

CHANGING IRELAND

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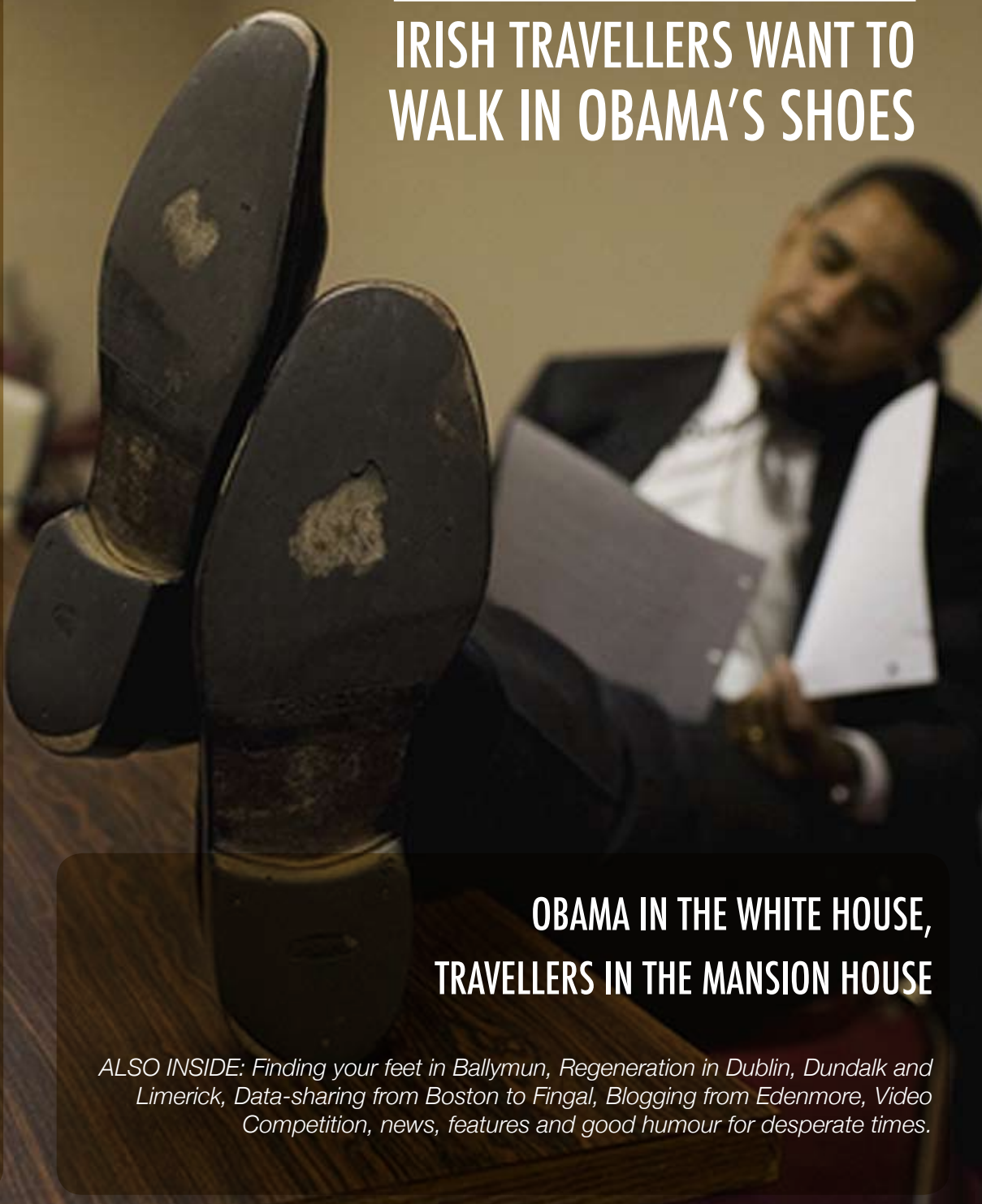


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PARTICIPATION: IRISH TRAVELLERS WANT TO WALK IN OBAMA'S SHOES



OBAMA IN THE WHITE HOUSE,
TRAVELLERS IN THE MANSION HOUSE

ALSO INSIDE: Finding your feet in Ballymun, Regeneration in Dublin, Dundalk and Limerick, Data-sharing from Boston to Fingal, Blogging from Edenmore, Video Competition, news, features and good humour for desperate times.



This publication and most projects featured are part of the
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Out of a crisis comes change



Community Development is a tool for positive change and one recognised worldwide. It seeks to understand the nature and structure of power in any one society and to rebalance the distribution of power (and therefore resources).

The national Community Development Programme employs around 350 people, many of whom have personally experienced some level of poverty, discrimination or alienation. The Programme includes up to 2000 volunteers in its 180 projects who have even more experience.

We all buy into the idea of leading from the bottom-up, but what really changes society?

Economist Milton Friedman famously wrote: "Only a crisis, actual or perceived, produces real change". He applied his theory to pushing unregulated free-market capitalism on many underdeveloped countries, or "disaster capitalism" as Naomi Klein terms it.

However, his definition of change can be usefully applied at personal, community or nation-state level. People probably need to identify a crisis at personal, family or community level to be prodded into seeking change by joining or setting up a community group. This is a positive reaction to crisis.

* * * * *

Another positive action in times of crisis is to be practical.

Some argue that Ireland's economy will go downhill if salaries are cut and if "consumers" cannot spend. I was at a wedding last weekend and a girl at our table wore €700 shoes and I see no loss to society if that type of luxury spending disappears.

Public spending cuts and rising taxes are inevitable and I believe it's better to fight to hold onto the services and programmes for good that we have in this country than to grow bitter over personal spending losses (so long as salary cuts are on a sliding scale and are introduced fairly across the board).

In national terms, I never saw the good in running a country on high personal salaries and low-level public services and would have gladly given up 30-40% of my income in return for improved services.

Why shouldn't Ireland follow Scandinavia?

* * * * *

I'd happily negotiate away up to 30% or more of my income in return for a country:

- Where services and supports to the poor, powerless and vulnerable are guaranteed,
- Where children and older people come first. Aren't we calling for that since the Easter Rising?
- Where white-collar criminals are jailed and small-time debtors and petty criminals are released and given community service.
- Where human rights are properly promoted and protected,
- Where public services such as transport are improved,
- Where our commitment to official overseas development aid was maintained.
- And where our prominent trade union leaders on €120,000 or more per annum saw their pay halved. The same should apply to anyone in politics, administration or banking on such high salaries.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, at local level, the best thing community organisations in disadvantaged areas could be doing this year is getting people to register to vote. Éamon Ó Cuív has said it before – communities and groups of people who vote get looked after, or at least they don't come last in the pecking order when politicians are making budgetary decisions.

* * * * *

The core-readership of this magazine, volunteers and workers in the Community and Voluntary Sector must work to have their voices heard clearly and in unison on issues as they emerge this year, the rise in racism being one. If doing so, we may also provide leadership by showing good example.

* * * * *

Speaking of good example, this issue's main theme is participation, a cornerstone of community development. One of our highlights is a report on a model of participation involving a CDP in Lifford that has been recognised by the World Health Organisation. The hope is that more will follow their lead.

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Disclaimer

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DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

Project News



Waterford Mothers Open New Premises

The Independent Mother's Project (IMP) has moved into a new dedicated premises which the volunteers managing the project have named 'Tosach'. The official opening at 42 Barrack Street took place recently with the Mayor of Waterford in attendance.

The IMP works with mothers who are parenting alone and provides them with a safe environment to meet. The project provides support, encouragement, development opportunities, access to information and aims to empower women.

"We have mothers who put in a huge commitment to the project over the years while raising their young children," said chairperson, Veronica Malone. "Their enthusiasm and energy has got the project to where it is now."

The project – as with all CDPs – operates from Community Development principles.

For more information, contact Veronica or Amy. T: 051-352866. E: improject@eircom.net

Edenmore Is First With A Blog

Over a dozen CDPs have websites, but the first CDP in the country to have a blog is Edenmore in Dublin.

News from the project is published as it happens, be it a new member joining the CDP board or a shopping trip to Newry for senior citizens. The news is published by way of text, photos and movies. The blog also features news from indymedia.ie and films of Community Development initiatives from around the world.

Recently, Edenmore CDP staff and volunteers produced a nine-minute film that tells where Edenmore is, the sort of place it is and some of the work the CDP is doing.

Check out: <http://edenmore.blogspot.com/>

Power-Struggle Over Centre In Dún Laoghaire

The project co-ordinator of a CDP in Dún Laoghaire has concerns over proposals put forward by the local authority for the management of a new €4.8m community centre.

