

CHANGING IRELAND

JUNE/JULY '05

ISSUE 14 The National Newsletter of the COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME - funding 185 Community Development Projects

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Extra funding supports available

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VOLUNTEERS ARE WORTH €485m

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Should creating poverty be a crime?

Poverty is, in theory, easily eradicable. Poverty kills many more people than war. Yet, poverty continues to be nurtured and promoted by many in power for their short-term profit. So, would it not help to criminalise its promotion?

Many people would like to see the poor disappear or at least stay quiet. In much the same way, many in the 'South' of this island wished when the Troubles were on that 'The North' would just go away, perhaps drift off into the Atlantic and sink forever.

Poor people are a nuisance, an embarrassment, they get in the way of 'development', they are not seen to contribute to the economy and are a burden to the tax-paying working middle-classes. And, in holding seeds of discontent, they represent a political threat (rarely realised) to the ruling classes and those enjoying material wealth.

'Changing Ireland' has in the past highlighted the fact that Ireland's equality and anti-discrimination laws, while strong and acclaimed internationally, stop short of protecting people from discrimination on the grounds of socio-economic class. The government prefers to protect people by more mundane methods such as guaranteeing a minimum wage and allowing trade union membership.

It may not be likely to happen this year, but a change in our equality laws would signal to employers and service-providers that you can no longer discriminate against someone because they are poor, or because they come from a disadvantaged area.

In the meantime, CDPs play an important role, acknowledge by the Equality Authority, in promoting knowledge and use of the laws protecting minorities. If anyone is well-placed to campaign for



better policies to tackle the causes and effects of poverty and disadvantage, it is CDPs. In fact, this is a core part of their work. While many of CDPs are heavily involved in service-provision, they also have a role fighting the causes of poverty as well as addressing the effects.

Going back to the idea of criminalising the promotion of poverty, it should be a crime punishable as war crimes are. Our leaders should be held to account for leading us into a situation where one-fifth of the world lives lavishly at the expense of the bulk of humanity. There are extreme divisions of wealth within countries for sure. But there is also a distinct geographical division of material wealth between the so-called 'West' and the rest of the world.

Of course, it sounds ludicrous today to even imagine the leaders of the wealthy nations one day being held to account by criminal tribunals for causing the impoverishment of others.

Yet, the EU already has a list of environmental sins for which leaders or at least the countries they represent can be held to account through being fined. And, under international law, occasionally ship-captains receive jail-terms when avoidable oil-spillages occur.

It is not inconceivable that in the future, those guilty of crimes of economic exploitation will face a similar justice system.

This year, a new campaign to 'Make Poverty History' is gaining momentum and millions of people are involved. If you wish to join in, call to an Oxfam shop for a white armband, or make your own, to show you believe global poverty, like slavery before it, can be made history. In the meantime, a Tsunami-sized death-rate occurs every fortnight in South-East Asia alone due solely to poverty.

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DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the author concerned. They do not, by any means, necessarily reflect the views of the Editor, the editorial team, the management committee of the Community Development Network, Moyross, Ltd., or the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

**PRODUCED IN MOYROSS
BY THE COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT NETWORK**



Sunday 2.47pm:

I know it's a touchy subject but I am proud to be a loyal and permanent subject of the Minister and his department. I am subject to endorsement, review, to the Ministers' every whim and as it says in my contract "the position is permanent subject to funding from the Department". So I'm guaranteed a job for life.

Monday 10.38pm:

Mick seems to think we do not have a guarantee of permanent funding and then told me I'm also subject to "satisfactory performance". I told him it's not a performance - with me what you see is what you get! However, it seems that when I don't do enough I am not meeting the criteria and when I do too much I am going beyond my remit. The management committee are getting very picky. My beloved Ministers would never do this kind of thing.

Tuesday 6.04pm:

I'm thinking of going back to college to study Systematic Maladministration - it sounds interesting and I think I'd be good at it. The points shouldn't be too high. I'm sure Maynooth or UCC have a diploma course in it.

Wednesday 9.09pm:

Lucky or what! The U.S. army offer a Diploma Course in Systematic Maladministration. So I applied today for a job as a military advisor with the coalition forces in Iraq. I should have no bother getting the job as I have experience in the FCA so they will know I have a lot to offer.

Thursday 7.17pm:

I've thought of a way to make money before I go to Iraq. School places are going to be the next big investment opportunity.

Horace McDermott - The Final Diary!

Former Faceless Bureaucrat,
Pinko Do-Gooder and
Development Worker

*"I'm thinking of going
back to college to study
Systematic
Maladministration - it
sounds interesting and I
think I'd be good at it."*

So I went into Ballymore and enrolled my as yet unconceived child- Horatio George - in the top school for the academic year 2010. Then I can sell my place to desperate parents called McDermott for a tidy profit. I'd say school places could become as expensive as a pub licence or a two bedroom garden shed in Dublin 4.

Friday 11.57pm:

Participative democracy! Most of us are sick of the sight of politicians but the Iraqis showed that people will turn out in great numbers to vote if they don't know who the candidates are. And then there's the French who had a referendum. What a non-event!

Saturday 10.38pm:

It's so hard to please people. Because of my commitment to equality and justice I offered to beat up the perpetrators who victimised some of the women in the domestic abuse project and now the management committee are charging me with gross misconduct. I was going to get the Shinnors, the twins Pa and Ra, to help me along with their buddy Pee O'Neill but that's all over now.

Sunday 9.46am:

I can't understand how no one consulted any of the fashion and model agencies who are experts in deportment about what people should wear when being deported from Ireland. Any one with an ounce of fashion sense knows that school uniforms are so uncool.

Monday 5.30pm:

I don't know about going to Iraq anymore. I might volunteer to go to Indonesia with an aid agency. The only thing is the Irish agencies really don't take these disasters seriously enough. I mean Concern should be In Deep Distress, GOAL would be more appropriate if called SAVE. Anyway, I'm finished with this development project lark and I'm going to put away diary. Wonder should I get it published - I might make a few bob!

THANKS TO THE AUTHOR

The Editor and Editorial Team would like to thank the author of 'The Diary of Horace McDermott' who shall, however, continue to remain nameless. Rumour has it he/she may return in to write in another guise. No doubt, those readers who always searched first for 'The Diary of Horace McDermott' before reading any other articles will write to us if they are finding it impossible to cope without 'Horace'!

CHANGING IRELAND

The National Newsletter of the COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME - funding 185 community projects

requires a

Part-Time Administrator

'Changing Ireland' is the magazine of the national Community Development Programme, based in Sarsfield Gardens Business Centre, Moyross, Limerick and managed by the Community Development Network Moyross Ltd.

'Changing Ireland' seeks to recruit a Part-Time Administrator for 20-hours-per-week to support the Editor in the maintenance and development of the magazine and associated project work.

The successful applicant must have:

- Excellent written and verbal communication.
- Minimum of one year's experience in office administration work, including computers skills (Word, Excel & databases).
- Basic accounting and finance skills.
- Friendly and open attitude.
- Be willing to work on their own initiative and as part of a team.

It would be desirable if the applicant has any of the following:

- A good understanding of community development.
- Experience of working in a newsletter/media project.
- Experience in website maintenance.
- A high standard of Irish.

Salary to approximately €16,000 per annum (depending on experience).

CVs will not be considered for short-listing.

For an Application Pack, please contact:

Allen Meagher, Editor,
'Changing Ireland' Recruitment Sub-Group,
c/o Community Development Network Ltd.,
Community Enterprise Centre,
Moyross, Limerick.
E-mail: allenmeagher@eircom.net
Requests by telephone for Application Packs to
Jude Meaney at 061-325696 or 087-688-2050.

The closing date for the receipt of completed
Application Forms is:
Tuesday, June 14th, latest 2pm.

This position is funded by the Department of Community, Rural
and Gaeltacht Affairs.





Clare Women's Network held bellydancing among other activities to celebrate International Women's Day. Last year, New Ross CDP was involved in a multi-cultural awards event that featured the belly-dancing featured here.

International Women's Day began in 1908

- 2005 had everything from belly-dancing to health checks

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day, held on March 8th, originated from the trade union movement in America in the early 20th century, particularly in the activism of the women who worked in the clothing industry 'sweatshops' of the time, reports JOAN COURTNEY.

In 1907, these women held a 'Hunger March' in New York to protest at the dangerous working conditions and very long working periods, and called for a ten-hour working day and improved wages. The police attacked the march, and the following year on March 8th, 1908, a commemorative march was held and this became a milestone in women's history. This date is what we now celebrate as International Women's day.

A snapshot of International Women's Day in Ireland in 2005 shows CDPs actively involved:

"Creative Women" was the theme chosen by The Clare Womens Network to mark International Women's Day this year. There was an all day Art Craft and Food Fair in the Templegate Hotel in Ennis when over 20 women displayed and sold their produce (including everything from hand made cards, paintings, pottery, woodwork and home produced cheeses and chocolates). The high standard of the goods on sale was remarked on by everyone, including the County Arts Officer, Siobhan Mulcahy, who opened the Fair.

In the evening, over 200 women met for workshops and demonstrations in Belly Dancing, Circle Dancing, Salsa and Ceili Dancing as well as singing from the CDP's International Women's Group. A singing workshop followed and the CDP plan to repeat the entire event next year.

The Clare Womens Network also supports a county-wide campaign to improve maternity service provision in County Clare. Members of the Co. Clare Maternity Services Awareness Group featured on a Clare FM radio programme together with a panel of service users and midwives to discuss the issues. The programme attracted a huge number of callers.

Tralee Women's Resource Centre hosted a Women's Health day with workshops and exhibitions. The workshops were on meditation, aerobics with taster workshops on acupuncture and reiki. They also hosted walk-in blood pressure checks through the Health Service Executive.

Clondalkin Women's Network organised a Health Information Morning and launched a quilt and a booklet highlighting women's health inequalities. There were also holistic workshops on crystal healing and angel-healing as well as a health talk.

The Waterford Women's Centre marked International Women's Day when women's groups showed their work through dance and drama and the guest speaker was noted feminist Nell McCafferty.

Tuam CDP launch two publications

THE staff and volunteers at Tuam Community Development Resource Centre in County Galway celebrated in Spring with the launch of two publications. The first was the 'Tuam Community Directory 2005', which contains information on local issues ranging from addiction and counselling to community development, education and training, and historical & cultural information.

The launch event was also used to unveil the centre's twice-yearly magazine, 'Plugged In', the CDP's action-packed community newsletter.

Both were launched on April 22nd at a party to mark the ten years of community development in Tuam CDP.

Spell-checker — as Gaeilge

THE latest version of the Irish language spell-checker 'GaelSpell' is selling well through Pobail Le Chéile CDP's bookshop in Fallcarragh, Co. Donegal.

"It's very popular, we've sold 20 already and there are more on order," said CDP co-ordinator, Paul Kernan. "It is like a dictionary that works off your word-processing programme. The dictionary is the same as the one on a 'Word' programme, just that it is in Irish. Words that are misspelled will be underlined. It is available for PCs, Macs and laptops and has proven most popular so far with families, school-children and organizations."

The CDP agreed to stock the unique software from publishers Cruinneog some months ago. GaelSpell was first published in 2001 and has been used by Irish speakers, journalists, school children and learners everywhere to help correct their spelling. It now includes nearly 300,000 entries in its word list and users of the GaelSpell 3 CD

have access to comprehensive e-mail technical support. Nationally, nearly 100 people a week enquire about the software.

Said Diarmaid Mac Mathúna from Cruinneog, "The spelling checker suggests corrections, and new terminology can be added with just a couple of clicks. GaelSpell helps the Irish language community use computers more effectively."

There will be no excuse for misspelling in future - except when it comes to 'óstlann' - for some reason the spell-checker has difficulty spelling the Irish word for hotel!

Pobail Le Chéile CDP charge €30 for the software CD though there is a discount price of €25 (+ post and packaging) for 'not-for-profit' organisations.

