must support communities to devise responses through support for the community and voluntary sector to build on past experience of what works in the area of education, employment and enterprise.

- ***Comprehensive approach to job creation***

Concern was expressed that policy in relation to job creation was overly focused on two areas, the 'smart economy' and export led growth, to the detriment of other areas such as the development of indigenous enterprises. There was a general suggestion that employment strategies be sustainable, diverse, comprehensive and have the capacity to create sustainable and equal access to employment.

The critical nature of learning opportunities to the development of the smart economy was noted and the Government was urged to ensure that those who are long-term unemployed are given opportunities to participate. Ensure the education sector design appropriate courses to match

requirements of employers /potential employers, at all times mindful of aspirations and needs of the individual (learner centred). The education sector needs to take into account the different needs of groups with specific needs such as people with disabilities and Travellers, and also consider the provision of related supports such as childcare and transport.

The Government was also urged to commit to developing and embedding holistic interagency approaches and ensuring **joined up strategic thinking** (JUST). This must include working with local and national community organisations that understand and represent communities.

- ***Maintain a focus on the long-term unemployed,***

There was consensus that focus need to be maintained on supporting people who are long-term unemployed or who are in danger of becoming long-term unemployed. Participants were supportive of profiling exercises to get a better idea of the needs and skills of those who are unemployed.

There was a suggestion that employment and education opportunities be poverty-proofed to ensure that those most distant from the labour market are afforded opportunities. This included proofing access to grants considered crucial to supporting people back to learning and work opportunities, such as the BTEI.

Engagement with younger people (18-25 year olds) who are experiencing high levels of employment but are less likely to engage with existing services was seen as crucial to avoiding long-term unemployment amongst this age group.

The provision of information on opportunities and entitlements was seen as key to enabling people to make informed choices and maximise opportunities.

Access to services with a particular focus on older people

Presentations

The workshops on **access to services with a particular focus on older people** were facilitated by Oonagh McArdle (Community workers' Co-operative). The presentations on good practice included:

Galway ***Older People On the Move – the case of Sligo Rural Transport***

Terri McGourty, Rural Transport Development Programme Officer, Pobal

Dundalk ***Louth – An Age Friendly County***

Mary Deery, Louth County Council and Rod Bond, Netwell Centre, Dundalk Institute of Technology

Wexford ***Getting Informed about Services and Entitlements***

Geralyn McGarry, Information, Publications and Social Policy Manager, Citizens Information Board

Cork ***Supporting Older People to Live in Safe Communities***

Sgt. Trevor Laffan, Community Policing, Garda Síochána, Cork

Donegal ***Accessible Public Services***

Shane Hogan, Senior Standards Officer in the NDA

Summary of discussion

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- ***Diversity and inequality***

One of the key points made throughout the seminars was in relation to the fact that older people are not a homogenous group. They are a diverse group with different needs, experiences and opportunities. Even the definition of 'older people' differs between communities - for example, in the Traveller community people live 10 to 12 years less than their settled counterparts so 'older' has a different meaning to that popularly held.

For many older people, issues and access to services can be exacerbated by poverty, location, identity, gender, and health status. For example, women's access to pensions is much poorer than men's as a result of the marriage bar and the lack of recognition of farm work and of the valuable care work that women are more likely to deliver unpaid.

Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) people's rights are restricted by the lack of recognition for LGBT relationships.

Participants felt that there is a general perception that older people should be grateful for what they receive and there is a lack of recognition of the contribution that older people make and have made to society and the ensuing rights that they have. The perception that older people are wealthy which needs to be challenged as this is not the reality for many older people, some of whom may have assets but are often cash poor.

- ***Access and Outcome***

Access and outcomes were two themes identified. Access referred to access (or lack thereof) to information and to transport. Access to information depends on literacy, increasingly including computer literacy, and this presents a real issue for many older people. Some older people also need to be empowered to look for information and to assert their right to information and to services which meet their needs. Lack of access to transport means that older people are very often physically isolated and unable to access other vital services.