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council is building the new facility to replace the old resource centre on the site where Mountwood/Fitzgerald Park CDP is based.

The opening is scheduled for August this year and while describing the new building as a "good news story" to local media, the CDP project co-ordinator, Marian White, said the council is attempting to control who sits on the facility's new management committee.

In addition Marian is concerned the council will not grant the CDP a lease on the new centre.

"As a Community Development Project we lobbied for about €1.7 million of the funds for the building, but having done all that we still have not got security of tenure," she said.

A council spokesperson said it was engaged in "extensive consultation" to ensure that the facility would meet the needs of the wider community.



Mountwood's old resource centre

Dungarvan CDP Settles Into New €6.5m Home

Dungarvan CDP is settling into a new home, having moved into a premises that was renovated at a cost of €6.5 to cater as a multi-purpose community centre.

The project is sharing the facility with the local Scouts, the HSE, a special needs pre-school, a project caring for older people, Focus Ireland and others.

At the official opening of the Presentation Community Development Centre, Minister Martin Cullen commended the county manager, the town councillors and members of the management committee of Dungarvan CDP for bringing the centre to fruition. The building was formerly owned by the Presentation Sisters who were there since 1858.

Dungarvan CDP works with over 200 members of the community on a weekly basis. The CDP's management committee won a Community and Voluntary Award in 2007 and the project provides the backbone to at least 17 services and community groups in the area.

Finance for the new centre came through the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dungarvan Town Council, POBAIL, the HSE and Waterford Institute of Technology.

Dungarvan CDP's new address is: Presentation Community Development Centre, Mitchell St., Dungarvan, Co. Waterford. The project's phone number remains unchanged.

Targetting Older People In Cavan

CDPs regularly host courses in their community centres and South West Cavan CDP, in conjunction with the VEC, are currently running technology courses for older people. Courses include: An Introduction to Computers for the Elderly; and Certified Intermediate Computing. If you are thinking of targeting older people, contact South West Cavan CDP on 049-4336070 for an insight.

In Carlow, meanwhile, Open Door CDP is targeting immigrants by hosting a course in English for Foreign Nationals. Other courses hosted by the project include Digital Photography, Guitar, Beauty Therapy and Computers Fetac Levels 4 & 5.



‘Changing Ireland’ has changed

- Send us your news and we’ll publish it this week!

The Editorial Team of ‘Changing Ireland’ is changing the way it operates, *reports Allen Meagher, editor.*

Rather than focus mainly on producing a quarterly magazine with a website in the background, we are turning our operations around. From now on, news will be published on the internet as we get it. In addition, ‘Changing Ireland’ has begun to film, record and upload audio and video reports from around the country.

We hope projects will also see the benefits of digging out their digital cameras and producing short reports for us to broadcast on the internet.

Not once in eight years has the Editorial Team sought to suppress an article submitted by a project – and there have been many articles published since 2001 that were critical of Government policy. The Editorial Team, the Department and the Minister deserve recognition for their maturity in seeing that the voice of Community Development needs to be heard and in recognising this essential component of a good democracy.

In publishing on the internet, new challenges will arise and each item will have to meet with the Editorial Team’s approval prior to publishing/broadcast. A system has been set up to allow this to happen very quickly without having to meet up as a group.

It’s up to you the readers now to provide us with the content. We’ll take your regular news and press releases, your opinion where it promotes positive change (ie is not merely critical) and your feedback. We’re already fighting off PR companies seeking publicity on a near daily basis. ‘Changing Ireland’ is for those engaged in Community Development in Ireland.

Get filming or writing - whether you’re working in a Partnership Company, a local library, your community, the Dail or – our core group – projects within the Community Development Programme. So long as it’s about Community Development and where possible offers solutions to challenging social issues. Use www.changingireland.ie to change Ireland for the good! Check it out yourself to see what’s there already.

We went green with Issue 27. We go live from Issue 28 onwards.

The Editorial Team currently consists of: Allen Meagher, editor, Viv Sadd, Mahon CDP co-ordinator and Juan Carlos Azzopardi, CDN Moyross co-ordinator, Niamh Walsh, DCRGA.

BEST PRACTICE IN
PARTICIPATION:

‘MINCEIR

Would we elect a Traveller as Taoiseach?

Allen Meagher reports

The influence of Barack Obama is everywhere and a national Traveller-only forum believes that one day a Traveller might become Taoiseach. The forum is called Minceir Whiden, a Cant word meaning Travellers Talking, and membership is heading towards a thousand.

They could be right. At least, you have to believe so if change is to happen.

“In a few years down the line, we would love to see a Minceir Whiden representative in the Seanad. We could then follow in America’s footsteps, in electing Mr Obama, and reach a position in Irish society where a Traveller is elected as Taoiseach,” said Mags Casey, project co-ordinator of Tipperary Travellers CDP.

“Promoting and creating a political platform for our community is one of our long-term aims. It will take a lot of hard work and it means we need support not only from our community but from the settled community,” she added.

NEARLY CHOKED

Ireland has twice elected female Presidents, a high-impossibility in the early years of the State when women, while having the vote, often voted as they were instructed to by the man of the house. But change begins by believing it is possible. I remember a female work colleague, during my time as a volunteer in the civil service in The Gambia; she nearly choked when I suggested her country could

one day elect a female President.

Eight years after that discussion, a woman was elected President in the nearby West African state of Liberia. My former work colleague admitted to me (on a subsequent visit) that it was a possibility one day in her country too. So too with the notion of a Traveller becoming Taoiseach. Talking about it gives life to the idea and Travellers are talking like never before.

Over 750 people have joined the Travellers-only forum where members talk openly about the issues they face, covering everything from family feuds to youngsters text-dating. This level of participation is remarkable and a credit to the many Traveller groups – including around a dozen CDPs – that have laid the groundwork over the years to encourage Travellers to get more organised.

HISTORIC DAY

The forum has been in the making quietly for four years now, but on November 27th, 2008, Minceir Whiden was officially launched at a public ceremony in the Mansion House, Dublin. The Minceir Whiden Council presented themselves at the official launch and outlined the forum’s aims. They also underlined the historic importance of the launch:

“This is where the first Dáil took place,” Martin Collins reminded those attending. “As is well documented by human rights bodies, Travellers continue to be one of the most marginalised and excluded groups in Irish society.”

That marginalisation is manifested in the rejection – by Travellers – of their own ethnicity, in low educational attainment, high unemployment rates, poor living conditions and so on.

ASSERTIVE AND STRONG

“We will be strong and assertive but dignified and disciplined in demanding the rights and respect the Traveller community are entitled to,” added Martin.

Minceir Whiden brings together Traveller activists from all over Ireland, many of whom have been involved in the struggle for many years, and their experience is balanced by the raw idealism of young Travellers who have joined up.

“Minceir Whiden will reap positive benefits not only for Travellers but for society in general. It will lead us forward as a community challenging our oppression as one,” said forum member, Rosemarie Maughan, from Mayo.

Having launched the national forum, Minceir Whiden is now working to win recognition from the State, national NGOs and domestic and international bodies supportive of Travellers and Human rights.

To become a member, or for more information, contact Minceir Whiden, c/o John Paul Collins, c/o Apartment 1, The Mews, 20a Herbert Lane, Dublin 2. T: 086-739-1988. E: minceirwhiden@o2.ie (the spelling is wrong, but the email address is correct).



Traveller peace pin

A design for a Traveller Peace Pin was launched as part of Traveller Focus Week in December.

Winnie Keenan of Pavee Point Mediation Service believes her idea that people should wear a Traveller Peace Pin will encourage an end to conflict within Traveller communities.

The idea was turned into a design by artist Eamon Coleman and – as funds are raised – the pin will go into production.

Winnie believes that by wearing the pin, people will stir debate about the problems within Traveller communities.

“Many Travellers want to see an end to violence and for people to find better ways of dealing with conflict and sorting out problems,” she said.

For more information or for an order form, please contact: The Mediation Service, Pavee Point Travellers’ Centre, 46 North Great Charles Street, Dublin 1. T: 01-8780255. E: caroline.keane@pavee.ie or winnie.keenan@pavee.ie

WHIDEN'

Obama in the White House;
Travellers in the Mansion House



TRAVELLER FLAG: CLOCK TICKING TOWARDS DECISION-TIME

Violence, family feuding and drug dealing within the Traveller community are among the issues discussed at the Minceir Whiden forum. Members don't shy away from heated subjects.

One of the most interesting – and divisive – issues among Travellers in recent times has been whether or not to adopt a flag. Some Travellers are totally against it – they say their flag is the Irish flag, full stop. Others see it as fitting and appropriate to their ethnic status – after all the Roma, Aboriginal and Maori communities have flags.