• To contact: Pobail Le Chéile CDP, Fallcarragh Resource Centre, Ballina, Fallcarragh, Co. Donegal. Tel: 074-9180111. E-mail: pobailc@eircom.net

Locals raise funds for students in college

- The Gerry Lawless Bursary Fund

By MARIE GROGAN

THE Gerry Lawless Bursary Fund, as the name suggests, was set up in memory of Gerry Lawless, a community activist from North Clondalkin who believed passionately in the power of education. The bursary is administered and monitored by the North Clondalkin CDP (NCCDP).

The main purpose is to encourage young people from North Clondalkin to pursue third level education and it offers financial assistance and personal support to students who have secured CAO places. Each candidate is assessed on their own merit and need.

When it was first set up in 1999, the

"I personally believe it is a fantastic initiative as local business, councillors, elected representatives and other community Groups are requested to donate to the fund. It would be good to see if other CDP's are involved in similar initiatives."

- Niamh Carton of NCCDP

Bursary only sought nominal contributions from other community groups in the area. Growing from that beginning, the CDP approached local businesses and were particularly successful with the Wyeth Group who not only gave an initial contribution but sponsored a number of students who are now studying a variety of science subjects.

NCCDP recently collated information on bursary fund recipients. This was done by way of questionnaires completed by students. The research showed the number of recipients in 2003 is equal to that of 2001 and 2002 put together. The questionnaire also showed equal numbers of male and female applicants.

The NCCDP and the Bursary fund committee were pleased with the fact that more young people from the area now intend to pursue third level education. The pressure is now on the CDP to secure greater funding to support bigger numbers.

- For more information, contact the author Marie Grogan or Niamh or Andy at North Clondalkin Community Safety Forum, 24 Neilstown Park, Clondalkin, Dublin 22. Tel. 01-457-5616. E-mail: cmelia@indigo.ie

Traveller children talk openly in new book

READERS from a settled background, the majority of whom will have never chatted with Traveller children, now have the opportunity to hear them talk openly of home-life and school.

'Whiddin to the Gauras' means 'Talking to our own' and recounts the story and findings of a group of Traveller Researchers talking to Limerick Traveller children. The book was launched on June 2nd in Limerick.

It resulted from a partnership between Limerick Travellers Development Group (a city-focused CDP) and Mary Immaculate College. Traveller women, Mags Casey, Ann O'Donoghue, Bridgie O'Donoghue and Ann O'Driscoll, were trained to conduct the qualitative educational study and the book was written and compiled by Eleanor Gormally. Mags Casey went on to become a CDP project co-ordinator for the Tipperary Rural Traveller Project.

The book is in English - only the title is in Cant - and it should be of much interest to community development workers, academics and project managers wishing to learn from Limerick's experience. The research went well, mostly, and the findings are presented honestly and in detail so that others may

learn. Not all research projects present their findings in this way and the book provides a truly insightful read for those interested in how a planned project works out in practice.

"It is hoped that in making the limitations and successes of the process available to a wider audience then other Traveller community development groups may be encouraged to engage with similar educational research initiatives," say the publishers.

Through a series of one-to-one interviews, a small group of primary school Traveller children chat, in the book, about home and school. Part one looks at the researchers' experience of carrying out the research, while part two explains how the project was set up. Part three presents the research findings, followed by a commentary and recommendations.

'Whiddin to the Gauras/Talking to Our Own' is available from Veritas bookshops in Sligo, Ennis, Letterkenny, Monaghan, Derry, Cork and Blanchardstown for €4.95. It is also available through O'Mahoney's Bookshop, O'Connell St., Limerick. It can also be purchased by post. Tel. Veritas 01-878-6507. E-mail: sales@veritas.ie

New CDPs contact details

Here follows the newly available contact details for three of the new CDPs in Mayo and Galway who hired staff in recent months and secured premises:

Iorras le Cheile CDP, American St., Belmullet, Co. Mayo; Co-ordinator, Rose Walsh, administrator, Lorraine Duffy. Tel. 097-20828.

Na Calai-South East Galway CDP, Abbey St., Portumna, Co. Galway; Co-ordinator, Noel Schofield, administrator, Emma Ryan. Tel. 090-974-1887

CorrAcla CDP, Polranny, Achill, Co. Mayo; Co-ordinator, Aine Egan, administrator, Vicki Staunton.

MILES from having access

MILES - Men In Limerick Experiencing Separation - was set up last year through co-operation between a local CDP and a Partnership company and recently went about recruiting a development worker to build up the fledgling organisation.

Weekly meetings of the support group have been facilitated until now by a worker from the Community Development Network Moyross Ltd with support from the PAUL Partnership in the city. A growing number of separated men are making contact with MILES, up to 60 so far, evidence there is need for such a group.

Unexpectedly, MILES has become well-known due to the actions of one man in particular who made contact with the group, Bill Kelly, a hunger-striking separated father. His protests outside the city's courthouse are designed to draw attention to what he sees as an unjust system whereby men do not

seem to have the equal rights of access to their children as separated mothers do. Bill was recently separated and experienced this situation himself and wants to see things change.

In MILES, they believe "that men have a positive part to play in the life of their family, whether or not they are living in the family home."

MILES works, as a group, to provide support to separated men, fathers or otherwise, from throughout the city. The group will become ever more active as the newly appointed development worker settles into the work.

The project is funded by the Health Service Executive.

- To find out more, contact: MILES, c/o PAUL Partnership, Unit 25, Tait Centre, Dominic St., Limerick. Tel. 087-260-3603.

Atlantic View CDP aims to become redundant

- says Chairperson at opening of new centre

By MARTIN READING

AFTER three moves in as many years Atlantic View CDP in Ballyshannon has found a main street home. Officially opened by local independent MEP and former community activist Marian Harkin on February 25th, the new premises marks another achievement for the project.

The project was formally established in 2001, after local groups had come together as the Erne Community Network four years earlier. Fourteen voluntary community groups are now represented working together under the principles of equality, inclusion, empowerment and capacity building.

Chairperson for the last six months (and representing BASIC, the Bundoran Area Social Inclusion Committee) Marian Cahill sees the CDP's ultimate goal is to become redundant. "Each community group would be empowered themselves and not need this support," she said. "But of course projects are developing all the time and there is plenty of work to do."

INVOLVED SINCE AGE 15

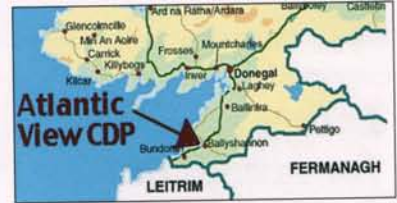
Marian has been involved with community groups since she was 15: "I have always felt that communities should help themselves. It's marvellous that we've got government funding

from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, but I have been in groups with no funding where all the funds were raised locally."

Atlantic View has accessed funding from a number of different agencies to support its work and that of the associated community groups. In addition to the new premises (renovated with help from the Donegal County Council-led Task Force) the CDP has also led



At the opening of Atlantic View CDP's new premises: Marian Harkin MEP (left), with development worker Anne McGowan and Atlantic View Chairperson Marian Cahill.



the way in adult education, workers have been employed under FAS schemes, and the Cross-Border Women's Collective has received funding from Co-operation Ireland.

Cultural projects, including the very successful publication 'A Day in the Life of Ballyshannon', have attracted funds from other agencies including LEADER and the Donegal Local Development Company. Resources also have been accessed from the Health Service Executive (HSE, formerly NWHB).

CDP CONTRIBUTES TO ECONOMY

Anne McGowan, one of the project's two permanent staff, points out the contribution that community development can make to the local economy: "Along with the huge impact it has on some people's lives in assisting them to access further education, employment and getting on courses, we make an impact economically in the area and as we know at the moment this is vital."

A local company, Donegal Parian China, announced early this year it would close one of its plants, with 54 employees to lose out.

Speaking before cutting the traditional ribbon to officially open the CDP's new premises, Marian Harkin also acknowledged the value of community development in economic terms, and highlighted the personal benefit to those volunteering and actively engaged in these groups. She noted that decisions made in Dublin and Brussels and in large commercial organisations have so much effect on our lives that people can feel alienated: "We can find that unsettling, in a way we are not masters or mistresses of our own destiny. I genuinely believe that when you are involved at a local level with your neighbours, with your friends, it in some way gives you some control over what happens. When people work in the local area and respond to local needs, they do have some control over their future and they contribute positively to their own quality of life and that of their neighbours."

BUILDING BRIDGES

Marian also saw a direct connection between Ballyshannon and Brussels with the European Parliament voting to give a further €108 million to the border counties for 2005/2006.

There are other positive developments in South Donegal. Ballyshannon, Ireland's 'oldest town' has been a traffic bottleneck for years, its old stone bridge being the only route between Donegal and the rest of the Republic. This is set to change with a new by-pass under construction. The dramatic new bridge taking shape reflects the strong cross-border element of Atlantic View CDP's work and will also divert the heavy traffic that rumbles now right past the new front door.

EARS to disability equality training!

The Programme's Equality and Anti-Racism Subcommittee (EARS) will be running training events over the next year that are open to all projects. Staff and volunteers are welcome along to find out more about equality issues and EARS.

One such training event is 'Disability Equality Training Using Forum Theatre' facilitated by Disability Awareness North East, on June 8th, in the Equality Authority offices in Dublin.

The EARS subcommittee meets every two months and new members are welcome. EARS aims to facilitate the inclusion of Anti-Racism and Equality issues on the agendas of CDPs and Family Resource Centres (FRCs).

EARS has concentrated on three areas: Anti-Racism, Sexual Orientation and Disability. Many of the projects will be familiar with the various publications and initiatives undertaken by the subcommittee over the past number of years. Examples of work undertaken include:

- An Anti-Racism Code of Practice;
- Anti-Racism Information Pack;
- Anti-Racism Round Table discussion;
- North East Strategy on sexual orientation;
- Strategy day on Disability.

'EARS' STRADDLES TWO PROGRAMMES

EARS is made up of a number of different people from the Community Development Programme and the Family & Community Services Resource Centre Programme. Membership comprises representatives from CDPs, FRCs, Support Agencies (both Regional and Specialist), the Family Support Agency, the National Advisory Committee and representatives from other groups from outside the above programmes who have an interest or expertise in Equality and Anti-Racism issues.

ADVANCING THE EQUALITY AGENDA

"Most of us would agree that working from an equality perspective forms the heart of the community development ethos and, for many workers within the sector, it was the very impetus that brought them into this field of work," said EARS in a statement.

"EARS has a central role to play as it facilitates a unified approach to equality issues within the two programmes and is working to advance the equality agenda at a broader level," they added.

For more information, contact: Eileen Carroll, DESSA, Fumbally Court, Fumbally Lane, Dublin 8. Tel. 01-416-3548. E-mail: ecarroll@deessa.ie

Should Counselling and Community Development really go together?

"There is a growing tendency in society to focus on the role of the individual person rather than the role of society in creating conditions that lead to inequality and poverty. The growth of the counselling/psychotherapy industry is testimony to this," argues Pádraig Kelly, a development worker with West Training Support Agency.

His highlighting of the flaws inherent in accepting counselling as the answer to society's woes are very pertinent at a time when society has finally recognised that suicide is as big a killer of young people as are road accidents. Before we jump on the 'counselling' bankwagon, Pádraig reminds us to remember that community development has as great, if not a greater role, to play. He writes in a personal capacity:



I AM CONCERNED at the vigour with which I perceive the Community Development sector is embracing, without question, a counselling approach to human and social betterment. Some community development workers would say they counsel people as part of their work. Community development workers actively seek funding for counselling in their catchment areas.

Counselling is increasingly regarded as an important component of the work of community workers. People are referred from the sector for counselling. However, we need to question the relationship between counselling and community development.

There are two areas of particular concern. One is how our society addresses social factors leading to exclusion and disadvantage, the other is the basis of the relationship between people in situations of disadvantage and exclusion and those who work with them.

There is a growing tendency in society to focus on the role of the individual person rather than the role of society in creating conditions that lead to inequality and poverty. The growth of the counselling/psychotherapy industry is testimony to this.

Do we know what it is about conditions in society that so many people are in such a state they have to resort to finding a professional to whom they pour out their intimate details, and pay him or her a hefty fee to listen, give them feedback, care for and affirm them?