In relation to outcome, many participants identified the fact that there is a difference between policy makers and those who implement policy at a local or regional level and often a corresponding gap between policy and implementation. This gap between policy and implementation, for example the implementation of the Home Care grant, means that your location can often determine the services available to you. There was consensus that policy needs to be implemented universally as an entitlement rather than on a discretionary basis.

- ***Isolation and fear***

Many participants noted that isolation is a major issue for many older people. This does not always refer only to physical isolation, though this is a key feature. People may also be socially isolated, dealing with the transition from employment to retirement or simply not 'fitting in'. Older people can live in fear, not only of violence but also of cuts to their pensions or other benefits and this impact on their lives including on their ability to care for themselves or access services.

- ***Older people and their rights are seen as 'soft targets' for cutbacks***

Many participants believed that older people are seen as 'soft targets' for cutbacks. This is manifested for example in the cut of the social welfare Christmas bonus, access to home help and public health nurses, lack of implementation of Home Care Grant and consideration of other cuts such as cuts to the medical cards for those over 70. The lack of support to carers and the disproportionate cuts to the community sector, all impact on access to quality services for older people.

- ***Lack of real options for caring at home and in the community***

The lack of support for people to be cared for at home and in the community was highlighted as a major issue. It was stated that this is something that must be addressed by Government as a priority. Home help was not seen as a sufficient answer to the issue and services should consider and meet the needs of individuals. Support for carers must be secured if this is to become a reality as well as support for community and voluntary organisations. Elder abuse was also identified as a concern and it was pointed out that this can go both ways, with carers of older people sometimes experiencing abuse also.

RESPONSES

In developing policy and practice responses, participants strongly advised policy makers to take the following into account:

- ***Respect for older people in all their diversity***

Older people have a contribution to make and have rights. A rights-based approach needs to underpin the design and provision of services to people. Services must be designed to meet the needs of people, taking into account the diversity of older people and challenges presented by their geographical location, identity, gender, disability and also financial and education status.

Make living at home and in the community a real option for older people, through for example provision of services locally and in the home as well as support for carers and community organisations (see below). Access to services needs to be enhanced by a range of measures including practical measures. Services need to be available to people within their communities where possible. Transport is required so that people can access services. Outreach work needs to be resourced. Access to services locally and in the home are crucial to ensuring people can live and be cared for at home and in their communities.

- ***Close the gap between policy and implementation***

Significant work needs to be done to overcome the gap between policy and the reality on the ground.

- **Communication and dissemination of information**

Access to information is a prerequisite to access to services. The communication and dissemination of information to older people must be more accessible, bearing mind for example literacy issues including computer literacy. It also needs to have an outreach component and be supported by measures to empower older people to seek information.

- **Support the community and voluntary sector**

The community and voluntary sector plays a critical role in empowering people so that they can access services that meet their needs and also in the provision of services. Community and voluntary organisations often meet the shortfall and bridge the gap between the services provided by government agencies and the individual needs. Older people live in communities and they are best placed to identify and support their participation within communities and society as a whole. Cuts to the community and voluntary sector impact disproportionately on access to services for the more marginalised older people.

- **Better use of existing resources**

Make better use of existing resources such as the CE Scheme, volunteers (including older people themselves) and good practices. The Government needs to ensure that its cuts do not disproportionately affect such resources to support older people. Other barriers to accessing these resources also need to be overcome, including the delay in securing Garda clearance for volunteers.

- **Consultation must be followed by action**

There was a strong message from participants that older people need to shout louder to have their voices heard and that at this time, it is critical that they make their voices heard. However, it was also felt that while people wanted to be consulted and to have an input, this has to be followed by action. Action is the evidence that policy makers have listened to the people.