It raises questions of identity. Which flag would come first – the Irish flag or the Traveller flag? Should a Traveller flag somehow include the Irish flag in its design? How would Travellers agree to one design over another?

If there was a flag, it would give Travellers a better opportunity to express pride in achievements by members of their community/nation.

Interestingly, Traveller representatives met with Unionists recently. Unionists being the biggest ethnic minority on the island of Ireland and, in common with Travellers, struggle sometimes to define themselves.

The issue of a Traveller flag almost went to a vote a couple of years ago, but there was no register of Traveller-only electors and no established referendum system, so the vote was called off. In 2005, over 100 Travellers met in Athlone. As Minceir Whiden reports, “It was agreed that the issue of the flag would be put on hold for five years after which time, if it was still an issue, it would be reviewed.”

It is still an issue and with only a year to go, you can expect to hear more about the pros and cons of a Traveller flag.

TALK ABOUT PARTICIPATION! - Minceir Whiden factfile:

The Minceir Whiden Forum promotes participation and representative democracy among Travellers.

It... has two structures: the Assembly (being the registered members) and the Council (which is elected by the Assembly to carry out identified actions).

...has over 750 Travellers registered as Assembly members and efforts are being made to increase membership.

... meets on average eight times a year - six Council meetings and two Assembly meetings.

... is not replacing or in competition with existing Traveller organisations (which involve settled people). On the contrary, it will lend its voice and support to existing bodies and their people.

... has received “huge support” from existing Traveller organisations.

... is not unusual. It is a common practice both domestically and internationally for particular interest groups or ethnic minorities to have their own forums in parallel to other models of participation.

Minceir Whiden aims to:

- Unite Travellers.
- Address the divisions amongst Travellers.
- Promote a collective voice and a political platform for Travellers.
- Promote Traveller Culture and its role in Irish society.
- Work together with other nomadic groups within Europe and worldwide.
- Build relations between Travellers and settled communities.
- Work in a spirit of co-operation and solidarity with Traveller organisations to achieve its objectives.



PARTICIPATION

‘Unemployed and homeless, I found my feet in Ballymun’

- Nick Murphy writes about his uplifting experience of ‘participation’

I began my present career in Community Development about five years after my first career folded.

I moved to Ballymun in the late ‘80s because I’d been unemployed for a couple of years and looked to be going to stay that way if I stayed where I was. Also the mortgage holder wanted the house back over a trifling matter of several unpaid mortgage installments.

Within weeks of moving in I was doing an interview for Community Employment, one of the first to be called C.E. instead of the

older Social Employment Scheme. They were looking for someone to work in the local

“I couldn’t turn on
a computer.”

tenant’s association office. Whatever. I didn’t care what the job was. It paid about 5 punts more than the dole but at least I could say I

was in work and, as an added advantage, I could walk to the office. Great.

The idea of C.E. was that people got training to do the job they were taken on to do so you didn’t need previous experience which was good ‘cos I didn’t have a clue. I couldn’t turn on a computer and I tended to run and hide if a phone rang rather than have to answer it. I even had to have the concept of Community Development explained to me. My first reaction was “Are you allowed to just set up a group to tell the government what to do? Don’t you need permission off someone?”

My first Supervisor didn't like the term C.E. Scheme. She felt the word "scheme" was pejorative. So we were a "Project". Later when I was a Supervisor myself I heard another Supervisor refer to his project as

**"Think of all the
Community Projects
that wouldn't exist if it
wasn't for CE staff."**

a "scheme" and his staff as "schemers". That's something C.E. has had to fight against pretty much from the start which I think is laughable when you think of all the Community Projects that wouldn't exist if it wasn't for C.E. staff.

That's something else we've been fighting against for all the time I've been in Community work – The way people will use labels to decide how they treat you. You really have to fight against people casually labelling you. People who don't even know you will decide how to treat you based on labels like Unemployed, Traveller, Lone Parent, Ex-Offender, Drug User etc.

Anyway within 3 months of landing in Ballymun I'd joined the Community Coalition. At the time there were 103 recognized community groups on the mailing list for a population of 21,000. Everybody around me was involved in community work – it just seemed to be the thing to do. I suppose in the beginning I just got swept along. I was amazed that you could just go out with some of your neighbours and start a group to improve your area or demand better services. I got the impression the agencies were a little surprised as well.

When I moved in, the Community had just successfully fought to stop a national bank from pulling out of Ballymun. I wasn't a big fan of banks at the time, as you may

**"The very idea
of people getting
involved in decisions
that affected them ...
was very new and
exciting for me"**

understand, but the community felt that for a national institution like a bank to pull out was saying that Ballymun had no future. Not for the first or last time the community had another opinion and were willing to take to the streets to share it. After a re-think, the bank came around to seeing it their way too.

As an outsider coming in, it seemed to me Ballymun was trying to pull itself up by its boot straps. The Job Centre was trying to help people get into work, there were groups trying to help drugs users, lone-parents, tenants and residents. There were clothes and furniture recycling (I don't think it was called recycling then, just selling second-hand stuff). We had youth groups, the Community and Family Training Agency, Community Action Project, the Housing Task Force trying to get Ballymun redeveloped, environmental groups trying to get something done about the open spaces and so on. The enthusiasm was infectious.

I don't mind saying I suffered a bit of culture shock. The very idea of people getting involved in decisions that affected them and that agencies and national politicians were willing to listen was very new and exciting for me. Sort of do-it-yourself Government. I couldn't wait to get involved.

**"You really have to
fight against people
casually labelling you."**

There were local and national politicians sitting on the Task Force alongside the community people. Before that I was used to seeing my elected representatives only at election time – suddenly I was sitting 'round the table with them on the first Tuesday of every month. Before I moved to Ballymun I couldn't have named a single government minister; by 1994 I was arguing with the Minister for Social Welfare on first name terms.

Now I know what your going to say; "I'll bet the infatuation with community work didn't last" but actually it did. Here I am several years on and a lot greyer, still up to my neck in it. Today, I work as a Community Development co-ordinator, 10 miles north of Ballymun on a Traveller Halting Site in Balbriggan."

** Nick Murphy is a Regional Reporter for 'Changing Ireland'.*

Blogspots highlight childcare and poverty issues

The Community Childcare Subvention Scheme was the focus of protests in December. Community crèche managers throughout the country have raised concerns.

The scheme's weaknesses were highlighted in October in a report launched by the Inner City Community Childcare Providers Network in conjunction with the Dublin Inner City Partnership (DICP).

"Childcare for the most vulnerable children across Ireland is under threat," said spokesperson Tommy Byrne.

For a pdf copy of the research and reports from the launch, log onto: www.dublininnercity.blogspot.com

For reports, including audio, from an open forum held by DICP in December to discuss responses to acute poverty in the inner city, log onto: www.socialmarketingireland.blogspot.com

Clondalkin P'ship is renamed

The Area Partnerships around the country are changing. For instance, CPLN Area Partnership (previously Clondalkin Partnership) has gone through a re-branding to align its name with its new geographic area.

On November 14th, it formally relaunched itself with CPLN standing for Clondalking, Palmerstown, Lucan and Newcastle.

Northside reached 17,000 people

According to a six year review entitled 'Taking Stock', almost 17,000 people have participated in Northside Partnership supported initiatives aimed at encouraging social inclusion across North Dublin since 2000.

Numbers aren't everything – though it helps to have a measure of a project's impact.

A key focus of the Partnership's work is responding to the training needs of unemployed people.

For more information on this and other Partnership news, log onto: www.planet.ie

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Communities astounding ingenuity - excerpt from 'Changing Ireland' interview with Junior Minister Curran



0:02 / 0:42

watch in high quality

moyross45
January 23, 2009
(more info)

The projects come from the communities themselves and what really inspires me is peoples imagination and their own approach to coming up with solutions to their problems that work Theyre so innovat...

URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAAqvB>

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CURRAN ON CAMERA

Minister of State, John Curran, takes questions on maintaining frontline services, difficulties over pensions for drugs workers, unemployment, his heroes, the Department's role in supporting communities, and his days as a protester. Excerpts from the interview are available on changingireland.ie and on youtube.com

ALLEN MEAGHER: Have you ever been on any street protests?

MINISTER OF STATE, JOHN CURRAN: I was involved in student protests. One of the big issues at the time was the very poor standards of accommodation... with students living in bedsits and flats in Rathmines.

I marched to the Dail as a student. I never thought (then) that a day would come when I'd be on the other side of the gate, that didn't cross my mind. It's unusual, it's not like you get up in the morning and say 'I'll become a TD' ... Every so often, I look (out the window) and say 'Yeah, well, once upon a time I was there with the students.'