COUNSELLING AS COLLUSION

It needs to be acknowledged more often that many problems are primarily social, political and economic. People are very often victims of wider social forces. Counselling may not be the best way of tackling such problems. By focusing on individuals, it may actually be colluding in the support of a wider status quo that is unequal, exclusive and unjust.

Community development is about power. It seeks to transform the practice whereby the all-powerful, all-knowing service-provider treats the client as passive and powerless. Community development acknowledges the ability and skills of those it works with to define their needs and act collectively for change. Services based on the traditional power relationship between the service and the client will always be a legitimate target for community development as it seeks to bring about greater inclusion.

And, power is not equal in the counselling relationship. The client is passive and vulnerable in the presence of the professional counsellor that society often endows with magical curative powers and 'mind reading' abilities.

My understanding of the Counselling Process is that the ultimate benefit is claimed to derive from the client/counsellor relationship. It is the personal qualities of the Counsellor in the relationship that lead to therapy for the client. The Counsellor has the expert power in which he/she displays knowledge of the human soul and psyche, an emotional maturity, a genuine regard and care for the client and is empathic and empowering. A relationship with a person of such qualities is therapeutic for the client.

Counselling is based on the premise that Counsellors possess these admirable human qualities. Some Counsellors do, but can a whole profession base itself on the possession of these, often too rare human virtues? It would be consoling to us all to believe this as we are all inspired by people of good character.

If simple things such as listening, feedback and helping become the realm of 'experts' or 'professionals', then this development has huge implications for our society. It means normal human interactions such as listening and feedback have become professional skills that can be bought and sold, packaged as counselling. The professionalisation of human interaction is adding further to feelings of powerlessness among people in

situations of disadvantage and inequality.

The argument is often made that in a perfect society there would not be a need for counselling. However, society is not perfect and we do need Counselling to fill a void. But are we accepting too readily the Counselling approach, referring people to Counselling and that's it?

We need in the sector to always keep the 'community' in 'community' development. Mutual support groups (AA, Gingerbread, GROW, AWARE) are 'mini-communities' where the relationship between each person attending is equal and people share common experiences. As there is no question of fees with these support groups, access is available to all. The characteristics of mutual support groups are similar to the characteristics of community development.

FISHING CAN BE THERAPEUTIC

I believe nothing and no one is intrinsically therapeutic. A person and an activity can be therapeutic when the time, place and other ingredients are right. Talking can be therapeutic but so also can walking, socialising, fishing, sports and hobbies. Are we losing sight of the benefit of these therapies and the fact that we all have the power to heal (or harm) and can do so in a community setting?

To sum up, Counselling is reflective of the way society can divest itself of responsibility in recognising and dealing with social problems and inequalities. Counselling deals with the effects of this failure on individuals in a service provider - client relationship that further reflects a belief that the client is responsible for his/her condition.

Counselling is a reflection of society's belief that a profession can provide people of such power and virtue that those in need of 'therapy' will be provided for. In our role of collective transformation, community development has to actively challenge such power relationships wherever it finds them.

CWC works on despite funding cut

THE Community Workers Co-operative will continue to function despite a €150,000 cut in core-funding by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

There was uproar in the community sector after the cut was announced in the run-up to Christmas. It took effect in April. However, not all the CWC's funding comes from the Department and the CWC - which has a large membership base - will continue to operate, albeit at a reduced capacity.

Many, though by no means all, paid workers in the Community Development Programme are members of the CWC.

The rationale given by Minister of State, Noel Ahern, for the cut was that, "...in the context of the focusing of my Department's resources on disadvantaged, I believe that the continued funding of the CWC could not be justified... The CWC differ from other groups funded under the National Anti-Poverty Network in that those other groups, in the main, deal with specific target groups."

In a reply to Dail questions, he said, "the Community Workers Co-operative falls short of the standards of the White Paper that each network should have a membership base which ensures the voice of disadvantaged marginalised groups will find expression in relevant national fora and that individual networks should be genuinely representative



and avoid unnecessary overlaps vis-à-vis each other."

Reacting to the Ministers decision, Helen Johnston, Director of the Combat Poverty Agency, said, "The CWC has been to the forefront in supporting the development of an independent voice for people who are excluded. It has played an essential role in the provision of information and resource guides on anti-poverty policy development and provided support to the most marginalised communities".

Founded in 1981 to promote social

inclusion, equality and social justice, the CWC received core funding from the government since 1993. The CWC supports local and national groups in their fight against inequality, enabling them to be more effective in dealing with government policy. It regularly publishes heavily researched documents and reports.

Last year, for example, the CWC produced a report, which included the voices of CDPs, on 'Endorsement of Community Development Project Plans by City and County Development Boards'. The CWC, in this and other reports, was often highly critical of government policies.

The CWC also coordinates the Community Platform (a network of 25 national anti-poverty and equality organisations) that refused to endorse the last 'Sustaining Progress' national agreement.

Reacting to the cut, the CWC termed it "a sinister move to silence an effective critical voice" and campaigned strongly, though ultimately without success, for funding to be reinstated.

Around 15 CDPs and Support Agencies signed an online petition to An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern seeking the restoration of funding to the CDP. Others petitioned TDs, raised the matter with local media and joined the campaign in different ways.

In memory of a CDP volunteer

The President, Mary McAleese, visited Limerick recently and planted a tree in the grounds of the Community Enterprise Centre in Moyross in memory of the late Geraldine O'Brien.

Geraldine was a worker with the Moyross Residents Forum and a volunteer on the Community Development Network Moyross (CDP). The ceremony was attended by members of Geraldine's family, former colleagues, community leaders and residents' forum members.



185 projects in Programme

To ensure there is no confusion over the number of CDPs in the Programme, the number currently stands at 185. An inaccurate figure was published in the last edition.

Clondalkin's Multi-Sensory Room

The Multi-sensory room featured in the Winter Edition of 'Changing Ireland' is actually based in a local school, St. Mary's Junior School, Rowlagh, Clondalkin, and not in a community centre as reported. The Multi-sensory room is funded by the Get Ahead Club, based in Neilstown Clondalkin.

Tralee Chairperson

Kathleen Higgins is the chairperson of Tralee CDP. Her name was omitted in a recent report.



is for valuing volunteering

ALLEN MEAGHER reports

THERE are over 1000 volunteers working in the Community Development Programme. Their work is spread across the Republic as they manage the operations of CDPs in our cities, towns, some rural areas and English-speaking islands.

Most of 'Changing Ireland's readers are volunteers or work with volunteers. In this Special Focus on Volunteering, 'Changing Ireland' takes an in-depth look at volunteering in the community today.

We ask should volunteers be paid? Are they happy? We look at the spreading popularity of Volunteer Packs. There is even a special report on 'How NOT to do it!'

In particular, we examine issues raised by a recent parliamentary committee report titled 'Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland'.

Volunteers need support and this has been recognised time and again. Otherwise, we face a decline in the number of people becoming volunteers.

The latest political initiative to promote volunteering and the need for a 'volunteering infrastructure' in this country came in January from the Dail Joint Committee.

In a move designed to wake the Department of Finance from its slumber, the Joint Committee did its best to place a monetary value on volunteer's input into the Irish economy. Amazingly, it is worth nearly half a billion euro annually.

Furthermore, they estimated there are up to 475,000 people

engaged to a greater or lesser extent in volunteering today in Ireland.

In that context, the CDP volunteers account for less than 1% of the total. Without them, however, a crucial Programme charged with tackling the causes and the effects of social exclusion and poverty in communities throughout the country would collapse.

The Joint committee recommended 14 changes to the current system and it seems the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRGA) are responding to the calls, in part anyway. They are investing €2 million over the next three years in promoting and strengthening volunteering.

Everyone from CDP volunteers to GAA volunteers to VdeP volunteers need a proper support structure. The DCRGA's funding announcement may signal a new beginning, whereby recommendations become reality rather than remaining topics for discussion among the experts. Time will tell.

While €2 million is better than more talk, a sector that is worth up to €485 million per annum to the economy deserves serious recognition by government. The two million starts to look small when put alongside the near €1.5 billion that volunteers should be worth to the economy over the three years the two million is invested in encouraging volunteer activity. Nonetheless, it is a start in the right direction. And now is the time for volunteers to invest time and energy into encouraging the politicians to do even more.

Value of volunteer work in Ireland = €485m

- but volunteer numbers are dropping

DESPITE our riches, Ireland, according to the United Nations, has the second largest income gap between rich and poor for a developed country. The worst offender is the United States. No surprise then perhaps that people in the community and voluntary sector are suffering from low morale.

Morale would undoubtedly be higher if past government recommendations had been acted upon. In 2000, a much-anticipated government 'White Paper' for the voluntary sector was published and, later, a special report on volunteering called 'Tipping the Balance' was launched. Both documents made many recommendations for change. However, many in the community/voluntary sector feel that "nothing has changed". Meanwhile, volunteer numbers are dropping, due to this and other reasons.

The situation was highlighted yet again, this year, by the Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (made up of government and opposition members of the Oireachtas). The Joint Committee published a report in January titled 'Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland'. The report draws on the experience of 21 voluntary organisations and the

committee strongly recommends that a clear strategy on volunteering be devised.

The Joint Committee struck a positive note by putting an economic value on the work done by volunteers in this country, of whom there are an estimated 475,000 people. Together, their contributions' worth to the economy lies somewhere between a low estimate of €204 million and a high estimate of €485 million. At the upper amount, each volunteer's contribution is worth around €1000 per year to the country.

The report states: "To put these figures into context, it is useful to mention that the DCRGA's expenditure on Community Affairs for 2005 will be around €133 million, and it will spend €63 million on Rural Affairs. Together, these two items account for 96% of the low scenario replacement costs of volunteering in Ireland (40% of the high scenario). Thus, if volunteers would have to be paid, this expenditure would - at a minimum - have to be doubled (low scenario), just to pay for the wages of the replacements of the volunteers."

The Joint Committee "felt the need to advance 'economic' arguments for the

support of volunteering given the perceived costs to the Exchequer (of providing this support)." In an era of decline for volunteering, it seems most evident that the more the State pumps into supporting volunteering the better in the long-run.

In this regard, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs made a start to funding a support structure for volunteers with the announcement in March by Minister of State, Noel Ahern, that €2 million is about to be invested in measures to strengthen and support volunteering.

This means that, despite a long wait, at least some of the recommendations on volunteering in Ireland are now going to be put into practice. The Joint Committee echoed the views expressed in the White Paper in 2000 and in a preceding report.

Minister Ahern paid tribute, when announcing the €2 million investment, to the work of the Joint Committee. Details on the expenditure are explained in a separate article.



What motivates people to volunteer?

VOLUNTEERS' motivating reasons are not always clear-cut. Research by an Irish volunteer agency in the 1990s found that women overwhelmingly volunteered to work overseas because they "wanted to help". Meanwhile, a substantial proportion of volunteers (particularly males) chose aid work because they "wanted to travel and experience a different culture."

The motivation to volunteer is more often than not a mixture of things, as the Joint Committee have also discovered during the course of their work.

Surveys which the committee commissioned in the late '90s found that the altruistic motive was the strongest among volunteers. This means they believe in a cause and wanted to help/be neighbourly. At the same time, 10% linked their volunteering to knowing/liking other people who were already involved in the organisation. And 7% volunteered because they enjoyed the activity they volunteered for. Sometimes, a person's primary reason for volunteering can be simply to gain work experience and learn new skills.

When someone engages in volunteer work, obviously it should be of help to the community or target group, but it also usually has positive effects on the volunteer. Volunteers can be motivated by wanting to help, or to gain something themselves, or for a third reason - a combination of the above. No matter, so long as they get their work done.



Volunteers are NOT always wanted

FOLLOWING President George W. Bush's call, in 2002, to Americans to devote more time (two years of their lifetimes) to volunteer service, the U.S.'s voluntary and community sector expressed doubts as to whether they could absorb any huge influx of new volunteers.

Much as they subscribed to the value and ethic of volunteering, organisations would be swamped if too many volunteers came knocking on the same day. The sector feared that it would not be able to provide the staff and resources necessary to train and supervise large numbers of additional voluntary workers.

In Ireland, it is no different, and the fact that taking on volunteers costs an organisation money and resources was recognised by the Joint Committee. It was raised as an issue by many of the organisations who made submissions.