People with Disabilities

Presentations

The workshops on *people with disabilities* were facilitated by Rachel Doyle (NWCI) and Elva O'Callaghan (NCCWN). The presentations on good practice included:

Galway *Advocacy in Action*

Clare O'Neill, Advocacy Officer, Mayo Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities

Dundalk *Training, Education and Work – Creating a Pathway.*

Máirín Haran, Department of Social and Family Affairs and ESF Funded Disability Activation Project Mullingar

Wexford *Working Together to Access all Areas – the Cashel Gold Star Initiative in Action*

Anne Bradshaw, Manager, Cashel Gold Star Initiative

Cork *Services and Support Provision for People with Disabilities – a Life Planning Approach*

Mary Van Lieshout, National Disability Authority

Summary of discussion

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- ***There is a wide gap between the policy and its implementation.***

Many participants identified that fact that there is a significant gap between policy and implementation. This in turn is dependent on interpretation and consequence. Where targets exist e.g. in relation to physical access, they are unlikely to be met. Where good practice is developed, it is often failed by lack of mainstreaming. Interpretation was identified as an issue along with implementation. For example, person centred planning can be useful but how it is interpreted impacts on how it is implemented. Where the interpretation is poor, the practice is poor.

- ***Access to quality work and learning.***

Access to quality work and learning is severely limited for people with disabilities. There was a general consensus that the recession is making it more difficult for people with disabilities to access work.

- ***Access to services can depend on where a person lives.***

There was consensus that there is an imbalance in the spread of services geographically – in rural areas it can be harder to access services. However, this is not simply a rural/urban divide and there are also issues for people living in urban areas. Service provision, it was generally agreed, needs to be universally accessible.

- ***Participation in society and in consultation is relatively low.***

Participation in society and in consultation process needs to be supported. People with disabilities often do not have a voice and therefore are not heard in consultation processes.

- **Limitations in the legal definition of 'disability'.**

Sometimes how disability is defined presents as an issue at the individual level with some people who require supports finding they have no entitlement as the issue they face does not fit within the legal definition of 'disability'.

RESPONSES

- In developing policy and practice responses, participants strongly advised policy makers to take the following into account:

- **Recognise, reform, reorganise**

Recognise, reform, reorganise are key principles. However, significant challenges remain and the realisation of the rights and recognition of the contribution that people with disabilities make, continue to be weak. Rights of people with disabilities needs to be a priority and significant progress must be secured.

- **Shift in model**

The shift from a medical model to a social model must become a reality, evident in policy and in the approach to services development and delivery. In order to make this shift, the focus needs to be on the choices that the person at the centre wants to make.

- **Disability as a cross-cutting theme**

Disability needs to be considered under all the themes of the 2010 Year including child poverty; access to quality work and learning; and access to services with a particular focus on older people. Access to education and employment is critical. Children and young people need to be able to access mainstream education but need to be supported to do so. The Special Needs Assistant service should be retained and enhanced - not cut. Similarly, adequate supports need to be available to support people with disabilities to gain quality employment.

- **Child poverty**

Child poverty is an issue but can present as an issue for the whole family. It was noted that because of the limited access to supports and the carer role that parents often play, families can fall into poverty. Parents for example may need to be full time carers. For some, daily life can mean regular trips to hospitals that are far away. The transport itself has a cost and the time it takes to travel may mean that the parent cannot engage in work and may have to give up their employment.

- **People have a right to chose where they live.**

The fundamental right for people with disabilities to choose where they live should be recognised in Irish law. This means that Article 19 in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should be enshrined in legislation.

- **Obligations must be tightened.**

Obligations must be tightened if policy is to be implemented. Reaching targets on physical access for example should be obligatory. Policy is too open and obligations need to be tightened. Where organisations including statutory bodies have equality policies, they need to ensure that all employees are aware of these and supported to implement them. There needs to be joined up thinking and action.

- **Upskilling**

Officials need to be supported to be more aware of and better able to implement their statutory responsibilities to people with disabilities. There needs to be more training for officials on their

statutory responsibilities and awareness on how policies can impact on the lives of people with disabilities. Officials need to meet with people with disabilities more and interact with them, so that those who are making important decision about people lives are making informed decisions, understanding the realities of the lives of people. .

- **HIQA standard for all.**

HIQA standards for residential services need to be mandatory for *all*, not just for new services.

- **Disability awareness**

Disability awareness should be part of the education curriculum. An anti-bias approach should be implemented in early years care and education. This is an important step to ensuring the longer term eradication of poverty and social exclusion.

- **Mainstream good practice.**

Good practice is often transferable. We should be seeing evidence of the continuation of good practice with mainstreaming a key strategy to making this a reality. The Government need to complete mainstreaming of good practice.