Those who organise a protest do it to show a depth of feeling. They've already engaged with Ministers and civil servants and the protest is to show the depth of feeling, that

it is not just John and Mary coming to the minister with a letter or petition, that this is an issue that has exercised a lot of people. I'm very conscious when I see protests.

Should RAPID areas be ringfenced for protection from frontline cutbacks?

Not necessarily. The funding for 2009 for Drugs Taskforces will be the same as in 2008 in money terms. I would hope Taskforces find efficiencies in the way they do their business, to ensure the frontline services they're providing are maintained. It is a challenge, but it's one faced by every Government department, by every private company.

(Drugs) projects may have to look at a shared outreach worker between projects or a shared counsellor or maybe one co-ordinator providing services or hosting services for other

projects.

So, what are communities saying to you nationwide?

We still have people who didn't make it, we still have people in poor circumstances. We still have areas trying to get over the legacy of generations of no employment. What communities are saying to me very clearly is that, even in the good times we had parts of this country that needed considerable support and still need it.

What impressed you most in the communities you have visited?

Most of the projects come from the communities themselves and what really inspires me is people's imagination and their own approach to coming up with solutions to their problems that work. When you look

at the range of things they're doing, because they're so innovative and flexible and timely in their response, they're doing things the statutory agencies couldn't respond to in a short timeframe. People's ingenuity always astounds me.

Where did you see the needs were greatest?

Disadvantaged areas still have a range of factors mitigating against them. Standards of education are lower, they are less likely to go to university, some (suffer) poorer health. So, disadvantage hasn't gone away.

How have you personally shaped the current and future plans for communities?

I asked everyone I met what they were doing and what their relationships with other agencies were like. Often, I found a lack of joined-up thinking. So, I've put a series of processes in place to make sure the services are better co-ordinated.

The Volunteer Centres come under my remit. They were being rolled out, but nobody had a good grip on it, so I've temporarily suspended any further roll-out. We're doing a review of their functions so we roll out a standard package.

The Volunteer Centres are matching people to the needs in various communities and I think they have a huge role to play in the future. I'm very impressed by them, but I want a high standard of service.

They're not being cut. The idea is there will be one in every county.

What have been the Department's greatest achievements in terms of tackling drugs since you own appointment?

We're hugely involved in producing a new National Drugs Strategy which will run to 2016. It has involved public consultations with all the stakeholders... That's a huge job of work...

We now have a national (drugs) rehabilitation co-ordinator employed through the HSE and I would hope in 2009 that rehabilitation will be advanced. We've put the structures in place for rehabilitation and now we've to move that forward in a meaningful way around the country.

Which Departmental or inter-departmental review is likely to have the most impact on community organisations?

We fund Community Development Projects, Partnerships and various projects through the Drugs Taskforces for example. One thing that's key is they're all operating in the same communities and one of the real issues/concerns that I have is how do we ensure they're providing integrated services, they're working together, not duplicating, not in competition with one another. (We want) to ensure that they're delivering maximum frontline services to the communities they're working in. That's a piece of work we're doing in-house at the moment and I think it'll be very important.

Even in times of recession, there are opportunities. What are the opportunities for communities now?

In these difficult times, I'm noticing people are more prepared to volunteer, to get involved in local groups and organisations.

How best can the Government support volunteering in the years ahead?

We can specifically support the Volunteer Centres. Figures show that people who have never volunteered before are volunteering through the Volunteer Centres.

Drugs Taskforce employees are not entitled to pensions whereas CDP employees are. This means there are conflicting pensions policy coming from the one Department. Can we get pensions for our colleagues that work with the Taskforces?

That's a matter that may well end up in the Labour Relations Court. I don't want to make a comment.

Do you think the workers who don't get pensions should get them?

It would be unfair (to comment) if it is going to court.

You've said that your emphasis is on maintaining frontline services. Should we cut back on infrastructural projects?

I don't think (so). If we're to maintain employment in the future, in other words if multi-national companies are to come to Ireland, it'll be depend on our infrastructure being able to compete with that in other eurozone countries.

Moyross in the past had 80% unemployment. It dropped to 27% when times were good and Community Development workers fear it could quickly rise up to 50+% since we're in recession. There are a lot of other disadvantaged communities facing similar situations. How can the Community Development Programme help?

The real challenge now is we have people losing their jobs who have the capacity to work, who have the work experience, who have discipline, and who have the expectation and anticipation of having a job – the real challenge is that they're retrained and (quickly helped to) find alternative employment, so that they don't become disenfranchised by becoming long-term unemployed because it's (then) much more difficult to get back into the workforce. The challenge for community groups is to identify opportunities and to retrain people as quickly as possible.

Recently, we relaunched the Clondalkin Centre for the Unemployed and it's been renamed Clondalkin Employment and Education Development Services. It's more proactive in its approach and is not just waiting for people to become unemployed.

What was your greatest leadership role in Clondalkin?

One of the reasons I got into politics was I was very concerned that Clondalkin was getting left behind in terms of infrastructure. We were looking at Tallaght emerging as almost a new city (whereas) in Clondalkin all we could see was housing coming up all around. I got involved in lobbying for a range of sporting, community and educational facilities. Not everything I looked for we got, but certainly the infrastructure has improved, with many new sporting developments, a new community centre, swimming pool, new school facilities, rail station.... I can see a tangible benefit on the ground.

Ideally, what's the first thing you would change – be it local, national or global - if you could get everyone to agree? Climate change for example?

The developed world, even in these difficult times, needs to be very conscious that there is a continent where a high number of countries are experiencing a high degree of poverty. I'd love to be able to bring world leaders together to make significant change. (Minister Curran recently visited southern Africa and witnessed extreme poverty).

Have you got a five-year plan?

I haven't got a long-term plan. I'm very focused on the work in front of me and the budgetary situation. I need to make sure that the Programmes I'm supporting are providing frontline services effectively and efficiently... I'm very concerned that there's a new National Drugs Strategy to be completed. I have a reduced budget, the Programmes I support have a meaningful impact on marginalised communities around the country and I want to make sure that the money we're spending continues to support those front-line services as far as possible in these difficult times.

What was the toughest day, week or month you've put down as a politician?

Personally, being blunt and honest, the worst day I ever had was the day the issue of the medical cards for the over-70s emerged. There's no question that caused huge concern and anxiety.

Do you expect to be in politics in five years time?

I have severed my links from business completely, this is my full-time job, I'm a full-time politician. (Minister Curran was self-employed for 20 years in an audio-visual company).

And who are your heroes?

Most of my heroes are people I've met: Ronnie Delaney, Eamon Coughlan, Kenny Egan, Mother Theresa. (In politics, again applying the guideline that they had to be people he has met, his heroes include): JFK, John McCain, Jack Lynch, Alan Dukes and John Hume.

Limerick Regeneration



Regeneration will include some relocation

€14 million is earmarked this year by Government for social housing for residents from Limerick city's disadvantaged areas. The unexpected aspect of the plan is that the housing will be built outside regeneration areas, in counties Limerick and Clare as well as Limerick city.

It is good news for those residents – often elderly people – who cannot wait for regeneration and are under pressure from anti-social elements in certain estates to move out.

However, given that €14m represents half the regeneration budget for 2009, community leaders grew concerned. They feared that regeneration could be replaced by a policy of relocation.

Relocation is a controversial measure all round. Neither the communities who must take in the new residents, nor the communities losing people and population view it entirely positively. And the regeneration communities did not actively participate in the decision.

Regeneration boss, Brendan Kenny, is allaying concerns and says there is “no plan whatsoever to engage in widespread relocation”. The €14m will pay for housing for around 100 families, which represents only a tiny percentage of the population living in the city's disadvantaged districts.

Brendan pointed out that over €9m will go to other regeneration activities for the year, including €3.5m for social regeneration and €750,000 for business enterprise support.

In an interview with ‘Changing Ireland’ before the funding was announced, he said: “In the short-term, there are quality of life issues for people, with houses burned out and people just can't wait for regeneration. Unfortunately, we're going to lose good people, though they will be allowed to come back...”

STATE NEEDS TO CHANGE

As regeneration gathers pace, Brendan says that the biggest challenge they face is not crime (“a matter for the Gardai”) or anti-social behaviour, but the system:

“We're saying we need major reform in the way services are delivered... and there could be a serious improvement while actually achieving savings.”

Asked had regeneration led to greater co-ordination between social workers, child psychologists and workers from various Government agencies, Kenny admitted: “Only a little bit. It's very slow. If we can't get the State agencies to integrate and co-ordinate their services, my overall worry is that, while we're making some progress, we won't get the success we should get.”