On average, around €230 is spent on supporting the average Irish volunteer. The cost therefore for supporting all the volunteers in the republic would be between €3.45 million and €4.37 million. This money comes from the pockets of the volunteer organisations, which goes a long way to explaining why people wanting to become volunteers often find it is not as easy as they thought to find an organisation wishing to take them on and avail of their services.

It is a cruel fact, volunteers are not always wanted. Not when the costs of training, supervision and support are beyond the organisation's capacity.

Economy's 'third sector' ignored

ECONOMISTS tend to study mainly the private, profit-oriented sector and the public sector. They pay far less attention to the 'third sector', which is the voluntary, not-for profit sector of the economy. So, while there is plenty research on the 'third sector' from the viewpoint of political science, sociology and social politics, there are few theories from the economic viewpoint. This deficit of understanding of the economics of the 'third sector' affects our knowledge of the effects of volunteering.

In their report, the TDs and Senators on the Joint Committee called "urgently" for further research into volunteering in Ireland. The scarcity of studies made the committee's job difficult. For example, in attempting to measure the economic value of volunteering in Ireland, the Joint Committee found: "The economic benefit of the work done by volunteers in Ireland is very hard to pin down. Firstly, we do not really know how any volunteers there are in the country and how involved they are with respect to time input."

For this reason, there was considerable variation in the estimated economic value of volunteering in Ireland (varying from a low of €204 million to a high of €485 million).

21 organisations had their say

THE 21 voluntary organisations who made submissions included long established social-service charities, sporting bodies, the Special Olympics, community organisations working on a parish level and overseas aid organisations. The organisations (who, the report-authors noted, are often in competition with each other) all had plenty to say.

Volunteering must, argued the volunteer organisations, be: supported, regulated and promoted. Volunteers must also be protected more and the image of volunteering needs to

be boosted. These issues and the overriding issue of the implementation of a national policy on volunteering arose in almost all submissions and presentations.

Despite there being over a thousand volunteers active in Ireland's 185 CDPs, the Community Development Programme did not make a submission. It is a Programme rather than a voluntary organisation and there is no national executive to speak on behalf of the projects.



Is it time to start paying volunteers?

People who work as volunteers in their community deserve some reward. The reward may be intangible - they may see a neighbour's quality of life improve, witness the pride in an area increase, experience a greater sense of belonging within their community. But, perhaps that is not enough. Volunteer numbers are falling and volunteers need more encouragement. So, should volunteers be paid for the work they do?

'No!' says one volunteer from Limerick, Deirdre O'Driscoll, chairperson of the Community Development Network Moyross. She believes it is more important that volunteers' expenses are paid. However, when Nick Murphy in Dublin put the question to community workers there, the reaction was mixed.

By NICK MURPHY

NO! YOU CANNOT PAY 'VOLUNTEERS'

"You can't pay volunteers!" retorts Deirdre O'Driscoll. "We do put in a lot of time and a lot of effort, but if you pay us, then you can't call us 'volunteers'. At the same time, I believe all volunteers must be paid for out-of-pocket expenses. For example, if I take a day off work to do volunteer training, I'm down a day's pay. That should be paid, we should never be out-of-pocket for being volunteers.

Instead of paying volunteers, an idea would be to offer scholarships to volunteers wishing to study community development. By the way, volunteering can lead to paid work anyway - you might get employment in the community sector after being a volunteer. But the whole point of being a volunteer, while you are one, is that you don't get paid."

YES! IF YOU WANT WORK DONE, YOU PAY FOR IT

Community Employment supervisor, Frank Rock, who works with Fatima Groups United, a CDP on the southside of Dublin, points out that volunteers are in short supply: "There are less volunteers now and the opportunities for people to earn money are increasing. If you want a piece of work done you have to pay for it."

NO! VOLUNTEERING CAN LEAD TO A PAID JOB

Tina Joyce is a development worker with Blakestown CDP, another Dublin project, and she has served her time as a volunteer and found the experience useful when it came to moving on.

"Volunteer work gives great experience, it helps to develop skills. I found aspects of my volunteer experience relevant to my new job as a development worker," she said.

Tina notes that, since she left, her previous



Deirdre O'Driscoll, CDP volunteer.

project now has one volunteer less and points out that it depends entirely on volunteers.

NO! FUNDING FOR THE PROJECT IS ENOUGH

The demands placed on the volunteer can sometimes be out of proportion to the amount of time they can give. Tom Toner who works with a C.E. project attached to Blanchardstown CDP feels that management committees can sometimes be required to meet a vast amount of commitments.

He said that while government departments are entitled to seek accountability from management committees, the reporting procedures and so on can be very time-consuming for voluntary members.

"A Project should be given a budget for a year and their work examined at the end of the year," he said. "If they did a good job their funding should be continued and if not that should be addressed."

YES! GIVE THEM A SMALL PAYMENT

John Murphy, co-ordinator of Ballymun Men's Centre, a CDP in north Dublin, believes a small payment should be made in recognition of a volunteer's input. He sees people doing great work on the ground because they see a need.

"Many volunteers have the time to get involved because they are unemployed or in ill health. They do it for the love of it but their input should be valued," he said, pointing out:

"I've seen some volunteers put in more hours than paid staff going to meetings and organising things. I think there could be a small payment which would not affect their benefit but would acknowledge their input."

John argues that sometimes a volunteer, who is making a huge contribution, is forced by financial considerations to take a low paid job with no prospects which then interferes with their volunteering. "We need a system to support such people to continue the good work they are doing," he argued.

NO! MONEY IS NOT THE ISSUE

Another paid worker, Jennifer Flynn, the newly-appointed co-ordinator of South Inner City Community Development Association (SICCCA) believes money is not the main issue for volunteers. She gained much experience of volunteers and their problems in her previous job working with a charity with a large volunteer base.

Jennifer has seen a number of volunteers move into Community Employment or Jobs Initiative positions as well as mainstream employment.

"If someone is being paid you have to ask, 'Are they here for the money or the love?' Does paying someone undermine their commitment?" she asked.

"There are plenty of legitimate reasons why a volunteer might prefer to be employed to do the same job which have nothing to do with getting a volunteer payment. For instance, moving into a work relationship can be empowering. Also, for example, it becomes easier to say 'No' if a new duty is suggested. And it is obvious that the person is valued if they are employed. It's more of a respect thing."

Note: The people quoted in this report are speaking as individuals and not on behalf of their projects. If you have a strong view on this or any other subject relating to volunteering and the Community Development Programme, write to 'Changing Ireland'.



Why bother volunteering? Here's why!

Did you ever ask yourself why there even are volunteers? Have you ever strongly felt 'The government should be providing such-and-such a service' when in fact volunteers provide it? Have you ever had reason to question the motivation behind an organisation becoming involved in volunteer/charity work? Are you glad of, or suspicious of, government support for volunteer groups?

DKM Economic Consultants, the authors of the Joint Committee's report on volunteers and volunteering carried out a review of international literature regarding volunteering and highlighted work by two academics, Roy and Ziemek. They suggested there were four main economic theories for why volunteering takes place in society. For the record, here they are:

- **Demand-side theory** - This links the existence of voluntary organisations to demand for public goods that are not met by the State or the private sector.
- **Supply-side theory** - This explains the growth of agencies committed to supplying public goods that are not delivered by other sectors. However, there may be a self-serving motivation behind this action, for example in the case of religious organisations that hope to win adherents to their faith through the provision of services.
- **Partnership theory** - This argues against the competitive relationship between the State and the voluntary sector. The voluntary sector is not seen as an alternative to State provision of public goods, but the two may complement each other. Thus the State generates resources which are deployed in conjunction with the voluntary organisations' ability to respond to local needs.
- **The social origin approach** - This explains the growth of voluntary organisations in the context of the social, economic and political dynamics of a society. They state that vibrant voluntary organisations are a reflection of the strength of the middle class and a weakening of the old elites.



Minister of State Noel Ahern has announced new funding supports for volunteering.

Ahern commits almost €2m to supporting volunteers

"OUR policies on volunteering must go to the very heart of our vision of how Irish society should develop over the coming years," asserted Minister of State, Noel Ahern, recently. He was announcing a number of initiatives - funded to the tune of almost €2million - that are designed to boost volunteering in Ireland.

The money will be spent over three years to:

- strengthen existing volunteering infrastructure,
- develop and expand volunteering infrastructure at local and community level,
- promote volunteering among young people in second and third level,
- support the development of an authoritative code of best practice for volunteering,
- develop reliable data with regard to volunteering to inform further initiatives, focus strategies and maximise criteria.

€500,000 of the Departments Cohesion Fund will be spent on measures that will promote volunteers and volunteering locally. Under this arrangement, proposals will be co-ordinated by City and County Development Boards. (Of note, the Cohesion Fund came about as a result of a tri-Ministerial - and sometimes unpopular - review of local and community development structures which began in 2003).

Another **€500,000 - of local area partnership funding - has been ring-fenced** for measures that encourage volunteers and volunteering. Each local area partnership company, if they are not doing so already, will be asked to develop measures at a local level.

Measures that involve more than one local or community agency will be particularly welcomed. The overall aim of this investment is to formalise the existing network of local and

community development groups in supporting volunteers and volunteering.

In addition, **volunteer bureaux in Tallaght, Newbridge, Bray, Tralee, Cork, Ballyfermot and Drogheda will be funded for the next three years (€578,000 per annum).** All are members of Volunteer Centres Ireland, which is also to receive **€50,000 per annum for three years to employ a development officer.** The development officer will draw up, in consultation with various players across the sector, a code of practice for volunteers and volunteering. S/he will also develop up-to-date statistics on volunteering from existing databases.

Two separate measures designed to promote volunteering among young people will also be supported:

The Young Social Innovators Initiative will get transition year students across the country to engage in mini-development projects. €200,000 will be provided to support this programme annually over the next three years. It will include 'Annual Showcase' awards.

Meanwhile, at third level, students in one college in particular stand to benefit. The **Dublin Institute of Technology's 'Community Learning Programme'** will receive up to €110,000 annually. This programme features a new teaching method called 'service-learning' and it works by integrating classroom learning in any subject with suitable volunteering activity.

In announcing the various measures, Minister of State Ahern said the ultimate aim of a policy on volunteering is to inspire people to participate in the development of their communities. He said the necessary supports must be put in place to turn that inspiration into action.



Research, promote and invest in the future

- Joint Committee's recommendations

IN all, 14 recommendations were made by the Joint Committee in their report 'Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland'. Most were concerned with volunteering policy. The recommendations that specifically involve the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRGA), are printed below in bold type. It is worth noting also that quite a number of the following recommendations were taken into account by the Department in their recent announcement of a €2 million investment in volunteering.

VOLUNTEERING POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Research** into volunteering in Ireland needs to be undertaken urgently.
- The DCRGA should launch a national campaign to promote volunteering and its positive effects, especially appealing to young people to come forward and demonstrating the potential benefits to business.
- **Academic accreditation** for long-term volunteers should be advanced.
- The State should give financial incentives to organisations which can show that they have the proper **volunteer management structures** in place.
- Action should be taken in the education sector at secondary and third-level to **promote volunteering among young people**. For example, Transition Year should strongly promote volunteering projects.
- Voluntary organisations should propose **volunteer recognition schemes** to be funded by the state.
- A **national volunteering passport** would provide a useful record of voluntary activity and would be beneficial at job interviews.

- A comprehensive **vetting procedure for volunteers**, particularly for those working with children and vulnerable adults, should be given priority.

VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The existing volunteering infrastructure should be developed. Volunteering Ireland and existing Volunteering Centres/Bureaux should be supported and granted long-term funding.
- Invest in the training of **volunteer managers**.
- Organisations such as Business in the Community provide a vital new impetus on the volunteering scene in Ireland and should be facilitated in every way possible.

FUNDING ISSUES RECOMMENDATIONS:

- New sources of funding for volunteering should be explored: eg the Dormant Accounts Fund. Also, the ring-fencing of some funds collected by the Criminal Assets Bureau could be spent in communities particularly those afflicted by gang-crime.
- **Ad-hoc and multi-agency funding make it difficult for organisations to plan ahead.** All funding for voluntary organisations and volunteering should in future be channeled exclusively through the DCRGA. This would improve efficiency and transparency. Funding commitments should be entered into over a number of years. In this way the monitoring of State expenditure would also be facilitated.
- Grants for the in-service training of volunteers should be made available from the State and be **ringfenced** so that they cannot be used for other services within the organisation.