- **Adoption of the EU ‘Horizontal Equality Directive’.**

At an EU level, commitment to equality for people with disabilities also needs to be realised. Member states should ensure the adoption of the EU Directive from Article 19 (‘Horizontal Equality Directive’ which requires equality in access to goods and services on the grounds of age, disability, sexual orientation and religion.

Plenary session

A representative of the regional area was invited to chair the plenary session of each of the seminars. The Chairs were:

Galway

Margaret Ó Riada, Galway Traveller Movement

Dundalk

Ursula McKenna, Dóchas for Women

Wexford *Anne Shorthall, Bagenalstown FRC*

Cork

Chris O’Leary, Faranree CDP

Donegal

Paul Kernan, Pobal le Chéile CDP

The plenary sessions began by taking feedback from each of the workshops and then provided an opportunity for participants to make comments that might not have been covered by the workshops, given that they were thematically based or other general comments. Cross cutting issues identified across the regional seminars included:

- ✗ The gap between policy and implementation.
- ✗ The barriers to participation including limited access to transport and childcare as well as a lack of evidence of outcomes from participation in previous consultation processes.
- ✗ Gender is relevant to all four themes of the European Year.
- ✗ While there relevance of a focus on issues experienced by older people and people with disabilities was acknowledged, other equality grounds were also highlighted including issues for GLBT people that are relevant to each of the themes of the Year.
- ✗ The need to address inequality and to consider equality and diversity in all areas and stages of policy development and implementation.

- ✘ Joint up strategic thinking is required if poverty and social exclusion are to be addressed effectively.
- ✘ Evidence of a lack of support for a community development approach which is seen as key to enabling participation of and outcomes for communities.
- ✘ The cuts to the community infrastructure impact on the most marginalised and undermine the investment made over the past decade.
- ✘ There is a danger as the community infrastructure is cut, that policy shall seek to reinvent the wheel. Caution was also expressed at 'quick fix thinking', evidence of which is emerging through e.g. short education and training initiatives.
- ✘ Recession has been used as an excuse for cuts to supports and services of marginalised communities who are seen as 'soft targets' . There was a strong message that there can be no regression and caution expressed at the longer-term impact of such short term thinking.

Seminar Conclusion

The seminars concluded with the next steps in relation to the process. Participants were informed by representatives of the Social Inclusion Division that the report of the proceedings would inform the design of the 2010 national Social Inclusion Forum, to which the participants will receive an invitation. Participants were also told that the issues raised would be brought forward to the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion.

Section Three: Conclusion

A key legacy envisaged for the 2010 Year was the development of a participation mechanism that would inform future policy development and implementation. The design and delivery of the regional seminars was developed to inform and enable such a legacy from the 2010 Year. Each element of the methodology was carefully planned and each element was considered crucial to the success of the seminars.

The original target of 60 participants per seminar was exceeded by all five. In addition, a fifth seminar had to be added to the original four planned as a result of demand. In all approximately 420 participants from a wide range and diversity of backgrounds attended the seminars and the feedback from participants was, in the main, very positive. The depth and breadth of participation and engagement was noteworthy. Each element of the methodology was considered critical for this success.

However, real success of this initiative may only be judged by how the information emanating from the process is used and whether changes will be made to policy and implementation as a result. Critically, participants need to know that the information they gave will make a difference.

Appendix I Consultation, participation and methodology

Consultation and participation

Methodology

The methodology was designed to support and facilitate the meaningful participation of all, particularly individuals and communities experiencing poverty, social exclusion and inequality. In seeking to ensure this, the partnership produced a detailed project plan that was agreed with the Social Inclusion Division, representatives of which met regularly with the project partners. One element of this work-plan was the identification of a contact person/liaison between the project team and the Social Inclusion Division. This ensured that information flow was as efficient as possible. Other key elements included:

Working Groups

Facilitated by the Social Inclusion Division Working Groups were established on each theme to identify speakers for each of the themes at each of the seminars. Speakers presented what was considered to be an example of good practice on each theme.