For regeneration to succeed, his agency needs to see “a very radical overhaul of how our public services are delivered, how they're integrated, co-ordinated and their accountability.”

A tall order. In general, is he an optimist? “Yes, absolutely, you have to be in this job and you have to be positive and to keep pushing.”

Kenny says he is satisfied progress is being made under regeneration, although nothing has been built yet (apart from a handball alley).

“I'm satisfied when I go to meetings and I hear residents – in Moyross – saying ‘This is the quietest we've seen it in years’. One resident said it was the quietest in 15 years.”

He said he was at a meeting on the Southside before Christmas when residents actually praised the Gardai, something which was not commonplace before.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

“There is a long way to go yet. And there are two aspects to it: There is the gangster crime and killings that drag Limerick down. But we (in Regeneration) hear far more about the ordinary, day-to-day, low-level, anti-social behaviour and harassment that affects residents in the regeneration areas. That's caused in the main by young people and it's harder for the Gardai to deal with that

than with the heavy crime, but people can't understand that.”

The communities have had their spirits lifted by the promise of regeneration and in Moyross crime is down 60%. Brendan considers this a good sign coming as it does before any real money has been spent on regeneration in Limerick.

“That progress was made in one year, so can you imagine when we really get going. The word is out there that if you're misbehaving you might not get a house.”

Since the arson attack on two children in 2005 in Moyross, media commentators have continued to give the false impression that the area is the most deprived of Limerick's estates.

However, the deprivation is actually worse in other communities in Limerick.

“While Moyross is certainly disadvantaged, it is communities in the other Regeneration areas of Southill, Ballinacurra-Weston and St. Mary's Park that experience the greatest degree of poverty, discrimination and disadvantage,” says Regeneration boss, Brendan Kenny.

Regeneration also hopes to reach in particular those families with children involved in anti-social behaviour.

“They're not involved in crime but they need help.”

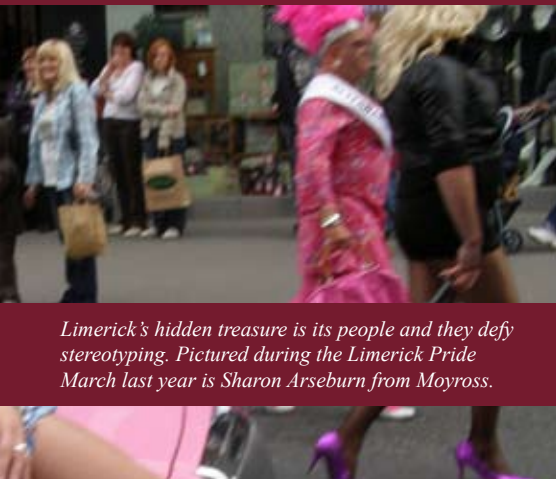
The local courts regularly deal with parents hauled up because their children miss out on a quarter or more of the school-year and this is an issue at the core of the social regeneration of Limerick city's disadvantaged communities.

LESSONS FROM DUBLIN

Brendan formerly worked through Dublin City Council on regeneration programmes in the capital. Ballymun in particular is viewed as a success story.

“I think Ballymun is going to prove to be very successful, because it had a very strong social, economic and physical strategy from the beginning. I think Fatima Mansions is a very good one, the community themselves would say it.”

However, Ballymun cost twice as much as was budgeted for and took twice as long as



Limerick's hidden treasure is its people and they defy stereotyping. Pictured during the Limerick Pride March last year is Sharon Arseburn from Moyross.

Cork shows passion for participation

planned. So, should we double the estimated cost of Limerick's regeneration now? The timeframe for Limerick has already been doubled from a five-year to a ten-year plan.

Not likely. Brendan argues that Ballymun's cost didn't double, saying that it was underestimated in the beginning.

"It's very difficult to budget for regeneration. Asbestos-removal. Unexpected delays. Also, at the time in Ballymun, the national economy was flying."

Did he feel embarrassed to be seeking €1.7 billion to be spent on 25,000 people over the next ten years as the country's finances collapsed?

Absolutely not!

"No! These areas were neglected and suffered awfully and went through the economic boom without getting to be part of it. By doing nothing we'll still have to pour a lot of money into these areas – whereas the long-term radical solution (of regeneration) will save money in the long-term."

He added that, "In some ways, we might be lucky because of the recession, it gives us time to hold back and reflect."

Incidentally, John Fitzgerald (whose report led to regeneration) said the investment would "pay for itself".

Fitzgerald's report also warned that Limerick needed at least 100 extra Gardai or no plan would work. Although numbers go up and down with retirements and transfers, the basic target of 100 extra officers has now been reached.

The main lesson Brendan learned from working in Ballymun was "You don't get anywhere without buy-in from the community" and it is something they have worked very hard for – and won – in Limerick.

"The people in these communities have lived through a recession for the last 25 years," he remarked. The aim is to get more children back into schooling among other crucial things. Without doing this, regeneration cannot succeed, he says.

"We may go back (to Government) and look for more powers. We're getting buy-in from all the agencies – courtesy and support – but we're not really effecting the change that is needed yet," he added.

Cork GAA is emerging from a bitter dispute over who should have their say in the selection of the county team and its managers. The dispute centred on the core Community Development principles of participation and consultation and involved clubs and players challenging board and management.

While the city's sports stars made headlines, leaders in the Community and Voluntary Sector and staff in City Hall also quietly recognised they needed to tidy up their affairs and make it easier for communities to be represented in the big and small decisions that effect people's lives.

Two years ago, the co-ordinators of eight CDPs across the city, in conjunction with Cork City Council, RAPID and Cork City Partnership, commissioned Exodea Europe Consulting to examine the issue.

Their study found solutions that are now being approved by groups across the city. The consultant's initial findings reflected the depth of the problem:

- There was no common notion of community participation and representation in the city.
- Most feedback from community representatives was ad-hoc and was only to their organisations.
- Most community reps didn't have a structure or support for reporting back to the rest of the community (eg through a community website).
- Many community reps had a mandate from a local group but were "representing" the whole community.
- The process of consultation is "still not seriously embedded in the culture of the state agencies and the local authority."
- There are 195 community and voluntary organisations registered with the City Community Forum. However,

attendance at meetings is low, members are unsure of the Forum's function and usefulness and this weakens the mandate of the elected reps.

SOLUTIONS

The following is the gist of what Cork is aiming to do:

- On information: The Forum should be reformed and a new community website for the city set up. Local community newsletters were seen as having a key role.

- On consultation: A short handbook on good consultation practice should be published.

- On involvement/volunteering: Transition year students and active retired people should be asked for 'Just 2 hours (per week)' as part of a pilot project.

- On development: Training and mentoring, ideally by experienced activists, should be offered to volunteers as their potential develops.

- On co-operation: More information-swapping sessions should be held around the city.

- On networking: The model behind the Community Safety Forum in Mahon should be adopted by communities across the city. A concept called 'chaos-conferencing' should set the agenda for meetings.

- Representing: A charter of good practice should be written and every group should back it. Work will next begin on implementing the recommendations.

For a bright and easy-to-read booklet, or a full copy of the report, contact Cork City Development Board. T: 021-4924596. E: dce@corkcity.ie

Traveller Specific Accommodation Heading Down A One-Way Street

Nick Murphy reports

45 BALLYMUN FAMILIES FACE LOSING HOMES

- Council may be in breach of law

2008 was the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, but you wouldn't know it to look at Dublin City Council's plans for Travellers in Ballymun.

The Council want to shift 45 Traveller families from an official halting site into standard housing, against the residents' wishes and in spite of laws supporting Traveller rights to culturally-suitable accommodation. The issue will go to a vote by the end of April as the Council's Draft Accommodation Programme comes before the area's 52 councillors.

The Travellers would prefer to see settled people get the houses and to stay in St. Margaret's.

The residents have their own Community Development Project on site and the project has achieved much over the years, but even experienced staff in the CDP admit they are "stunned" by this latest twist.

A campaign was mounted in early December to resist the plan.

Supporters include former Minister of State Chris Flood, various local and national Traveller organisations, Ballymun Regeneration Limited (which now believes the plan is a bad idea), and crucially - quite a number (though not yet a majority) of Councillors.

If passed, it will spell the end of Travellers as a community in Ballymun, predicted one resident. However, the Council may be breaking the law. The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, requires local authorities to have regard to the "distinct needs and family circumstances of Travellers."

Irish Traveller Movement National Accommodation Officer, Claire Davey, said she was "surprised" at the City Council because the proposal "appears to be in breach of that statutory obligation."

Could the threatened closure of St. Margaret's halting site in Ballymun mark the start of the end of Traveller Specific Accommodation and Consultation in Ireland?