The Merrion Street entrance to Leinster House.

Joint Committee membership

THE members of the Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs who produced the report on 'Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland' in January were as follows.

Deputies:

James Breen (Ind)
Michael Collins (Ind)
Jimmy Deenihan (FG)
Jim Glennon (FF) (Committee Vice-Chairman)
Cecilia Keaveney (FF) (Committee Chairman)
Peter Kelly (FF)
Dinny McGinley (FG)
Fiona O'Malley (PD)
Brian O'Shea (Lab)
Jack Wall (Lab)
G.V.Wright (FF)

Senators:

Brendan Daly (FF)
Frank Feighan (FG)
Joe McHugh (FG)
Labhrás Ó Murchú (FF)
Joe O'Toole (Ind)
Kieran Phelan (FF)

To read the full report

Copies of the report are available on the government website: www.irlgov.ie The report includes summaries of the contributions made by the voluntary groups that appeared before the Joint Committee and makes for an interesting and thought-provoking and possibly maddening read. In many cases, the issues raised in the report mirror the topics covered by "Tipping the Balance" which shows how little progress

there has been since the late '90s on promoting volunteering in Ireland. For further background reading, consult the "White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector" published in 2000 and also available on the government website.



'Volunteer Pack' idea spreading through Ireland

AS maps guide hill-walkers, and Che Guevara and Paulo Freire inspire revolutionaries, 'Volunteer Packs' are now informing and encouraging volunteers engaged in community development.

Still now, people are sometimes put off volunteering to join local CDPs and Family Resource Centres because they need to develop a basic understanding of employment legislation, finance, management and government funding. However, this hurdle has been largely removed for people considering volunteering in the West, and more recently in the South and Mid-West. The problem has been overcome thanks to the wealth of information provided in Volunteer Packs.

What began as a phenomena among community projects in the West Region has spread to the Mid-West and South and it should not be long before project volunteers nationwide have access to Volunteer Packs. The first pack was launched in Galway in November '03 and, late last year, a Volunteer Pack geared towards projects in the South and Mid-West Region was launched.

Currently, West Training Support Agency, which pioneered the pack in consultation with local project volunteers, is in negotiation with

the Family Support Agency about the idea of publishing the pack for nationwide distribution.

ANY VOLUNTEER COULD USE IT

While designed for volunteers in two government-funded programmes (the Community Development Programme and the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme) the packs are versatile enough to be adjusted for use by any local project or national organisation.

As Breda Lymer, West Training co-ordinator, said: "It is a very adaptable pack for volunteers anywhere in Ireland and for volunteers generally in the community development sector. What we like about the Volunteer Pack is that you can personalise it, for example with photographs of volunteers from your region and with stories telling of local volunteers' experiences."

Sales of the pack by the South & Mid West Community Development Support Agency (S&MWCDISA) show there is plenty demand for such a guide. According to policy worker, Veronica McNamara, there is as much demand from outside organisations as from projects within the two programmes the pack was designed around.

The spreading popularity of Volunteer Packs means that the long-desired wishes of volunteers in Ireland to have a written guide to support them in their work are being fulfilled.

BACKGROUND TO MID-WEST LAUNCH

The launch, some months back, of the pack in counties Kerry, Cork, Limerick, Clare and in South Tipperary (the South and Mid-West Region) came about as follows:

In October 2001, around 50 volunteers came together in the Mid-West Region to make a submission to the National Committee on Volunteering regarding what they saw as the key supports required to maintain, encourage and support volunteerism in Ireland. A key recommendation in this submission was that adequate information be provided for volunteers involved in various programmes in the community and voluntary sector. They should be fully aware of what is required of them in their capacity as a volunteer particularly on management committees.

To fulfil this recommendation in the Mid-West Region, Our Lady of Lourdes CDP was nominated regionally to work with the S&MWCDISA on the development of an information and resource pack for volunteers in the two afore-mentioned programmes. Subsequently the Support Agency and local volunteers spent over two years developing and piloting information for the pack, then Comhairle agreed to fund the publication.

West Training and Development Support Agency and community projects in the West were also working on an information and resource pack so, rather than duplicate this work, the S&MWCDISA and Our Lady of Lourdes CDP linked up with West Training and with agreement from them were able to include specific pieces of information and adapt their pack to suit the needs of the Mid West region.

This was a great success and gave people a lot of confidence in the pack as it meant that two regions were now working from the same pack, hence providing consistent information and opportunities to volunteers throughout their induction process.

As a follow on to the Volunteer Pack, research on volunteering will be conducted by the S&MWCDISA later this year through funding from Comhairle.



The Volunteer Pack for projects in the South and Mid-West Region was launched in Our Lady of Lourdes (OLOL) CDP, Limerick, by Helen Flanagan, a volunteer on the management committee of St. Mary's CDP in Limerick City. L to R: John Thompson (OLOL), Billy Phillips (OLOL), Majella Cosgrove South & Mid West Community Development Support Agency (S&MWCDISA), Helen Flanagan (St. Mary's CDP), Veronica McNamara (S&MWCDISA), Ann Bourke (OLOL).

What does a volunteer need to know?

Trained and experienced volunteers know best what information they need to get through their work. They were at the core of the work in developing the comprehensive information pack. The following are the contents of the Volunteer Pack (produced by the Support Agency and CDPs in the South and Mid-West, in conjunction with West Training and projects in that region):

- An Introduction to the Community Development and Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programmes;
- Questions, motivations and experiences of Volunteering;
- Voluntary Management Committees including management structures and the roles and responsibilities of committee members;
- Supports available for volunteers within each of the programmes;
- The legal obligations of a voluntary management committee;
- Employment Legislation;
- Internal policies and procedures within your project;
- The links between Volunteering and National policy;
- Evaluating your work as a volunteer and
- Sample policies and claim forms.

Q&A about the Pack

WEST Training and projects in the West have been working with the Volunteer Pack since it was launched there in 2003 and hundreds of packs have been distributed. Every volunteer in the West has received the pack and new volunteers are issued with one when they join a CDP or FRC.

The Volunteer Pack is new to the South & Mid-West Region and the response has been very enthusiastic so far. The pack will be utilised along side a series of PowerPoint presentations when inducting and recruiting new members onto management committees. Here follow a few questions and answers regarding cost, distribution and feedback in the South & Mid-West:

How much is the pack? Including post and packaging?

Each pack from the S&MWSA costs €26 including posting.

How many enquiries to date?

21 from projects within the two programmes, roughly 10-15 from other organisations

Any from outside the region?

Yes from the eastern region. And from Cork and Kerry Projects (which are new to the extended region).

Any feedback/compliments/examples of it being put into use?

A lot of projects are finding the pack particularly useful for induction of new management committee members and also in the development of volunteer policies.

Who is the contact for anyone in the South & Mid-West wishing to purchase a volunteer pack?

Ann Bourke, Our Lady of Lourdes CDP (Tel. 061-318370) or Veronica McNamara at the Support Agency (Tel. 061-225711).

CDP volunteer is national chairperson

KERRY activist, Joan Courtney, has been appointed the National Chairperson of OPEN – the One Parent Exchange and Network – an umbrella body that represents almost 80 one-parent family groups spread around the country. Joan has much experience in voluntary work, yet this will be her greatest challenge to date.

Joan is involved in two CDPs in Tralee – she works with Tralee Women's Resource Centre as a support worker to women affected by domestic violence and she is a voluntary management member of Tralee CDP. She is also involved as a volunteer in the latter CDP's sub-group for teenager members of one-parent families. Last but not least, she recently joined 'Changing Ireland's team of reporters (and has written a number of articles in this issue).

In her leadership role with OPEN, Joan will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the organisation's new Strategic Action Plan 2005 – 2007. This plan was drawn up after extensive consultation with member groups and other interested stakeholders.

Among the key objectives is a brand new training programme that will develop the strength and capacity of groups around the country while also giving lone-parents an accredited qualification.

BRUSSELS EXPERIENCE

The recent appointment to OPEN brings opportunities for work at both national and European level. Joan has already been to



CDP worker and volunteer Joan Courtney is the new national chairperson of OPEN.

Brussels last year as part of a team representing the needs of Irish one-parent families living in poverty.

Joan will be joined by another Tralee CDP volunteer colleague, Bernie Moore, on the board of OPEN. The two Kerry activists will work on behalf of one-parent families at

national level to ensure that government adopts policies and practices that support lone parents and their children to continue to make a positive contribution to Irish society.

OPEN is a national anti-poverty network and was established in 1994. The role of the organisation is to provide information, training and support for its local member groups and to campaign for policy change that recognises family diversity, supports economic independence and improves the quality of life for one-parent families. OPEN is a member of the European Network of One Parent Families.

LOCAL WISDOM

Locally, Joan's work with Tralee CDP's group for teenagers in one-parent families included producing an action research document titled 'Local Needs Local Action'. The document explored the lived experience of one-parent families in the greater Tralee area.

A number of the report's recommendations have since been implemented, much to the benefit of local families. For example, a FAS back-to-work programme was wisely based around school hours and the school calendar and, as a result, two people who did not have a Leaving Certificate went on to third level as mature students.

Now, Joan will have to channel her energies into promoting national policy reform and development. Not to mention continuing to report for 'Changing Ireland' in Cork and Kerry!



A new way of seeing Africa



Irish tried to dispel 'lazy' label

UGANDANS, at least in Mbula, have a more positive view of 'white' people since Philip Mudge visited. He is, incidentally, in his mid-30s, and writes:

"We learnt that many of the villagers had never spoken to white-skinned people before and were amazed that we would talk to them and shake their hands. We learnt that white people were considered to be lazy in Uganda but we discredited the stereotype by playing soccer against the local team in the heat of the tropical sun.

"A man said to me afterwards 'When I saw you old men running and playing soccer I was surprised because I thought all white people were lazy.'

The cheek of him, calling me 'old'!"

WHEREAS, in the past, only missionaries and development workers or volunteers from Ireland got to visit poor countries and experience life there, now this opportunity is open to many 'ordinary' people. With our high incomes and cheaper air fares, Irish communities are now reaching out in a way unimaginable only a few years ago. Where in the past, France was a faraway place, nowadays towns and villages in Ireland are organising twinning relationships with villages in Africa and elsewhere.

It is a new phenomena which has evolved quietly and without any national recognition, until now. Here, 'Changing Ireland' looks at a couple of the twinings. The first involves a CDP in Mayo, the second a Partnership Programme company in Munster. The former has built links over 14 years with a village health centre in Kenya, the latter are starting to build a relationship with a village community in Uganda and have a great emphasis on the notion of 'exchange'. In both cases, locals from Ireland have paid visits - wading through dangerous rivers in one case after a bridge collapsed - to visit their partners.

Move away from old model of

- Ugandan village hosts Irish community reps

By PHILIP MUDGE

PHILIP Mudge is a development worker attached to Ballyhoura Development Company, funded through the Partnership Programme. Previously, he worked in Limerick city as a RAPID co-ordinator working closely with CDPs on the city's northside and before that he was a volunteer in Botswana. Here he recounts his recent week-long visit to Mbula, a Ugandan village now twinning with communities in Cork and Limerick:

"I belong to a community group from Caherconlish in County Limerick who are twinning with the community in Mbula, a Kenyan village 300 kilometres and a long dusty drive from the capital. In February, ten of us from the communities of Caherconlish and Herbertstown in County Limerick and Mitchelstown and Charleville in County Cork, visited Mbula.

"The aim of the partnership project was to move away from the old idea of the developed world sending aid to the developing world and to build a new model of communities sharing ideas and learning from each other and then helping each other to meet development aims defined by their own community planning processes.

"After a nine hour flight from Heathrow, we set

off on the three-hour drive to Mbula and the further we went the more potholed the road got. We knew for the last stretch to the village that there was no road - local development workers just use scrambler motorbikes to get around.