Information & logistics

The production of accessible and timely information on the project and seminars that was circulated to as wide an audience as possible. This involved using a number of databases to which the project partners had access, including that of the CWC, EAPN, the Community Platform, and the Social Inclusion Division. In addition, a database comprising all contact details for statutory, community and voluntary organisations was developed. Information circulated included:

- diary notice,
- information leaflet,
- registration form,
- briefing papers for speakers, facilitators and note takers,
- policy briefing papers.

Logistically, all venues were vetted for accessibility before they were confirmed. In addition, participants were asked to highlight any accessibility issues they might have had at registration stage in order that all accommodations could be put in place before the seminars. Information on the expenses policy was circulated prior to the seminars and expense application forms were readily available.

The facilitation of the workshops was considered to be key. Early on in the process, a team of facilitators was identified. Each facilitator identified the theme that best reflected their own area of experience and facilitated that theme at each of the workshops. That enabled the facilitator to bring the knowledge from the previous seminar to the next. Note takers were also identified for each of the workshops.

Participants from organisations representing issues related to the workshop theme were identified and invited to participate. Participants coming from a lived experience of the issue were also particularly encouraged.

The plenary session was regarded as an important opportunity to raise issues that may be crosscutting and/or not touched on by the seminar theme. Reflecting the regional nature of the seminars, each plenary was chaired by a representative of a local community organisation.

Briefing notes were sent to each facilitator, note-taker, presenter and local Chair prior to the seminars.

Supporting participation

Supporting, enabling and facilitating meaningful participation was considered key and a significant amount of resources were allocated to this work. Methods employed included:

- ✘ Telephone calls to raise awareness and encourage participation. All community organisations (CDPs, FRCs and others) were contacted by phone. These phone conversations included a background to the project and emphasised the importance of attendance, particularly as there are so few opportunities to engage at this level at a regional level. The fact that financial support was available to support the participation of unwaged participants was also outlined and organisations were encouraged to encourage their own constituents to attend.
- ✘ The circulation of a number of questions designed to stimulate debate and discussion within organisations and communities in advance of the regional seminar.
- ✘ Preparatory meetings held in a number of locations in advance of the seminars. Again designed to stimulate debate and discussion, these were highly effective.

Attendance

The attendance and presence of representatives of the Social Inclusion Division was considered to be a key factor of the successful outcomes of the seminars.

Media

Significant attention was given to ensuring media coverage of all four seminars. Press releases were sent prior to the seminars, with follow-up phone calls and information circulated. The outcome was coverage in several newspapers and significant radio coverage. Support for media work was provided by MKC Communications.

Evaluation

All seminar participants were asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of each seminar. These have been compiled and are included in this report.

Efficiency & leaning

- The project partners reviewed each seminar with a view to constantly improving efficiencies. Reviews of initial seminars resulted in gender being given more of a focus and an additional seminar being added to the series to be held in the northeast in the autumn.
- A de-brief and review session post seminars was held between the project partners and the Social Inclusion Division.
- To ensure that the learning from the project was adequately captured, a report of the regional seminars was compiled. A commitment to circulate the report to each participant was made at the seminars.

Appendix II Feedback from Participants

Evaluation forms were circulated at each of the regional seminars. Feedback from participants is outlined in the table below.

Feedback from Participants

Evaluation forms were circulated at each of the regional seminars. Feedback from participants is outlined in the table below.

| 2010 EU Year to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion Regional Seminars | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| Evaluation Summary | | 93 Evaluation Sheets Collected in Total | |
| Question | No of Responses | Sample Comments | |
| Q 1. | Did The Seminar Meet Your Expectations? | | |
| Yes | 81 | Each workshop was relevant but it was only possible to go to one, It was very useful; Well chosen themes; workshop on disability had no focus on the theme of access for employment; time a little short in the workshops; good to meet with other groups; yes I felt my voice was heard and points raised were fed back to the big group; very interesting; didn't have any expectations, expected another talk shop; yes and more listening and sharing in finding a solution to poverty and inequality; it is very exciting to hear so many views, excellent opportunity to share experiences, well facilitated- a large diverse group in the workshop; great to see community development groups standing up for themselves, Well Done!; very informative, useful to hear all points; it was very focused topics and issues raised that I was concerned about; though I would have liked to attend more workshops excellent; very very good, interesting in hearing the feelings of people and certain frustrations; Useful to feel support of other organisations in similar positions | |
| No | 5 | Not enough time to discuss issues, my expectations were quite low but even so they were not met. No ideas, solutions or initiatives on job creation, focused on NEWB hard to get to wider issues; unfortunately it was déjà vu; | |
| No Answer | 7 | I didn't quite know what to expect from the seminar | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Q 2. | Was The Information Useful To You? | | |