"This is a national issue because if the Council push it through it will have negative implications for the survival of other sites," said CDP Accommodation Worker, Sarah Lovely. "They probably see St. Margaret's in terms of its commercial potential. IKEA is due to go across the road from us."

Local authorities across the State must adopt new Accommodation Programmes (including provision for Travellers) by the end of April.

COMMUNITY OF 60 YEARS

Travellers have been living in Ballymun for at least 60 years. In 1975 they were moved from their traditional site, near where the local library is now, to Margaret's Road and in 1997 the present St. Margaret's official halting site was built.

In the past, St. Margaret's suffered from overcrowding, difficulties with electricity supply, raw sewage seeping from drains and intermittent fresh water supply. Dumping in the area was a major problem at one point, as was graffiti.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY SITE

Although overcrowded and badly serviced, the design of the site remains family-friendly which gives a level of security to the young children simply not available in standard housing. Over the years, onsite developments have grown to provide childcare and other services and this has brought employment and training opportunities to the residents.

Damien Smith, project co-ordinator of St. Margaret's Travellers Community Association (one of four CDPs in Ballymun) said St. Margaret's is a caring and supportive community: "Many of the residents are involved in voluntary work to improve the living circumstances of local Travellers."

A CREDIT TO RESIDENTS

Working in partnership with Dublin City

Council, the residents have addressed many of the issues and St. Margaret's is a credit to them. A series of murals of scenes from the Bible graces the entrance and the site was recently honoured by the Tidy Towns committee for contributing to a cleaner Ballymun. The residents recently secured €66,000 in RAPID funding for an on-site playground.

Damien said the bad drainage and poor electrical supply are matters for Dublin City Council, as the residents cannot rectify these by their own efforts.

On overcrowding, he said, "Dublin City Council must take responsibility. There's nowhere else for couples to go when they get married and they end up being forced to live in overcrowded conditions with their relatives".

'WE'RE STUNNED!'

Now the Council's Draft Accommodation Programme calls for 40 standard houses in groups of 4/5 across Ballymun to replace the site. Presumably the murals, the childcare services, the training opportunities and the proposed playground will be swept away.

"We're stunned," says Damien. "We did detailed work with the residents on their preferences which we submitted to Dublin City Council to inform their 2009 plan. Our consultation showed 73% wished to stay, 18 people preferred bungalows and nine preferred traditional bays. Yet there seems to be no acknowledgement of (this)."

This is not the first time consultation work carried out by the CDP has been ignored by the Council. The project's submissions on behalf of the community for the 2005-'08 Traveller Accommodation Programme were not taken into account either and 25 standard houses were provided for Travellers under that plan. Four of these now lie vacant.

PROTESTS MOUNT

St. Margaret's, through their CDP, have since lodged two new submissions objecting to the draft proposals in the latest plan. The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative



Committee has also written in protest.

“Dublin City Council appear to have closed their minds to Traveller Specific Housing,” said a spokesperson for St. Margaret’s Residents Association. “Since they were first required to produce a plan that took Travellers needs into account, they have never reached their targets. Maybe they’ve just decided it’s too hard and it’s easier and cheaper to force us into houses that won’t suit. This way, the City Council will get their houses back in about three years when people who can’t adapt to standard housing move out. Then the Council can say we made ourselves homeless and refuse to provide Traveller Specific Housing.”

‘OUT THE WINDOW’

It’s the kind of thing that – should DCC succeed – might prompt other local authorities to turn their back on the law and the needs of Travellers.

“It’s as though consultation has gone out the window,” said one of the residents. “If this plan goes ahead, us Travellers will disappear as a recognisable community in Ballymun.”

“This way, the City Council will get their houses back in about three years when people who can’t adapt to standard housing move out. Then the Council can say we made ourselves homeless and refuse to provide Traveller Specific Housing.”

Owen McDonagh, a resident of the site, sees the problem in stark terms. “Would it be too strong to use the phrase ‘Ethnic Cleansing’? Are the Government once again are putting conditions on my culture and my ethnic background.”

In better times, in June 2005, President Mary McAleese attended the graduation at St. Margaret’s of participants in the Traveller Primary Health Care Programme.

One wonder what she would think of the latest ‘development’.

For more information, contact: St. Margaret’s Travellers Community Association, St. Margaret’s Road, St. Margaret’s Park, Ballymun, Dublin 1. T: 01-8622144. E: saintmargarets@eircom.net

Earlier ‘Changing Ireland’ reports from St. Margaret’s can be found in issues 17, 18 and 22: see our website archive. In 2007, ‘Changing Ireland’ ran a media skills training workshop for local resident activists. The CDP is in the middle of the halting site, the axel in the wheel, and it too faces possible demolition.

Struggle Replaces Participation

Dublin City Council

“It is proposed to replace the St Margaret’s site with approximately 40 houses in clusters of 4/5 throughout Ballymun Regeneration Project.”

- Excerpt from *Dublin City Council (DCC) Draft Accommodation Programme 2009 – 2013*.

St. Margaret’s Travellers

“It is the collective view and wish of the local community to develop the site rather than close it down.”

- *St. Margaret’s Travellers Community Association Chairperson, Colin Thomson*.

Irish Traveller Movement

“It would appear that all the good work and lessons of including residents in the design of their accommodation that were to the fore in the Ballymun Regeneration Project have been discarded for regressive policies that should be consigned to history.”

- *Irish Traveller Movement National Accommodation Officer, Claire Davey*.

Hope And Dismay Nationally

Dismay: Family evicted

A couple and their three children, including twins suffering with Down syndrome, were evicted from their home at Kilbarry halting site on January 28th, by Waterford City Council. Boulders were placed to prevent the O’Reilly family from returning.

Director of the Irish Traveller Movement Damien Peelo said it was “one of the most shocking cases” he had come across in over 10 years.

Members of Waterford Travellers CDP were working to support the family and made applications for relevant documentation under the Freedom of Information Act, though Mary Kearney

said they were meeting with “a brick wall”.

There were 156 Traveller families living in Waterford city according to a survey in October last and 34 of those families were on the housing list.

Hope: Judge backs 100 Travellers

A High Court judge on January 30th, refused to order an extended Traveller family to move from an unauthorised encampment near the M1 motorway until Dublin City Council provided a suitable alternative site for them.

Judge Michael Peart was ruling on a request by the council for final orders in proceedings brought by the council against the 100-member Gavin family.

The council had asked the judge to order the Gavins to move their 30 caravans from their existing location near the motorway to a site a couple of miles away at St Dominick’s Park, Belcamp.



SLUM TO SLUM

We Are The Women Of O'Devaney Gardens

- Report: Nadine Murphy and Ruth Murray *

We are the women of O'Devaney Gardens. We live here, this is our community. Developers and Dublin City Council argue about who pulled out or why, but the result is we are left living in substandard accommodation, in a community under stress. It is our children who have to be raised here. We are both single mothers, who work full-time, to provide for our own families and to fight for our community.

FROM SLUM TO SLUM

Our children have been looking forward to a new home. We have both been heavily involved since the beginning of the PPP process and have put a lot of time and effort into it. Now we feel totally devastated by the whole situation, not only for ourselves, but for our families and our community.

Most of the families who live here now were originally moved into O'Devaney Gardens from other flats that built in the 1930's or from tenement buildings that were so bad they were in danger of collapsing and killing everyone inside. Our families and communities were moved from slums and destitution. Now, three generations on, we are back in the slums of today.

We want what we were promised, a new community.

MODERN PROMISE

The Community Charter, which was the basis of the Redevelopment Proposals states:

"We are dealing with people's homes and lives here and the regeneration must deliver a high quality environment, housing, services and amenities to the existing community. Anything less than this would not be tolerated in an affluent area and the existing and future residents have a right to such regeneration."

LIFE IN 'THE LUXURIES'

O'Devaney Gardens is a local authority flats complex in the north west inner city of Dublin. It is quite near the Phoenix Park. The estate was built in the 1950's and is a big complex with 276 flats and four shops. The flats come in two different styles, known to the local community as the, 'Long Balconies', and the 'Luxuries'. The luxuries were originally being built by a developer in the

1950's who went bust and were taken over by Dublin Corporation (as it was called then) to provide accommodation for people who had to be moved out of condemned buildings. A public Private Partnership of its day!

A lot of the residents in O'Devaney Gardens today are second and third generation residents. Many of the community have extended family living in the flats, and a network of support. There are families here who were reared in the flats and who are rearing their children in O'Devaney Gardens, or their children's children.