"But, incredibly, the Mbulans widened a half-kilometre long footpath specially for us so our vehicles could pass, and decorated the new avenue with banana plants and bougainvillea. We felt very welcome.

"Since the purpose of our visit was to build relationships between our communities and the communities in Mbula, we brought information about our communities, photos and letters from the school, pictures of dairy farming in County Limerick. We also brought hurleys, sliotars and rugby balls so we could show them how to hurl and play rugby. It was especially interesting to compare and contrast their community-life and ours:

- We spent some days in the local school, listened to the 129 children in the senior infants class show off their near perfect English language skills. They were six years old and English was their third language.
- We also marvelled at the how their education system addresses issues such as relationships

and sexual health in an open and honest manner.

- We learnt that their parents associations and school boards of management were organised exactly as ours are in Ireland.
- The Ugandan teachers were amazed to learn that there are 89 children in my local school because they had more than 89 in each classroom.
- We met members of the Post-Test Club where people who have taken HIV tests offer each other mutual support and undertake community public awareness programmes on HIV/ Aids. According to government statistics, 17% of the population is HIV positive, yet according to non-governmental organisations it is actually about 30%.
- We learnt how the whole community supported by Plan Tororo became involved in their community planning process so that everyone knows and agrees on the community development priorities.
- The farmers in our group met and shared information with local farmers who couldn't believe that in Ireland we can get more milk from one cow in a day than they could get in a week.



The Kenyan-Clare Island connection

By ALLEN MEAGHER

THE CDP on Clare Island in County Mayo - known as Clare Island Community Co-op Ltd - is probably best known for twice-yearly hosting singles weekends that receive nationwide publicity. However, the community of 150 people have also been quietly nurturing a partnership with a Kenyan village that is as isolated by water as is Clare Island.

After 12 years of communication and cross-linking, Beth Moran and Oliver O'Malley of Clare Island visited the village, Nakwamoru, in Kenya's famous Rift Valley. A local bridge was down, but that didn't put them off - they were there to build new bridges of friendship.

That was two years ago. Currently, the Clare Island CDP are waiting to hear from the new managers of the village health clinic which the Irish have been helping to support. As with all long-distance relationships, there is sometimes a strain. But, the Clare Islanders are hopeful of remaining

involved, particularly Beth. Though she is no longer on the board of the CDP, she remains very interested in the island's connection with the Kenyan village, particularly the health clinic. Clare Islanders have helped pay for the roof and pay for medical supplies.

"The clinic is very important to the whole area," she said.

Kenya's total population dwarfs Ireland's at 31 million (1999 estimate), but the percentage of people with AIDS is over 15% and it has lowered average life expectancy, which stood (in 1999) at 47 years.

Beth said the trip "raised my awareness of a whole other world", though she wasn't surprised at the poverty. She had expected that.

"But I was surprised at the level of ignorance, as in superstitions. They keep old wives' tales close to their hearts. For example, they tie a woman by her hands and feet to a tree when she can't give birth.

"I wasn't really expecting that level of primitive belief. I found that very difficult and the treatment of women was difficult too. I'm not ignorant, I think those beliefs are primitive, maybe you think I am just narrow-minded," said Beth.

The gender-gap is wider in Kenya than in Ireland, certainly in literacy: While 86% of men can read and write, only 70% of women can (1995 est.)

"But there was an unexpected joy from the people that I didn't expect. They are a very joyful people. The noon-singing was elevating.

"And the people in Nakwamoru have huge potential. They are very intelligent, very quick to pick things up. For instance, people from the village attend agricultural college and learn about planting

new crops and bring those ideas back to the village to try them out," said Beth.

PURPOSE

"The purpose of our visit was to make personal contact with the people we were working with for 12 years - the medical professionals in the Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM) who ran the clinic.

"Once we made a personal link, it made everything different, not just for us, but for everyone on Clare Island. We held a slideshow and everyone feels they know the place now," added Beth.

"They have community meetings in Nakwamoru, but I don't know if they have a village council. Although of course we met plenty people from the village, it is hard to make personal contact with them, though we did a little exchange work in the local school," continued Beth.

"They knew nothing of us on Clare Island before our visit. After our visit, they might know something, maybe some of the students. But Clare Island is the least of their concerns."

Unfortunately, while Kenyans work at the clinic, the managers have always been foreign missionaries, to date.

And the Clare Island - Nakwamoru connection - via the health clinic - is currently under stress because of a changeover in management at the health clinic. The Irish sisters have handed the operation over to an order of Indian sisters who have yet to make contact with the Clare Island Community Co-operative.

"We are willing to continue the support, but it is largely up to them," noted Beth. She was hopeful: "In future, we hope to improve the links, maybe someone from Clare Island will go stay in the village for a while."

'helping'

"Finally, one afternoon, we went fishing. Fishing in Mbula involves the men of the village standing in a small pond up to their knees baling water out of the pond and pulling fish out of the mud with their bare hands. Sadly, there were only six fish caught to share out among five families that day.

"My challenge now is to share my enthusiasm for the project in my own community and see if my neighbours can be as excited as I am about my new friends. Our challenge will be to think of new and innovative ways to build the relationship between our community and Mbula and to continue to learn about each other so that both communities will become stronger."

Note: The twinning is being pursued by three groups - Mbula's community association, Ballyhoura Development Ltd, and Plan International (a development NGO) and it is being facilitated by Pat Gibbons of UCD's community development department.

• For more information, contact: Ballyhoura Development Ltd., Main St., Kilfinane, Co. Limerick. Tel. 063-91300. Fax: 063-91330. E-mail: info@ballyhoura.org Website: www.ballyhouracountry.com



An Irish based African drumming group on a visit to Clare Island, Co. Mayo.



So! Are Volunteers Happier?

VOLUNTEERS are either motivated because they enjoy helping others (called **intrinsic motivation**) or because they hope to grow as people and improve their social network through volunteering (**extrinsic motivation**). For most people, the benefits of volunteering will be a combination of the two.

Empirical studies have shown a positive statistical relationship between volunteering and life satisfaction. In a recent paper on the relationship between volunteering and life satisfaction, two researchers, Meier and Stutzer*, used the unique opportunity afforded by the fall of the Berlin Wall to compare data on volunteering in East Germany before and after German Reunification. Volunteering in the East was widespread before 1989, but reunion brought with it the closure of many companies (with their associated clubs for sport and diverse cultural activities). People randomly lost their opportunities for volunteering. The researchers focused their attention on people who continued to volunteer despite the new challenges and they found:

- After German reunion, satisfaction with life

in East Germany decreased for the average person. There was a remarkably similar fall in the level of life-satisfaction for those who had never volunteered as there was for those who did volunteer and continued to do so after reunification.

- However, people who had to drop their volunteering work reported the largest drop in life satisfaction.
- People who put more emphasis on extrinsic goals (rather than intrinsic goals) are less satisfied with life.
- Volunteers on average rated intrinsic goals (helping others) as more important than extrinsic goals (for themselves).
- People who were more extrinsically-oriented benefited less from volunteering than people who considered intrinsic goals more important.

Of course, causation could also run in the opposite direction: happier people might be more willing to help others through volunteering. Also, the act of volunteering may be intrinsically more rewarding, the better off one is in terms of happiness. However, these two directions are not

mutually contradictory.

The results reported by Meier and Stutzer are based on an extensive panel data set, the likes of which is not available to Irish researchers. However, it stands to reason that volunteers everywhere derive positive feedback from their efforts and that this in turn has a positive effect on their well-being and health.

Against that, some of the contributions to the hearings held by the Joint Committee mentioned that volunteers also suffered from rivalry and tension within organisations and endured the ill-effects of burn-out from being over-stretched and ill-supported.

* Meier S. and Stutzer A. (2004), 'Is Volunteering Rewarding in Itself?', Working Paper No. 180, Institute for Empirical Research in Economics, University of Zurich, Germany.

NOTE: The above article (with some editing) is taken from the report by the Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs on 'Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland'.

Management Tips on how NOT to do it!

VOLUNTARY management is becoming increasingly complex and demanding in today's world. Here, thanks to a contribution from a Tipperary reader, Nick Morrissey, we can provide some case-study examples that show how NOT to do it when confronted with a new challenge. The stories are claimed to be true.

Dealing with unforeseen losses

After stopping for drinks at an illegal bar, a Zimbabwean bus driver found that the 20 psychiatric patients he was supposed to be transporting from Harare to Bulawayo had escaped. Not wanting to admit his incompetence, the driver went to a nearby bus stop and offered everyone waiting there a free ride. He then delivered the passengers to the psychiatric hospital, telling the staff that the patients were very excitable and prone to bizarre fantasies. The deception wasn't discovered for three days.

Dealing with faulty equipment

When his 38-calibre revolver failed to fire at its intended victim during a hold-up in Long Beach, California, would be robber James Elliot did something that can only inspire wonder: He peered down the barrel and tried the trigger again. This time it worked.

Dealing with complaining employees

The chef at a hotel in Switzerland lost a finger in a meat-cutting machine and, after a little hopping around, submitted a claim to his insurance company. The company, suspecting negligence, sent out one of its men to have a look for himself. He tried the machine out and lost a finger.

Our socialist leader



Cartoon by Juan Carlos Azzopardi

Old style wagon back on the road

JOHN COURTNEY reports

TRAVELLERS in Cork have paraded in spectacular style through the European City Capital of Culture. For St Patrick's Day, they drove through the city in a barrel-top wagon.

For the Cork Traveller Women's Network (CTWN) it was the culmination of a year's work. But since March, the wagon has been brought out to a number of communities in Cork where CDP staff and volunteers have joined the admiring crowds that turn up each time it makes an appearance.

Now an unusual sight, the barrel top wagon was once a home to many Travelling families in Ireland. Mary O'Sullivan and Bridget Carmody came up with the idea of building the wagon to celebrate Cork 2005.

"The reaction to the wagon was fantastic," says Mary with great enthusiasm. "For the Travelling community it was something tangible and a real part of Traveller culture, something to be proud of, it was beautiful."

In the mid-1930s approximately half the travelling community in Ireland would have lived and travelled in wagons. By the mid 1970s this number had decreased because of the arrival of motorist transport.

"That was the culture of the travelling people 50 years ago. But there isn't one of those old caravans left in Ireland," continued Mary, and this is what makes their wagon so special.

The (CTWN) works very much with the principles of community development so from the outset they consulted widely with Traveller groups across cork city

James Carmody, an older Traveller, was recruited because of his extensive experience in traditional wagon building. An important aspect of the work was the opportunity for skill sharing so the construction work was carried out with a view to preserving and passing on traditional-craft skills.

Women from different groups affiliated to the network made



traditional items of clothing for display within the wagon including a shawl and an apron. And one of the most important aspects of the project was the collecting of stories and memories and the regeneration of past Traveller experiences.

The project reawakened interest in times past and got a community working together sharing stories and skills. A booklet was published to coincide with the launch of the wagon.

Such is the wagon's popularity that it has been guaranteed a place in Cork City Museum.

Now, other groups have shown interest in starting similar projects.

• For more information, contact: CTWN, c/o St. Catherine's School, Bishopstown Ave., Model Farm Road, Cork. Tel. 086-807-1740.

Tuam celebrate a win for childcare

By DECLAN WEIR

ESTABLISHED in 1993, Tuam Community Development Resource Centre (TCDRC) had cause to celebrate recently when the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform allocated €1.1million for new childcare premises.

Clearly delighted, manager Loretta Needham sees this as an ideal opportunity to consolidate the centre's services in the Galway town.

"The new childcare facility will be purpose built, serving the whole community and accommodating approximately 70 children from three months upwards," she explained. "The grant will allow our hours to be significantly expanded. At present we only operate a sessional service, which doesn't help parents wanting to return to work or full time education."

Loretta and everyone involved in the centre are understandably proud of their work around family support, parenting alone, childcare and women's issues. There's a great buzz around the place, enhanced by the enthusiastic sounds drifting up from the young clientele at the Happy Days Crèche and Playgroup which currently caters for up to 31 children between 3 months and 5 years. Talking about the facility, Loretta

described it as a 'huge success because of its fee structure which is relative to parents' income. There is a constant demand for places but lack of resources meant that the community creche could not expand. Until now.'

