



**Community Workers'
Co-operative**

Community Workers' Co-operative,
c/o Galway Traveller Movement,
1 The Plaza, Headford Road, Galway
Phone: +353 (0) 87 9326467
Email: info@cwci.ie Website: www.cwci.ie

Community Work Updates

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Welcome to the 1st issue of *Community Work Updates for 2012*, the e bulletin of the CWC

Thanks to all who contributed esp. Aiden Lloyd, Anastasia Crickley, Tommy Coombes Catherine Lynch, Elva O' Callaghan, Angela Holohan, Siobhan Curran, Rita Fagan

If you would like to make a contribution to the next one please contact siobhan@mrcci.ie.

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Alignment of Local Government and Local Development



Update on the Steering Group on the Alignment of Local Government and Local Development

This steering group was set up in September 2011 to advise the Minister of Environment, Community and Local Government on the alignment of local development structures. The steering group has been appointed on a non-representative basis and is composed of serving and retired civil servants plus a smattering of outsiders.

Alignment is the latest part of a process that began with *endorsement* (bestowing a measure of control by local authorities over the work of Partnerships and Community Development Projects) through *cohesion* (amalgamating the work of Partnerships, LEADER companies and CDPs and rationalising structures through the creation of new local development companies). The interim report of the steering group has been available on the DEC&LG website since November 2011. A final report was due to be submitted to the Minister in early February, but is likely to be delayed.

There are a number of assumptions in the interim report about the proposed alignment. No distinction is made between community development and local development. There is a complete absence of any critique of local government and a contention that local authorities have capacity and expertise in the delivery of 'community-oriented actions' which will enable them to assume oversight of local and community development initiatives.

There is no indication or understanding of community development as an embodiment of local collective action that gives expression to the needs of disadvantaged communities. It is entirely seen as a service delivered to people rather than a process for social change. Similarly, there is no acknowledgement of the change in circumstance and context that have come about during some 20 years of local development.

The Minister's statement refers to the need for closer alignment of local/community development and local authorities as part of a wider process of local government reform. On the evidence, the wider process of local government reform appears to be about increased outsourcing of services previously provided by local authorities – refuse, water, sewage etc – while allocating them a greater role in community activity. This may result in existing programme funding being channelled through local authorities. Far from enhancing local government and putting it on a par with European counterparts, it will in fact diminish local democracy and further reduce community involvement in determining vital public services.

The Community Workers Coop has responded to the interim report in a considered submission paper <http://www.cwc.ie/2012/01/alignment-of-localcommunity-development-structures-cwc-submission/>

and is seeking an urgent meeting with the steering group on the basis that it is both undemocratic and foolhardy to decide the future of community development without seeking the views of key stakeholders.

Ireland's 4th Periodic Report under International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Committee

Ireland is due to report to the UN HR Committee in 2012 under the ICCPR and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has already commenced work at an interdepartmental level on preparing its 4th report. The DFAT invited civil society organisations to a briefing on 3rd February about the preparation process and set out the timeline for completing the report. They wish to complete the first draft by April after which they will invite written submissions from NGOs to be submitted within a 3 week period (by early May approximately). It is intended to follow this in late May with a further consultation with NGOs (and other departments). NGOs can submit a list of issues to the department from this point on to be taken into consideration during the drafting stage with a view to making more detailed submissions at submission stage.



Ireland's 3rd report on the ICCPR, lists of issues and the UNHRC's concluding observations (2008) can be found on the DFA website at <http://www.dfa.ie/home/index.aspx?id=319>. The Committee's concluding observations draw attention to particular issues on which Ireland is expected to make progress but it is notable that some of the areas commended by these such as Ireland's human rights and equality infrastructure and increased budgetary allocation to combat domestic violence have regressed since 2008. Civil society representatives attending the DFAT Briefing asked that the State report truly reflect the contributions of NGOs. It was suggested that it may be useful for NGOs to work together on issues and furthermore that organisations making submissions would indicate that they are willing to allow their submissions be circulated.