| | | | |
|-------------|--|----|---|
| | Yes | 86 | but not convinced that the local presentations were necessary or relevant; I'm a bit removed from what is happening on the ground; some of the information is useful to Travellers; excellent; good to see different agencies perspectives on their work; more information needed; good to hear what other organisations said; very useful and informative good to hear others views and know your problems are the same as others learning and sharing especially feedback from other workshops; presentation from social protection was very informative; somewhat, I would have known the info already but important it was aired here also; Information about activation unit, especially helpful; listening to how things are working for others; definitely; very informative; Especially the Donegal Co Co representative; especially DCC presentation on deprivation in Donegal - want a copy!; Statistical presentation was very informative, well presented |
| | No | 5 | too general - not enough time for planning and recommendations; most people spoke of their need for funding and patting themselves on the back, because I believe nothing will change; Not Really |
| | No Answers | 2 | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Q 3. | Were The Workshops Useful To You? | | |
| | Yes | 83 | an opportunity to have your say and hopefully be heard that we can make change when working together, but not nearly enough time; felt that they provided platform to raise some concerns but not sure how comprehensive this was or what will happen now?; very interesting; everyone voices their concerns on introduction; very good interesting; well organised and good to see supports in place to help people attend very good; Got to see what FAS do; very interactive and participative very good to get presentations of relevance very timely intervention; good to hear other people's experiences and opinions yes, interesting; as above, (good to hear other people's views and know your problems are the same as others very useful; good to hear other people's perspectives, excellent child poverty, very. Thank you; although I was disappointed at the small number and the absence of people with obvious disability; including everyone in our community target and non target groups (directly and indirectly); gave plenty of food for thought; excellent very well facilitated by oonagh; It was helpful to hear from "coalface" workers etc; NEWB presentation had some new information;(knowledge) which will keep me in good stead for my projects in college; yes but not enough time; |
| | No | 5 | well facilitated but time allotted to the morning schedule meant participants had to listen more than air their comments experiences; very specialised input given the wider child poverty issue; again we all repeated what had been said before; group was very large which made participation difficult |
| | No Answer | 3 | |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| | | | |
| Q 4. | Please Comment on Participation Support | | |
| <p>waffle; facilitation was good, participation ok but time constraints; workshops very well facilitated, all people got a chance to talk/ write a response; very few people from communities, disappointed at the lack of traveller representatives; no crèche; there was plenty of opportunity to participate; very good, absolutely excellent but little participation by agencies e.g. DSFA; excellent; fine, everyone encouraged to voice opinion and facilitator kept group focused on relevant issues; as every time the workshop was too short; very valuable and worthwhile; good time is always short; very good, interesting; well organised and good to see supports in place to help people attend; one participant was humiliated by a prominent speaker; very good; very good; everyone was very helpful and understanding; lots of participation; from whom?; very good; everyone contributed; believe good support for participation and equal access to speak and input; great; need more service users to attend; facilitated well; very good; people spoke easily and informally; felt it was easy to speak and participate. friendly easy going space; great passions and commitment varied participation in my workshop; excellent; very good; good; excellent; excellent; good mix; good participation; good; people in place to facilitate and feedback this gave the freedom to participate I learnt a lot from the workshop; don't really know what this means; having regional seminars helps greatly in participation support; a safe space to give your opinion; good, frustration was evident; Thanks- I brought a group of unwaged people not possible without finance; very supportive; would have liked some handouts re presentation; everyone got a change to voice their opinion; time was an issue not everyone got to speak; were supported good participation at poverty workshop; good; I loved the workshop valuable and input from participants was a real eye opener; great chance to give your views on what you would like to see a change in; very interesting discussion amongst participants; good;"Activator" talk from Social Welfare Donegal County Council toolkit report; frustrated with issues as the government will be bringing in more cut backs which will be detrimental to combating poverty</p> | | | |