Upstairs, the centre offers information and advice on welfare rights and entitlements as well as available funding opportunities. This is where the background work happens, the thinking and planning essential to any organisation participating in local, regional and national networks and working for increased social inclusion.

Education is seen as the key to opening up new opportunities for people, and forms an integral part of the centre's work. During 2004, through the Back to Education Initiative, 23 people participated in FETAC accredited computer courses. They now have the opportunity to continue on to a more advanced course or use their new skills to find employment.

Loretta considers these courses to be "a very real, working example of the centre's attempts to bring about positive change in the lives of people who lack choices, power and resources." The Department of Education has approved funding again this year, giving even more people the opportunity to develop new skills and improve existing talents. Another example of

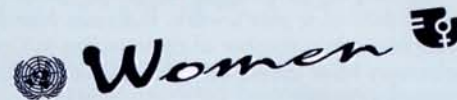
education enhancing lives is STEPS - Steps to Excellence for Personal Success. This part-time course focuses on human motivation and behaviour, and helps participants realise their full potential in a positive learning environment.

Unfortunately, domestic violence continues to be a major issue in 21st century Ireland. TCDRC has contributed to the development of a Code of Practice on Domestic Violence in Galway and Mayo which is being adapted nationally for all CDPs. Domestic violence awareness training is also organised by the Centre, and all enquiries are confidential. An Outreach worker from Waterside attends the centre on a monthly basis, and appointments can be made on request.

Later this year, Tuam will be the venue for the launch of research commissioned by the Western Region Community Response to Domestic Violence Network (WRCRDVN). The research is based on (a) interviews with women who have experienced violence and abuse from an intimate partner and who had used frontline services, (b) interviews with workers involved in those frontline services, and (c) case reviews.

• Contact details: Tuam Community Development Resource Centre, Bishop Street, Tuam, County Galway. Tel/Fax: 093-25340. Email: tuamrc@eircom.net

CDPs help deliver 10,000 brown envelopes



YOU may have been alarmed in recent months to have heard whispers about 'Brown Envelopes' up and down the length and breadth of Ireland. This was the name for a campaign involving CDPs that highlighted inequalities in the social welfare system affecting women.

Unemployed married women – of whom there are tens of thousands – are not officially registered by the Department of Social and Family Affairs who instead label them as 'dependents'. Where both spouses are unemployed, it is the man who automatically receives the actual dole money. The CDPs, in conjunction with the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) and other groups, have joined up to end this disgraceful practise.

In 2003 the NWCi published a research report 'A Women's Model for Social Welfare Reform' which led to the calls for change in the social welfare system.

WHERE DID THE IDEA COME FROM?

A series of regional seminars on women's welfare issues were held around the country in '04 and '05. Seminar participants planned ways to campaign to improve women's access

JOAN COURTNEY reports

to the system. The idea for a brown envelope campaign was put forward by the Cork/Kerry region.

Women from all over Ireland worked on the campaign which involved collecting signatures on a standard letter to the Minister for Finance, Brian Cowen, listing the changes needed. The signed letters were gathered together, placed in brown envelopes and were personally delivered by activist women from all over Ireland on May 17th.

By signing the letter demanding these changes, thousands of women and men around Ireland have shown their anger and frustration at the unfairness of the social welfare system that reinforces poverty and inequality for women.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

If a couple are both unemployed and receiving a welfare payment, women are regarded as a 'Qualified Adult' and receive 70% of the normal full adult allowance. (In other words, the total household payment is reduced to 1.7 times the rate of two separate adult payments). This payment is then

normally made to the husband/partner. This system does little for women's economic independence and discriminates against women. A woman can apply to receive her payment separately from her husband, but this is not the norm. The Minister for Social and Family Affairs has promised to address the issue in the budget for '06.

The campaigners argue that currently the social welfare system does NOT:

- Treat women as independent adults.
- Recognise unpaid care-work.
- Support or enable part-time work.
- Adequately provide for women's financial security in older age through personal state pensions.

The Government is being asked by the 'Brown Envelope' campaigners to reform the social welfare system so that it addresses these inequalities.

If you want to get involved in similar campaigns, contact your local women's group or a CDP in your area.

You can also get involved by contacting The National Women's Council of Ireland, 9 Malborough Court, Malborough Street, Dublin 1. Tel. 01-8787-248.

Fax: 01-8787-301. Website: www.nwci.ie

20% more calls to Women's Aid

THE campaign by Women's Aid to highlight domestic violence encouraged many victims to speak out for the first time. The national women's organisation supports CDPs engaged in work on women's rights. It is one of five Specialist Support Agencies to the Programme.

There was an increase of nearly 20% in the number of calls to the organisation's helpline during their recent 'End the Silence' television and radio campaign.

According to Women's Aid, many of these were people who contacted the service for the first time.

Ireland's UN boasts dismissed in Ennis

AT the latest UN conference on women, the Irish Government highlighted the Equality for Women Measure as a major step forward for women in Ireland. The government failed, however, to highlight that it is in fact a pilot scheme which will only last three years which is simply not enough.

Much attention was drawn to the above situation in Ennis when the Clare Women's Network Conference was united as the delegates unanimously called for sustained funding to be provided.

Sadly, it was the occasion for the launch of the final report on the Outreach Education Project for Women in Clare. The project was managed by the Clare Womens Network with the funding coming from the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform (under the Equality for Women Measure).

Ailbhe Smyth, Senior Lecturer in Women's Studies, UCD, launched the report, and drew attention to the fact that there were concerns nationwide surrounding the lack of sustained funding for the education and development of women.

The personal testimonies of Adebola Omotoyinbo and Kathy Murphy at the conference highlighted yet again women's ability to move forward against the odds when given the supports that are fundamental to

their progression.

The public call was made to all funders for continued sustainable funding for Community Education Supports for women in County Clare. This funding would ensure that real measures of equality for women – economic, social, political and personal – would result.

"The benefits of such Outreach Projects both in themselves and as stepping stones for further education and employment for women must not be undervalued by the lack of resources," commented Elaine D'Alton project co-ordinator.

The main barriers preventing women accessing education and employment continue to be childcare, support for family carers, transport, skills development, self esteem and lack of opportunities at all levels.

The National collective of Community Based Women's Networks, Aontas and Banulacht and all conference delegates echoed the call for sustained funding.

• For further information contact: Elaine D'Alton, Clare Womens Network, Clonroad Business Park, Ennis, Co Clare. Tel. 065-682-8731. E-mail: clarewomen@eircom.net

An unexpected finding

AN unexpected finding by researchers in Donegal was that two different categories of Social Welfare office exist - local offices and branch offices - and that the quality of service provision appeared to be of a higher standard in local offices.

In the local offices, which are staffed by civil servants who receive ongoing training and have an identified information officer, the quality of the service to women was judged by the researchers to be better. In the branch offices, which are located in the south of the county, the office staff were not obliged to avail of training and at the time of the research none of the branch offices had a designated information officer. This finding indicated that location may determine the quality of the service to the individual woman. CDPs in Cork and Kerry have identified the same problem.



Kathleen Hughes who spoke of her personal experiences of accessing the Live Register at the launch of 'Alive?....but not registered', which took place at the National Women's Council Regional Seminar in Bundoran in February.

Donegal project doles out the truth on inequality

NEW research findings on women's experiences of accessing the Live Register make sombre reading. The research report titled 'Alive? But Not Registered' was compiled by the Donegal Women's Network and captured women's frustration with the system:

- "Why am I not allowed to go and stand in the queue in my own right and not just as a dependent of my husband?"
 - "Trying to find out about all your entitlements is like being caught in a web, a spider's web."
 - "There are so many women out there that would be an asset to society if it weren't for the barriers in accessing training and education."
- These are just a few of women's comments

from the research. The report was launched at a regional meeting of the National Women's Council of Ireland which called on women's rights to be recognised. Cathleen O'Neill, Community Activist and promoter of women's equality and human rights, launched the report.

Women spoke about the impact of literacy difficulties, about the very limited opening hours of Social Welfare offices, about rural issues and Traveller issues. A very significant issue for women was that of access onto FÁS training courses.

Women strongly felt that Social Welfare staff should be aware and sensitive to the issues that impact on women who work full-time in the home. They need to give women in this situation accurate, relevant, useful information regardless of whether or not women ask 'the right questions' about

entitlements, splitting claims, spousal swaps part-time claims, credits and training.

One woman quoted in the report said: "They told me it was a waste of my time signing. They told me nothing about credits. I never got offered a FÁS course. Now, I'm nothing, just a housewife."

Finola Brennan, Co-ordinator of Donegal Women's Network explained: "There are many women who are not aware of the Live Register and how it impacts on their lives. The Live Register is the main route through which many women can access FÁS, the Back-To-Work Scheme, Community Employment and Back-To-Education Schemes."

In the Republic's social welfare system, once a woman who is unemployed marries or lives with a partner she ceases to be an economic agent in her own right and becomes known by the bureaucracy as a 'Qualified Adult'.

Carmel McNamee carried out the research on behalf of the CDP and conducted focus groups, posted questionnaires and interviewed seven individual women. She also visited all the Social Welfare offices in Donegal to get a sense of the appearance of the office and the atmosphere, assess the openness of the staff regarding enquiries and the level of privacy available. Set questions were asked in each office to assess the level of information available.

Confusion as to what the Live Register is or how women are affected by not being able to get on it, the lack of privacy, and the fact that a woman is not regarded as person in her own right were issues raised by all the participants.



Cast from 'Alive? But Not Registered' a drama written and directed by Ann McGowan, Atlantic View CDP (third from right) who performed at a seminar organised by the National Women's Council of Ireland in the Great Northern Hotel, Bundoran, Co. Donegal. L to R: Finola Brennan, co-ordinator, Donegal Women's Network, Sally Davis (who works with the Second Chance Education Project for Women), Deirdre Heatley-Mulhall, chairperson of the afore-mentioned project, Ann McGowan, and Ann McNulty and Olivia Magee, both volunteers with Atlantic View CDP.

Upcoming UN days

THE following are commemorative days of action that will be marked around the globe by various groups, including CDPs in Ireland.

Since the early days of the United Nations system, the UN has established a set of Days and Weeks (as listed below), Years and Decades to help focus the world on the issues in which the UN has an interest and commitment. The UN calls on Member States and other organisations, and that includes CDPs of course, to mark these days in ways which reflect their priorities. These are days coming up in June:

June

- 4 International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression
- 5 World Environment Day
- 17 World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought
- 20 World Refugee Day
- 23 United Nations Public Service Day
- 26 International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking and International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

UN International Decades

As well as the annual celebration of certain UN-designated days and weeks, we find ourselves in the midst of celebrating a number of on-going internationally-declared decades.

1997-2006 United Nations Decade for the **Eradication of Poverty.**

2001-2010 International Decade for a **Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World** & Second International Decade for the **Eradication of Colonialism.**

2003-2012 United Nations Literacy Decade: **Literacy for All.**

2005-2014 United Nations Decade of **Education for Sustainable Development.**

This year - 2005 - is also designated the UN International Year of **Microcredit.**

CAFÉ handbook is fundraisers' bible

The CAFÉ Irish Fundraising Handbook is the first place to go for any project wishing to fund-raise. A read of the handbook could lead to your area getting a new community centre more easily than you realise. The handbook is a directory and guide to fund-raising for non-profit work in the Republic of Ireland. The price is approx. €20 plus €2.50 for posting.

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Who's your neighbour?

Forgotten who our new EU neighbours are? Given that around 50,000 Polish people have immigrated to Ireland in the past year, it is worth recalling who the new EU member states are: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. There are now 25 countries in the EU. And the capitals are...! It is time to expand our geographic understanding of Europe.

Minimum Wage rises to €7.65

The Minimum Wage increased to €7.65 on May 1st. When first introduced in April 2000, the Minimum Wage was set at €5.59 and the Mayday increase was the fourth so far. It last went up in February of last year to €7 and this latest increase is in line with a recommendation by the Labour Court to bring it back up in line with recent inflation.

We are 'primitive' and 'underdeveloped'

- leading researcher

LEADING Social Researcher, Brian Harvey labelled the community and voluntary sector in Ireland as having "a primitive level of organisation", it is "underdeveloped" and unable to influence the government's lack of will to implement the White Paper on Voluntary and Community Sector Activity.