CWC presents at Wexford Local Development Conference – National Challenges, Local Responses: Where to next for Local and Community Development in Ireland



WLD celebrated the launch of its Strategic Plan for the Local + Community Development Programme with a timely conference to reflect on the future place of community development in a changing and challenging environment and the implications for communities and people experiencing social exclusion. Whilst the plan outlined by CEO Brian Kehoe is developed around a core social inclusion focus, the WLD will have its work cut out in being able to apply to the great challenges facing Wexford as a county with one of the highest rates of unemployment and one of the lowest in educational attainment. About 150 participants listened to Minister Brendan Howlin launch the plan. He reflected on his development in the 1990s of the White Paper *Better Local Government* as Minister for Environment and Local Government and oversight of the work of the Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development systems, regretting that they who

conceptualised the architecture for an improved system were not in government to implement it. Professor Fred Powell, Dean of Social Science UCC discussed development models and community narratives, presenting an overview of the roles of community development, pre and post Celtic Tiger and some stimulating ideas about the potential of community development in realising concepts of radical democracy, planetary citizenship and critical citizenship. Elva O’Callaghan from the CWC said it was impossible to ignore the tight squeeze on community development at this time and emphasised the need to recognise that community development works from a bottom up analysis to the community’s agenda for change and cannot merely be applied as a methodology in any context. She pointed to the need for communities to push hard for the right to participate in local development, to support the continuation of strong community development practice where it exists and to create meaningful mechanisms for participatory democracy within local government. Sinéad Pentony from TASC spoke about the need for a new political economy in Ireland which will strengthen civil society, active citizenship and economic citizenship and will assess economic progress in terms of its impact on well-being, equality and environmental sustainability. Participants described the hopelessness of the high levels of unemployment in the county, expressed concern about the inclusion of people with disabilities and commended WLD on its work

CWC Member Profile – Tommy Coombes, Community Worker, Bluebell, Dublin



Tommy grew up in Dolphin House, Dolphins Barn and worked as a truck driver for many years before being introduced to community work 11 years ago. He moved from being a volunteer to a CE Scheme before ending up in NUI Maynooth where he qualified as a community and youth worker. One of his first jobs was back in Dolphin House where he worked for 6 years.

In 2008 he joined Bluebell CDP as manager. As a result of the demise of the Community Development Programme he is now employed through the LDSIP and is seconded to work with the CDP.

Tommy is very clear that in the current climate it can be very difficult to maintain focus and energy for the struggle for social change. Communities are experiencing really difficult issues such as long term unemployment, drug dependency, loneliness, poverty. As a community worker he talks about having to deal with the many crises' people and communities find themselves in while also keeping in mind the bigger picture and focus on social change. Apart from the daily grind for survival and hardship communities are experiencing Tommy also talks about the struggle of meeting the administrative requirements of funders, which is essential if the conditions for quality community work are to be maintained.

Starting where people are at is an important part of community work says Tommy. Building trust, establishing relationships, getting people to engage are key first steps. He talks about the Dampness Campaign that started in Bluebell last year and how this was the first step for many tenants to get involved.

Initially many were simply interested in getting their own situation improved. As a result of linking up with others in a similar situation through Tenants First, a Dublin wide coalition, tenants have had the opportunity to see the 'bigger picture'. They now have a human rights analysis of issues such as dampness and poor maintenance and there is now in place a collective effort to secure accountability and rights which is beginning to get places.

Tommy stresses the need for solidarity, for community workers to share their analysis, resources and learning. 'We have to think outside the box if anything is to change' he concludes.

‘The Community Work Approach to Peace Building’ A Resource Guide to Inform and Engage the Sector

This Resource Guide forms part the CWC PEACE III Project ‘*Harnessing Equality for Lasting Peace*’ Project and has been moulded by facilitated sessions at seminars, workshops and residentials with community workers in the region on a cross-border basis

The work has been informed by Dr. Kenneth Bush’s ‘*Aid for Peace*’ methodology and also by practice within the International Development Sector.

The purpose of ‘The *Community Work Approach to Peace building*’ Resource Guide is to:

- Explore and begin a dialogue on the relationship between Community Work and Peace building focused on Social Change;
- Provide examples of creative ways to bring about such change using case studies;
- Broaden understanding of the ways to measure successes as well as examine the potential for improvement;
- Assist community workers in achieving positive outcomes and impacts for the communities that they work with; and
- Be a practical resource for community workers by providing contact details for case studies and other useful links.

The eight case studies included are drawn from the following projects/organisations:

- EXPAC ‘*Conflict of Interest*’;
- Donegal YMCA – Cross Border Community Leadership and Family Support;
- Community Dialogue – Asylum Seeking Community in Belfast;
- The Playhouse -- ‘*Theatre of Witness*’ Project;
- Donegal CWC -- ‘*HELP*’ Project;
- Abhaile Arís;
- Londonderry YMCA – ‘*Gateway to Protestant Participation*’ and
- C. Galligan/Sligo County Community Forum -- Intercultural Studies Course.

The regional launch of the guide will be held on Friday 24th February in The Playhouse, Derry/Londonderry at 12 noon. Howard Keery, Director of the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) will launch the guide on behalf of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

The guide will be available to download from the cwc website www.cwc.ie from Friday 24th February.