| | |
|--|---|
| Q5. | Please Comment on the Venue |
| <p>good; hotel conference- comfortably bland; very comfortable; good venue; good; fine; excellent venue; good; venue is good; worked well, good breakfast and meeting rooms and parking; very good; good; venue is fine ; the venue was great; fine; very good; very good; comfortable; excellent - a little too warm; ok- two far from train station; very comfortable and room good advantage; excellent; very good; good; hotel conference- comfortably bland; very comfortable; good venue; good; fine; excellent venue; good; venue is good; worked well, good breakfast and meeting rooms and parking; very good; good; venue is fine ; the venue was great; fine; very good; very good; good venue, groups well broken up and good space and airy also; great; would have liked speakers and participants to use microphones, quite enjoyable; fine; suitable; very good; great; excellent venue, well organised; comfortable safe environment; excellent; good; excellent; excellent; ideal not to have to travel to Dublin; very good; venue very good; excellent; good; good; very nice; venue is good; good; very good; good; great location, venue excellent easily accessed; nice and comfortable; comfortable ease of poverty; good comfortable and accessible; venue was grand; very accessible; fine, suitable; cold; spacious but a little noisy and cold; cold and very bad sound; good; excellent; very nice; freezing; room was too big sound was too poor; got quite cold and heater was too loud; lovely rooms but cold otherwise excellent; good venue; noisy; ok a bit cold; cold; the venue of the workshop is very conducive except it was bit cold; too small and cold in the workshop room no mic for the speakers; cold; ok; excellent; cold; excellent very helpful staff; a bit cold; tad chilly and a microphone wouldn't have gone a miss; cold</p> | |
| | |
| Q6 | What Follow- Up Would You Like To See? |
| <p>feedback; implementation of findings; a seminar on the same grounds when the department bring back the information that was brought to them today and see if they really listened; written responses all workshops feedback to participants; meeting with people in communities; development of national job strategy linked to need as much as economic debt, development of plan for education for life; an annual or biannual event of this type; more workshops like this with presence of the powers that be; report to be circulated; I would like a copy of the report and would hope that policy makers will consider the recommendation of the report; issues raised documented and distributed to the policy and decision makers; a subgroup at collection from seminars at point of collated feedback to be presented. results on the issues; output of workshops; I'd like to see the point of view brought up today actually make some difference; our needs and issues discussed- change; action taken; ministers participation; feedback from seminars in plain English; more work shops; wider collective attendance of people from communities of service provision personnel; email reports to all participants; an effective report that will be taken into consideration for policy making decisions; that everything said in the report will be followed up that CDPs will NOT be closed as they are the heart of the community; feedback on the website; implementation of report; prompt issue of report; implementation; getting the issues on the political agenda; implementation; info available for all seminars and the findings emerging with the actors forwarded to the department; the series of the workshops and other events proposed appear to be the appropriate follow up, a copy of the results and anti agency networks established between organisations, perhaps a list of participants could be distributed to enable great collaboration of networking; stats on the longer term effects and development following the FÁS programme; repeat; outcomes and government response are</p> | |

extremely important; implementation of report; yes; follow up seminar in order to get feedback; venue very good; active participation of individual media and groups in this issue; groups working and communicating with one another; good; the community development programme is actively fought for; working groups to input; that info is brought directly to minister particularly in work and importance of community sector and CDP programme; outcomes; forum, copy of report, outcomes, real comment and bring the message forward; outcomes to be fed back to all that attended seminars that it can be seen that it was fed back.; opportunities to have ordinary people to meet and have a voice; use the information from seminar to implement real progress; copy of report from workshop circulated to participants, insist, resist and persist; outcomes without delay