ONCE VIBRANT, BUT NEVER BENEFITTED

O'Devaney Gardens was once a very vibrant community, everyone looked out for each other and it was a very safe area for children, but in the late 70's and early 80's O'Devaney Gardens saw an exodus of tenants moving out to new housing estates.

"Everyday, a local child comes into our office to look at the model of the regeneration. What are we supposed to tell her now?"

Our community went down hill, it was poorly maintained, the economy was depressed and there was very little in the way of vibrant local community or local community structures. Communal space became ripe for anti-social behaviour, leading to early school leavers and a significant drug problem. The area developed a bad name and reputation, and there were some anti-social problems, but one feeds the other, and O'Devaney Gardens become very depressed. While everyone else was benefiting from the Celtic Tiger, our community did not get the support it needed: childcare, youth services, education, adult education, and health services. Now, when the Tiger has left the building, we are the first to lose out again. This is not fair!

REKINDLING COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Today in O'Devaney Gardens residents are trying to get the community spirit to come alive again. People look out for each other, helping each other with childcare, washing, fundraising for community events and for people in trouble. There are projects and volunteer work in the community and some of

Nadine's story:

My family have lived in O'Devaney for three generations. My Nanny was one of the first tenants, my grandparents lived here, I still have a sister, cousins and my children have cousins living here. When my child was six, I hoped to be in my new home for when he was having his debts, giving it plenty of time. His debts is in less than a year!

Ruth's experience:

I have lived in these flats for 12 years, I got my flat the day before my child was born. I am from the north-west inner city of Dublin and also have extended family living in O'Devaney, including a sister, nieces and nephews. My children have cousins here. When I was pregnant with my youngest child, the dream was to have a new home for his education. He started school this September, still with no facilities.

REGENERATION WORKERS' PERSONAL TESTIMONY

the bigger problems such as drugs are getting better. There are still problems, but things have improved. There are a range of activities and facilities in the community: some of the facilities are not in a good state, but there is a vibrant community, with lots going on! We are trying, but the loss of the redevelopment was like a kick in the teeth.

LOOKING TO THE 1950s FOR INSPIRATION

In the 1950s the developer went bust, and the local authority stepped in and completed the building and provided good quality accommodation to a community in need. Why can't this happen today? Surely the economy is in a better position today than in the 1950s? And our community still needs to be regenerated. We must learn the mistakes of the previous redevelopment. It is not just new accommodation this community needs, but supports to maintain and develop a community.

FAMILY FIRST

Over the last number of years our community has gone through a rollercoaster of events from the highs of seeing models and plans of our new community, to the lows of being told the developer has pulled out. Why was our community allowed to be taken for such a ride?

We are mothers to young children, and while we love our community and have worked hard to battle for improvements and resources, we first have a responsibility to our families. At what point do we decide that staying here damages our children and their future?

Everyday, a local child comes into our office to look at the model of the regeneration. What are we supposed to tell her now?

** Ruth Murray and Nadine Murphy, are residents and Regeneration Workers from O'Devaney Gardens. Community Technical Aid, which is funded through the Community Development Programme, are Ruth's and Nadine's employers.*

CDP Employs The Regeneration Workers

In 1999, Dublin City Council decided that O'Devaney Gardens flat complex would undergo a massive regeneration. A Residents' Blocks Committee was set up to work with and on behalf of the residents.

The Block's Committee visited other communities that were also being regenerated by Dublin City Council and the advice they received from the other estates made it very clear that the process needed to slow down.

Between 2000 - 2003, a number of proposals were put on the table, but the residents of O'Devaney Gardens refused these proposals as they felt they were unsuitable for their community.

In early 2004, a decision was made to proceed with the regeneration under a PPP (Public Private Partnership). In April of that year, a draft Community Charter was drawn up and circulated to all tenants and public meetings were held by the blocks committee. In July, the nearby CDP known as Community Technical Aid (CTA) was asked to assist the O'Devaney Gardens blocks committee in this process and were centrally involved in developing a community charter and social agenda as a tool for ensuring that the tenants got the best deal possible. This charter was then passed by Dublin's City councillors and in June 2005 two regeneration workers were employed from O'Devaney Gardens under the management of CTA.

Over the years, CTA has supported the tenants of O'Devaney Gardens, carrying out tenant training and social research and strategic planning training. CTA also provided technical support and urban planning advice to residents and continue to do so. CTA are the secretariat to the Regeneration Board and have an administrative role.

- This background article was written by Community Technical Aid.

Regeneration Under Spotlight

Close to 200 development workers and community activists from across the State attended a day-long seminar in November in Trinity College Dublin.

Among the presentations - on the pros and cons of regeneration, the level of true participation involved and the results of research - was one from TCD's Dr. Andrew MacLaran.

It can be downloaded from the Combat Poverty Agency website: www.cpa.ie/research/seminars/presentations/2008-11-04_AndrewMacLaran.pdf



New book lifts the lid on regeneration

A new publication on housing and the dismantling of communities through 'regeneration' was published in December by Tasc and New Island.

Staff and volunteers in St. Michael's Family Resource Centre - the local CDP - have been involved for years in attempts to make regeneration work for the area.

'Regeneration: public good or private profit?' by Dr. John Bisset lifts the lid on a model of regeneration that "wasted public resources, and failed the needs of communities in need of those resources". The book reads like a thriller as it documents the experience of regeneration from the community perspective in St Michael's Estate and other parts of Dublin.

Official launches of the book have taken place in Dublin, Belfast, Waterford and Limerick.

In Limerick, the Regeneration Agencies want to attract €1.3 billion in private investment, although with the demise of financial capitalism it remains to be seen if this is possible. As Dr. Bisset documented, communities in Dublin had problems with private-sector involvement and Limerick people are currently reading the book with interest.

'Regeneration: public good or private profit?' is available, priced €15, from all good bookstores or directly from the CDP in St. Michael's Estate (tel. 01-4533938)



Brid McMenamin.

WHO highlights Lifford's work

- CDPs can and do support primary health care

Community reps are working with health workers in Co. Donegal so that the roll-out of frontline services at local level matches the people's real health-care needs.

A strong emphasis has been placed on taking a Community Development approach to health and so members of the community play a crucial role. Lifford-Clonleigh Resource Centre, one of nine CDPs in Co. Donegal, is among the partner organisations.

Communities in other parts of the country are taking a lead from Donegal, and basing their work on what is known as the Lifford/Castlefinn model, named after the first area in the county to set up a Primary Care Team (PCT). It was one of ten pilot projects established in various parts of the State back in 2003.

Meaningful Participation

"We have been inundated with people calling to find out how we achieved meaningful community participation," says Lifford's CDP co-ordinator, Brid McMenamin.

To cope with the demand for information, the CDP produced two booklets and a

20-minute DVD to get the message out. On the international front, the World Health Organisation (WHO) now feature the work in County Donegal on their website. The WHO coverage is remarkable as the work in Lifford is placed alongside examples of development work from Brazil, Chile, France and other countries.

So far, Lifford has taken calls and visits from Donegal to Cork and Mayo to Laois. This is partly because there is no current agreed national framework for 'Community Participation' when establishing primary care teams.

Plan Is For 600

If and when plans come to fruition, there will be around 600 PCTs nationwide as the Republic's health system shifts from its hospital-focus towards primary and community-based healthcare. It is a crucial part of the reform of the health services.

By now, Ireland should be spending around €1.5 billion per annum on these preventative measures, saving money on surgical procedures and keeping hospital numbers down. However, the roll-out has proceeded in fits and starts since first announced (in the Primary Care Strategy in 2001).

Nonetheless, there are now over 90 Primary Care Teams in operation around the State and some of these teams have sought support from CDPs. Thanks to the Community Development Programme, national initiatives such as this can be rolled out relatively quickly while respecting the principles of consultation and participation.

* To view the WHO coverage, log onto: www.euro.who.int/socialdeterminants/socmarketing/20080812_2

"Thanks to the Community Development Programme, national initiatives such as this can be rolled out relatively quickly while respecting the principles of consultation and participation."

Locals Lead Donegal To Good Health

In Donegal, real progress has taken place because local people had their say on what shape new health-focused projects should take.

The talking took place through focus groups (17 in all) and by establishing Community Health Forums (CHF) which support the participation of community representatives. Now, there are four Primary Care Teams operating in Co. Donegal (the



Lifford's pension day bus project

plan calls for 20 such teams and forums).

"Health workers now seek the advice of the community reps on the Primary Care Team, and doctors in particular have become great promoters of the Forums' work and of the community approach to promoting health," says Marie McLaughlin, Community Worker with the East Donegal Primary Care Network

Marie works a two-day week to support three of the forums and insists both commitment and resources from the HSE at national level are crucial for continued development

The successes in Lifford to date came about through collaboration between Lifford/Clonleigh Resource Centre (the local CDP) and the HSE. The CDP has continued to support the development of meaningful (and they stress the word 'meaningful') community participation and continues to ensure there is real community representation on the Primary Care Teams and Forums.