Joint Visit to Ireland by Advisory Committee for the Framework Convention on National Minorities (FCNM) and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)



Anastasia Crickley (NUI Maynooth) and Catherine Lynch (Irish Network Against Racism) provide an update on the joint visit undertaken by the Advisory Committee for the Framework Convention on National Minorities and the Commission on Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe to Ireland from February 26th to March 1st next.

The purpose of the visit, which is on invitation by the Irish Government, is to develop the FCNM Advisory Committee's response to Ireland's third Report under the FCNM (available at http://hudoc.ecri.coe.int/XMLEcri/ENGLISH/Cycle_03/03_CbC_eng/IRL-CbC-III-2007-24-ENG.pdf) which informs the comment and recommendations of Committee of Ministers to Ireland and to develop and compile material for ECRI's third report on Ireland. ECRI's previous reports on Ireland are available at http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Ireland/Ireland_CBC_en.asp During their time in Ireland, the group will meet NGOs, Government departments (in particular the Department of Justice which is the lead Department) and national institutions. They will spend time in Dublin and outside of Dublin with some meetings for all involved and others for only ECRI or FCNM members.

The Framework Convention on National Minorities of the Council of Europe which was opened for signature by the Council of Europe's member states in 1995, is the first legally binding unilateral instrument devoted to the protection of national minorities. The choice of a framework convention, containing mostly programme type provisions, setting out objectives which the signed up states undertake to pursue, was made because of the range of different situations and problems to be resolved.

This means that the emphasis is placed on implementation of the principles set out in the Framework Convention through national legislation and appropriate governmental policies. The emphasis is placed on the protection of persons belong to national minorities, who may exercise their rights individually and in community with others. The Convention now has 48 signatories. The implementation of the Convention is overseen by an Advisory Committee with support from a small secretariat. The Advisory Committee comprises and elected group of independent experts nominated in the first instances by their national governments. Members serve for a maximum of two terms.

The Commission on Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe is established in the light of the European Convention on Human Rights to help combat racism, racial discrimination and intolerance in Europe. It reviews member states' legislation, policies and measures to address racism and their effectiveness and formulates general policy recommendations to member states and the Council.

The Council of Europe Court of Human Rights is the main regional instrument for legal redress on human rights issues. The Council of Europe is totally separate from the European Union and should not be confused with the European Council or Council of the heads of State of the member states of the European Union.

Development and enlargement of the European Union to 27 member states with the continued existence of applicants has tended to shift power and status in some areas away from the Council of Europe. However, it remains the preeminent human rights champion. In a year when Ireland is lobbying for election to membership of the UN Human Rights Council and views of the Council on Ireland's human rights record and the responses of the Government to them, could be significant for the campaign.

Anastasia Crickley, NUI Maynooth, is a member of the Advisory Committee for the Framework Convention on National Minorities and Michael Farrell of FLAC (Free Legal advice Centres) was recently nominated as Ireland's member of the European Commission on Racism and Intolerance. Further details and information regarding the Convention and Commission are available from them Michael.Farrell@flac.ie and Anastasia.Crickley@nuim.ie

Candle-lit Vigil in Memory of Marioara Rostas

On Friday evening, 10 Feb, members of the public, community sector, elected representatives and the Gardai, gathered at a candle-lit vigil to pay their respects to Marioara Rostas. Marioara Rostas, the young woman murdered in tragic circumstances in 2008 whose body was found last month, was buried in Romania earlier that day. The candle-lit vigil was

organised by Pavee Point, in order to give people an opportunity to publicly and collectively demonstrate their solidarity with the family of Marioara and the wider Roma community in Ireland. The vigil took place opposite Pearse Street Garda station, close to the last sighting of Marioara. Martin Collins of Pavee Point spoke about how a family leaving a situation of poverty and persecution in Romania and simply looking for a better life had experienced such tragedy in Ireland and offered condolences to her family.



This tragic death highlights concerns that Pavee Point and other civil society organisations have about risks faced by members of Roma communities and in particular Roma women, in Ireland. In particular, Pavee Point note that certain Irish laws and policy serve to marginalise Roma from wider Irish society. In this context Pavee Point are disappointed to note that the Irish National / Traveller Roma Integration Strategy (2012) fails to identify actions, targets and timeframes and largely excludes Roma. This strategy which was drafted as part of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020, offers an opportunity to address the exclusion of Roma in Ireland and needs to be revised in line with the Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion.

For more information on the issues discussed or the work of Pavee Point's Roma Project, please contact Siobhan at siobhan.curran@pavee.ie

A short video clip on the vigil can be seen at <http://paveepoint.ie/>

Note from Geneva – Anastasia Crickley, member of UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

I have just arrived here for the 80th session of the UN committee on the Elimination of racial Discrimination which takes place over the next four weeks. A number of developments reported on during our first day are of relevance work for justice, equality and human rights in Ireland, Europe and globally.