Speaking at the Leadership Conference in Croke Park organised by Carmichael House, Brian Harvey also heavily criticised government inactivity on implementing reform on developing a structure for the voluntary and community sector. Commenting on the time it took the Irish state to issue the White Paper on Voluntary and Community Activity since the first efforts at a structured relationship he said,

"It took the Irish state a full forty years to issue the resulting White Paper....which must be some form of record in governmental decision-making".

By international standards the Irish voluntary and community sector does not compare well. Some of this he puts down to the historical reluctance of the Irish state to implement welfare state reforms in the post-1945 period, but there is also the fact that the proportion of the voluntary sector working in the area of human rights and civil society is "the lowest in the European Union". The reason for this he



GERRY MCKEEVER reports

lays at the door of the voluntary and community sector itself which has been "slow to develop a concept of civil society" comparable to that in Eastern Europe which developed in

the 1948-89 period. Why too, he asks, has the voluntary and community sector "permitted such a situation to develop" in which the state was so dilatory in developing any coherent structure for the voluntary and community sector to develop?

Emphasising the re-birth of the concept of civil society and participatory democracy in Eastern Europe which enhances rather than challenges representative democracy, Brian Harvey points to the lack of a national voluntary structure or database in Ireland, and archaic laws laid down by the parliament of Queen Elizabeth I which still apply to the sector.

Regarding enviously the structure of voluntary and community organisations in Northern Ireland, he calls for a through modernisation of the structures, a new commitment to civil society, national representative structures and will by government to implement the White Paper recommendations in full.

Brian Harvey is a leading social researcher who has authored books published by Combat Poverty. Last year, he compiled a hard-hitting report on an implementation and advisory group set up to oversee the implementation of decisions in the White Paper on Voluntary and Community Activity.

Whisper it low; community work is political

RANT OR REASON?

You don't need to agree with Murt Flynn, but his writing reflects a certain frustration within communities. So, is he just a ranter? And ungrateful and impatient? Or the community voice of common sense?

The new man to shout 'Stop!'?

I USED to describe the CDP as a form of Social Contract between the State and a local community. Used to. The Social Contract underpinned the sometime vague notion of citizenship. It represented an acceptance that the issues that communities experienced were caused by national social and economic policy and could, in turn, be combated and changed by local action, supported by the State.

It represented an uneasy mix of State intervention, within differing political philosophies, and sustained community action, identified and led by some of the most disadvantaged communities in the country. It also accepted, albeit informally and unofficially, that democracy is a complex mix of representation and participation. And I used to think that it was a sign of a mature country saying goodbye to the traditional charitable model. I used to.

MISPLACED IDEALISM

Of course, all of the above could now, and probably even then, be dismissed as misplaced idealism. It is always a challenge for CDPs to do a Johnny Cash on it, walking the line between maintaining an independent and sometimes critical voice and not biting the hand that feeds. (It depended on recognition of the requirements of local communities and the State and an acceptance of diversity and independent action).

Within that dynamic, a massive and crucially important amount of work was done by the Community Development Programme. Recognised by local communities, politicians, public servants and independently by Nexus and others, the impact of the Programme to bring about sustainable change for people resulted in a confidence taking root in what had previously been a harsh, neglected and almost discarded environment. And then? And then

something changed.

A significant shift could be seen and felt. From the mid 1990's, other changes had caused crises to develop. These included the rapid expansion of the Programme, the development of the specific Support Agency model and changes in Departmental structures. But then came the Big Bang and it was as if we had gone to bed one morning and awoke the next day to find a new landscape had been designed and transplanted onto what had been our familiar garden. We awoke not to smell the roses but to find ourselves wondering where all the flowers had gone.

FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES ARE AFOOT

Was the Community Development Programme a victim of its own success? Did the development of new Local Government Structures carry within it a role for local politicians and senior Local Authority officials? Perhaps these politicians and officials felt that their traditional role as movers and shakers and fetchers and carriers had been diminished by the radical development of local community leadership that combined analysis and action.

Has the new neo-liberal political orthodoxy sounded the death knell for independent community work? One way or another, we have witnessed and are continuing to witness and experience fundamental changes in the relationship between the State and local communities.

The current situation is the result of assumptions being made about the nature of community development and participative democracy. It pre-supposed (a) that there had been an absence of practical co-operation between CDPs, local authorities and Partnership



By MURT FLYNN

Companies. And (b) it pre-supposed that there was a capacity within local government to embrace differing understandings and ways of doing community work.

A quick glance at the Nexus report or a basic understanding of the working out on a local level of the 1998 Traveller Housing and Accommodation Act would have shown that, in the main, it had proven possible to maintain an independent analysis and, still, to co-operate, without duplication, in a range of areas.

THREE ISSUES STAND OUT

In all this, three issues stand out, striking in their difference but united in their impact.

- (1) We have a smoke and mirrors situation where the stated policy is to develop strong local government, but the actual practice is a strengthening of central Government.
- (2) Maybe we all made assumptions - mistaken ones - that policy and decision makers recognised the impact of the CDP and recognised that there is a healthy difference and divergence in work that might be funded by the State and at the same time might be critical of the State.
- (3) The severing of local voluntary action from the institutions of the State.

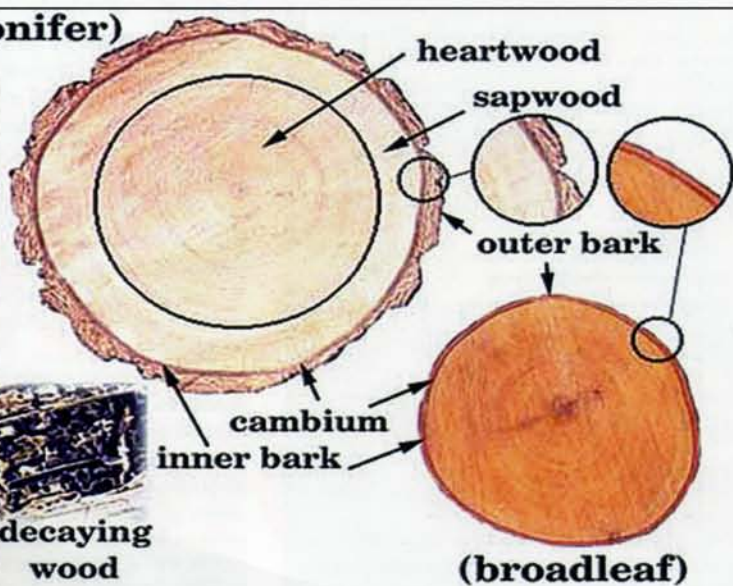
The bedrock of the Programme is action by local people, supported by resources from the State. These resources include funding for employing staff, renting or buying premises and the nuts and bolts to maintain and run a community enterprise.

The demands of the endorsement process, the cohesion process, and interplay with other programmes (EOCP and RAPID for example) placed additional demands on peoples time and contribution. Unfortunately, these additional demands on peoples time cause worker fatigue and dis-empowerment. It also, crucially, brings into sharp contrast the dilemma of the relationship between the citizen and the State. Its actions neither have a neutral input nor a neutral impact. Whisper it low but Community work is political.

Many issues are like rain-bearing black clouds: for example, the struggles that particular areas are having with the 'Endorsement' process. Seeing the wood from the tress will inform the debate as to the future of the Programme. Let's hope that the current pruning desires of the wanna-be-Gerry Dalys leave room for all to grow.

Murt Flynn © The workers civil war blues collective

(conifer)



decaying
dead trunk wood

(broadleaf)

Sometimes you have to look hard to see the wood from the trees.

Boost for project working with town's 'forgotten people'



THURLES has a three-screen cinema and a range of pubs, hotels and night clubs. Apart from Gaelic games, soccer and rugby, you will find greyhound and horse racing, squash, golf, cycling, angling, hockey, health and leisure centres, snooker, swimming and tennis.

And of course, Thurles is the birthplace of the GAA.

But what if you are not into sport? Or pubs? The thriving business town of 8,500 people has very little for local youths (who are apparently "at great risk"), for lone parents, for Travellers, and others. They are all among the "forgotten" people - as Josephine Hogan calls them - now being targeted by Thurles CDP.

Josephine, a full-time carer and former factory worker, is Chairperson of the CDP. She was motivated by the lack of facilities for teenagers to join other volunteers striving to set up the CDP.

A year-and-a-half on from when they appointed their first worker, they now have funding from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to employ a second person. It is going to make a big difference, says Josephine, to the work they can do with disadvantaged groups, as it will with a dozen other projects around the country that now have funding to hire new workers (see accompanying report on the 'Lucky 13').

Josephine is quoted here in an interview with editor, Allen Meagher.

But, what if you're not into hurling?

"AT the moment, Thurles CDP is concentrating on lone parents and people needing more literacy skills. We ran a pilot scheme giving literacy to ten people wanting to do the driver theory test. It is a great success - five have passed so far and the rest have still to do the test. Some are settled, some are Travellers.

"I would definitely say the CDP is making a difference to Thurles town, especially with the forgotten people from the target groups, such as lone parents, people with literacy difficulties and Travellers. Our co-ordinator, Breda Ryan, has helped set up a lot of new groups in town, but the admin side of that work is taking up a lot of her time now. When the new part-time administrator starts, it will make a big difference. We're delighted with it.

"Into the bargain, we will be able to do things on our workplan that we could not do before, for example, come up with a database of all the groups and agencies working in Thurles. We found when we carried out our needs analysis in the town that there were lots of groups and agencies, but some didn't even know of each other. So, when the administrator is employed, we will be able to gather the information and publish a community resources guidebook.

"It is only when you read the progress report you see all that is being done by the CDP. Our co-ordinator also works a lot with residents' groups. There are four new estates in Thurles and some are very problematic. Breda is also on the Council's Social Inclusion Measures Group and she works with the

Health Executive, on an 'Inroads' programme which is aimed at increasing people's self-esteem, bringing them along.

Good news for 'Lucky 13'

THERE was good news also for a number of established CDPs (including 'Changing Ireland') when the Minister recently approved extra core funding to 13 projects to allow for the recruitment of additional staff.

The majority of these projects joined the Programme within the last three years and have been operating with just one CDP-funded worker since their inception. In most cases, the additional funding will allow these projects to take on part-time administrators to assist in dealing with the increased level of activity which the projects have generated in their communities since their establishment.

The projects who will be busy recruiting over the coming months are:

- Na Calai, South East Galway;
- North West Roscommon CDP;
- Cumann na Daoine, Youghal, Co. Cork;
- Dungarvan CDP, Co. Waterford;
- Robert Emmet CDP, Dublin 8;
- East Clare CDP;
- The Bridge CDP, Newbridge, Co. Kildare;
- Thurles CDP, Co. Tipperary;
- West Limerick CDP;
- Ballymun Mens Centre, Dublin 11;
- Cork Social and Health Education Project;
- Fermoy CDP, Co. Cork;
- 'Changing Ireland', c/o CDN Moyross, Limerick. (The Programme magazine is under the management of the Community Development Network Moyross Ltd).

"My getting involved happened by chance. A couple of years ago, I was on the way to donate blood and I saw a sign saying 'Community Development - all welcome!' My children were teenagers and I said to myself 'There is nothing here for them, besides sports, only the pubs' and we have to do something. So in I went to the meeting. That was the reason I got involved.

"The youth in Thurles are greatly at risk. There are many youngsters talented at things other than sports or singing, but there is not a lot for them to do, only go to the pub. Hurling is fine, but if you are not into it, where do you go?

"The youngsters are into skateboarding here, but they get moved on every place they go. One 16-year-old collected a petition with 600 signatures and handed it into the council. I would love to see them get a proper skateboard park.

"At the moment, along with the Gardai, VEC and Bernardos, we have sent out questionnaires to three local schools and will be compiling the results of the youths' views soon. We plan to hold a Youth Forum here in September.

"Having a new administrator will free up Breda to do more work with the community. The office is closed a lot of the time because she is out around the community meeting people. At least the door will be open now when people call."

• For more information, contact: Thurles CDP, Parnell St., Thurles, Co. Tipperary. Tel. Josephine on 0504-24440.