Q7 | General Comments Including Strengths & Weaknesses of the Seminar

Hopefully something will come out of it; again another conference for social workers, all saying that they need funding. Very much over represented by minority groups. Little mention of the majority of unemployed except to call them the "new" unemployed, a change for civil servants to raise themselves up a pay grade in the new department; Interesting that DCGRA are part of this yet at the same time excluding community voice by merger of CDPS into partnership also child poverty speakers seemed to concentrate on preschool, what about living conditions etc.? ; Very Well done!; really enjoyed today only thing is that I would have loved to have more participation or presentations from service users; workshops need to be focused on or else the impact is lost, In fact if I come to attend a disability workshop it would have been a waste of time in terms of thematic approach; that the comments and ideas from the workshops are presented as given at governmental level; the seminar seemed to get a rounded view on each of the issues, facilitator was excellent; to the minister to influence policy- listen to the people on the ground, stop terrifying the elderly and think of the ripple effects of cut backs, support PHW's to engage with community workers on all levels; public accessing services don't know PHWs, no relationship built up so no trust established, please use resources there- don't reinvent the wheel, evaluate it more and look for accountability to move forward; I think it was well worth it and interesting; very good. pity minister couldn't make it. If it was a Fianna Fail talk shop opening he would be there- but then we are not banks, developers or builders; nothing new heard or discussed- is anyone listening?; the plans, strategies etc, are clear and extensive. I feel practical information regarding how to implement on the ground would be helpful. People need to know what is there as services are. Engaging is a huge problem, as things have shifted target and marginalised groups have also shifted. Plans, attitudes, contribution, needs to be correlated at ground level- accessibility; absence of inclusion of carers at planning level; 2nd speech at start was drawn out and at time irrelevant, the group facilitator was excellent; good audience mix and participation, hope it is not just a tick box exercise; could have been a full day give people time to reflect and add on; more local seminars or local focus groups, ideas box for people who are too shy to talk out loud; excellent, many thanks; all good; congratulations to all involved, best wishes for remaining workshops; very informative; more workshops, follow up and communication between organisations especially in the present economic climate,; very good, well done, look forward to the next one! Thanks; very short timescale, great start, well done!; very good and well organised. Interesting; All very good, Thank you well done to facilitators given feedback on workshops, congratulations to the organiser of the conference it was very well run, very exciting and full of enthusiastic energy, well done; none, thank you; Very good and well organised event, good for link with CWC and dept of social inclusion, good networking with such a diversity of people and expertise, thank you; Strengths- Not in Dublin, good to have regional seminars, wide variety of groups attended, weaknesses- felt at times it was a bit rushed; well done, lacked the voice of young people in presentation relating to Dáil na nOg; Needs a full day would like to be inclusive in social inclusion seminar in autumn please; seminar was well run; seminar was very well organised; it was good, created a learning room for me, thanks; needs to be done again; very meaningful, good discussion; it

was nice to hear everyone's point of view; very good but jargon needs to be looked at; Sharing resources information etc; overall very enjoyable but the main room was very cold; course too rushed not enough time; wish there was more time given to seminar and maybe handouts on/ with each speaker; found seminar excellent and I am hopeful that there will be an outcome to this and the future in Donegal will not be as bleak as it has been in the past; hard to hear speakers; good seminar, poverty workshop highlighted poverty is not about finance it is much broader; too many topics being discussed not enough time; given that there was only 3 hours involved it was valuable and worthwhile; great to see the numbers if cutbacks are inevitable systems need to be changed, good to hear comments from those on the ground, felt a bit rushed; distracted by noise of fan should have had a radio mic - difficult to hear at times all seminar staff very helpful what other statutory agencies were present and will this info be shared with their information?; better focus on the wider social economic and policy aspects of the causes of poverty and ways to effectively combat it; Too many public sector speakers not enough time for the ordinary person; the strength of this seminar will be known when what has been said has been heard and implemented into ACTION and Ireland has a value system where people are first; The workshop was good as it gave many participants the opportunity to express their concerns about a lot of things that need to be addressed by policy makers; Started late and carried on throughout the day. Our workshop facilitator was very good and gave people the opportunity to speak; very good like feedback and outcomes of the seminars; people losing faith; Workshops - strengths; poverty is manmade. One man's poverty is another man's creation. We lack humanity so much; we must learn to live in harmony; we are all equal; equally deserving human rights; we must learn to live without whining and learn to work;