In making the above comments and seeking their inclusion in the CWC news bites at a time when communities and those who work with them faces major challenges I am stuck by the obvious question regarding their relevance. The start of my answer is to encourage us to move beyond leaving the language and issues of human rights to the human rights community and instead to claim human rights for and with communities directly through community work interventions. Such interventions when informed by good information and the organisation and lobbying that community worker are capable of, can have local, national European and global outcomes even if small. In addition CWC members throughout the 1980s early 90's recession and challenges with no or little staff back up, played significant roles in shaping key UN responses which now facilitate rights realisation in Ireland and elsewhere.

Firstly, the important Dublin II Statement on strengthening/reform of the UN Treaty Bodies work (that is the work of the Human Rights Committee, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination etc) which emerged from the second meeting of Treaty Bodies, NGOs and other experts in Dublin on November 10/11 2011 is gathering considerable support. The meeting was led by Michael O'Flaherty, Member of the Human Rights Committee now president of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and part sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The whole process of reform is gathering momentum, partly out of concern to increase efficiency, effectiveness, implementation and to increase rights realisation, partly out of concern of some states to control the committees and partly out of a crude attempt at cost cutting. Two things are clear – there is room for efficiency especially with regard to follow up, and one size cannot fit all everywhere. The process is now the subject of intergovernmental discussions and in the end will be progressed probably via a UN General Assembly Resolution following on the report of the High Commissioner on Human Rights which is due in June. NGOS have contributed at various stages and it is still possible to engage or at least be informed regarding the position being adopted by Ireland and by the European Union.

Secondly, the recommendations of the fourth Global Forum on Minority Issues which focused on guaranteeing the rights of minority women and girls held on November 29 – 30 2011 are now available. The Forum was the first under the tenure of Rita Iszak the Hungarian Roma Woman who recently replaced Gay McDougall as UN Rapporteur on Minority Issues. The forum underlined the unique challenges of the multiple and intersecting discriminations experienced by minority group women and also their vulnerability to harmful practices, exploitation and trafficking. The call for disaggregated data collection, a gender perspective and impact perspective in actions for women.

Finally, the CERD has a new chairperson Alexei Avtononov (Russian Federation) and a Bureau which includes myself as General Rapporteur.

St Michaels Estate let down yet again. Rita Fagan calls for action

We always seem to be looking for help. If its not one fire were fighting it's another! Friday last, DCC informed the St. Michael's Regeneration Board that they had withdrawn the contract with the builder BAM on the grounds of Health and Safety.

Up to that point the board knew nothing. 3/4 of the structures of the site have been built. The after-school and Creche were about to get there roofs on. BAM did say a balcony moved 10 inches in December and now in February they have been served with their notice to withdraw from the site although BAM in there press release said the Health and Safety authority had visited the site a number of times and told them to go on with the work.



We don't know how big the issue is but what the board did propose was someone at the highest level of mediation of government mediates between both the builder and DCC. We the community do not want a unhealthy workplace or housing but we don't want either the site to close this Friday because every solution has not been tried.

If it goes to an injunction or into the courts you can say that it will be 5 times that St. Michael's Estate have been let down which is a shocking and appalling outcome after 15 long years of struggle. If resources are needed to make it safer well then let the government put their money where their mouth is. But the first step is mediation.

We are calling for your solidarity once again. We always appreciate your support. Amplify your voice. Out of the 5 regeneration's projects let down by Bernard McNamara this is the only one that has public housing and community facilities being developed. Also if you could forward this to others that would be a great help. Please write an email to Minister Phil Hogan and Jan O' Sullivan calling for mediation. minister@enviorn.ie
ministerofstate@enviorn.ie

Towards Climate Justice: a strategy guide for the community sector in responding to climate change

Funded by the EPA, this report entitled, *Towards Climate Justice: a strategy guide for the community sector in responding to climate change*, highlights the need to move towards climate justice, where the specific needs of those living with poverty, inequality and social exclusion are taken into account when developing climate and sustainable development policy. This project also highlights the unique potential of the community sector, particularly that element of the community sector engaged in community work (a) in ensuring that the voice of the most marginalised individuals and communities are heard at policy level, and (b) in beginning the process of developing responses to what are now considered to be the inevitable consequences of climate change. The report has a foreword written by former president Mary Robinson in her capacity as CEO of the Mary Robinson Foundation.

The launch will take place in Dublin in April – date and venue to be confirmed so watch for updates.