Reaches The Most Excluded

"The Lifford/Castlefinn Community Health Forum aims to act as a voice to address issues effecting the health and well-being of people from prenatal care to old age. It particularly emphasises matters of concern to the most vulnerable and excluded groups or individuals," says Marie.

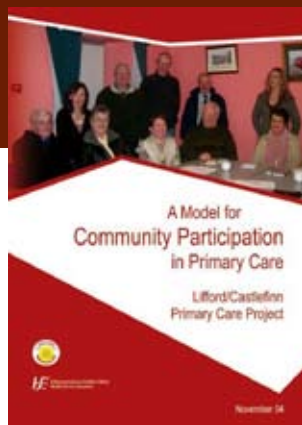
"Nonetheless, additional resources are required to reach the most disadvantaged groups. In the start up phase this was achieved by an extensive community consultation process where some 17 focus groups were convened specifically to obtain the views of the 'hard to reach' groups," she says.

The feedback from the focus groups informed the needs assessment which in turn informed both the work of the PCT and CHF. A second community consultation is now being undertaken jointly by the Lifford/Castlefinn CHF, the Lifford/Clonleigh Resource Centre and the Castlefinn Local Area Team.

Note: A list of the projects established through the work in Donegal is published on the next page.

* Nationally, Lifford/Castlefinn was one of 10 areas selected in 2001 as pilot projects for implementing the delivery of primary care and the development of community participation as an integral part of this project was supported by the HSE and the Combat Poverty Agency (through its Building Healthy Communities Programme)





How to support Primary Care in your community

A few factors were key to getting the process of Community Participation started in Co. Donegal:

1. **Local leadership.** One advantage Donegal had over other areas was that some key HSE staff in the county had a background in Community Development.

2. **Excellent Community Consultation,** involving a CDP staff member and an external person as facilitator.
3. **Support from the local CDP:** The Lifford/Clonleagh Resource Centre work is based on the Community Development approach. It continues to provide support.
4. **Representation on Primary Care Team.** Having representation on the Primary Care Team (PCT) was central. The Forum has a slot on the agenda at each Team Meeting. Community involvement was indispensable for identification of needs and actions such as the extension of doctor practice times and locations.
5. **Community Work Support.** A community worker worked on the project initially 2 days a week and was essential to the establishment and development of the

Community Health Forum and its projects.

6. **Funding and administrative support.** The funding from the HSE and from Combat Poverty's Building Healthy Communities Programme freed up time normally dedicated to fund-raising and that time was used wisely. The same stands for the administrative support provided by Lifford/Clonleagh Resource Centre. There was also support – as one might expect – for community participation from the HSE Local Health Office.
7. **Commitment.** Members of the Community Health Forum realised the significance of primary care and the opportunities it presented to improve the health of the population in the Lifford/Castlefinn area. The Forum's projects would not have been possible without their hard work and time invested.

Following Good Practice: Achievements on the ground in Donegal

Lifford/Castlefinn Community Health Forum – established with the support of the HSE and the local CDP – has been able to establish the following projects. Each one addresses social factors which impact on health and well being and the needs were identified by local people.

1. **Carers Group.** This group has participated in activities including training (manual handling), coping skills, days away, and law briefings.
2. **Pension Day Projects** in Lifford and Castlefinn. The Forum set up a weekly bus service to allow rural pensioners collect their pension, visit the local health centre if required, do their shopping and they meet up for lunch and an activity of their own choice at the CDP.
3. **Support for Doneyloop and Castlefinn Youth Clubs.** The lack of facilities for young people was the most frequently raised issue in the community consultation process. Since 2005, Doneyloop Youth Club was established and have just completed the mammoth task of establishing a purpose built youth centre. Castlefinn Youth Club is a large club with 150 members and gets ongoing support from the forum
4. **Parents and Toddler Group** in Lifford and Castlefinn: helped integrate young isolated parents and eased the transition for their children from home-life to

school.

5. **Public Relations Group:** set up to inform the local community about the work of the Primary Care Team and the Community Health Forum. It also submits articles to local newsletters.
6. **Lone Parent Groups** in Lifford and Castlefinn: A lone parent group has been established in Castlefinn.
7. **Information on Rights and Entitlements.** Staff from the Citizen Information Centres have visited many local community groups to answer queries people have on services, rights and entitlements and also ensure information is kept supplied and up to date in the local health centres.
8. **Community Pharmacy:** The opening of a pharmacy in Castlefinn greatly reduced the difficulties of low-income citizens who don't have easy access to transport.
9. **The Lifford/Castlefinn Community Health Forum is currently working on 2 new projects.** Next year the Lifford/Castlefinn Community Health Forum and the Primary Care Team will undertake joint training to identify an issue of concern to both. It is anticipated the two groups will merge and work together to respond to this issue in an integrated way. (Funded under the Community Participation Primary Health Care – Joint Demonstration Funding Initiative.
10. **Primary Care Team:** responded directly to needs identified in the consultation process through the:
 - (a) expansion of doctor practice times and locations;
 - (b) recruitment of health specialists

such as a physiotherapist occupational therapist and a social worker
(c) development of a diabetes project.

The CDP in Lifford, Co. Donegal has been very involved in developing community participation in their own Primary Care Team and in the development of other such teams in County Donegal. The need for each of the above projects was first identified by local people. They then helped in the development of the projects.

CDPs nationwide can play a leading role in ensuring communities participate in Primary Care initiatives.

For health professionals seeking to link with CDPs, they will find contact details at: www.changingireland.ie/resources.html

Family Resource Centres nationwide also have a website: www.familyresource.ie **For partnerships, log onto:** www.planet.ie and www.cpn.ie

Primary Care

Primary care covers a range of services designed to keep people well. For example, it includes screening people for disease. There is a strong emphasis on working with communities and individuals to improve their health and social well-being. This means dealing with health problems at the lowest level of complexity, often preventing people becoming ill rather than curing them afterwards.

Primary Health Care in Africa

Go to the people, not tell them where to go!

By Colin Murphy*

Women in Bundas, Uganda, working the land after being resettled (following war) with support from the charity group ACT. Taking the Community Development approach to hunger means going to the people and working with them, rather than just telling them where to go for food. It means concentrating on Primary Health Care. On pages 18-19, we look at progress in Primary Health Care in Ireland.

The first thing that you notice when you step into a feeding centre in Africa is the stench. It is the smell of the effort to clutch onto life, fetid, desperate. It is difficult to conceive of anyone being able to put up with it for long.

But, when you work in such a centre, you learn you can put up with it. It becomes a part of the environment. You learn to see that battle for survival as something proud, that your work supports, and not something pathetic, that you pity. After a while in such a place, in some famine-hit part of rural Africa, say, you come to find the successes more exhilarating than the failures are depressing. Seeing children leave on their feet (or at least happily strapped to their mothers' backs) makes seeing others leaving for the burial ground more tolerable. Success is measured simply, in statistics: mortality, weight gain, malnutrition rates. Good stats make the work worthwhile.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO FAMINE

Feeding centres have been at the core of the institutional response to famine for decades. They have given us our iconic images of white aid workers holding swollen-bellied black children, under plastic tarpaulin in some God-forsaken plot of parched land somewhere. Based on the hospital model, they make sense to us. They appeal to our instincts for centralised organisation and distribution. They echo deeply-embedded ideas of discipline and order. They allow aid workers to run and oversee aid programmes efficiently and systematically.

So it's easy to forget, especially when you work in one, how unnatural they are. They bring sick people closer together. They require mothers to leave the rest of their families for weeks at a time, in order to care for one child who is sick. They prevent mothers (almost always mothers) from doing work on their

smallholding. They reduce people who have been fighting for their survival to the status of "beneficiaries" of foreign charity, often administered by people who look suspiciously like the former colonials, except in t-shirts and sandals.

ALTERNATIVE: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

No matter. They save lives. In a crisis, that's what counts. But, around 2001, an alternative emerged. A young, dreadlocked doctor named Steve Collins visited feeding centres in central Angola, where I was then a t-shirted and sandaled young aid worker, and talked about a curious idea he had: that the systems of emergency feeding could be combined with the well-established ethos of community development. He looked at our centres, helped improve them, and then wrote a report suggesting that what we should really be doing was teaching mothers how to treat their seriously-ill children in the community.

It was controversial. Sending things out into a community – whether information or goods – means forsaking control. Some situations – such as conflict – are too unstable to permit it. Getting it wrong would risk children's lives. But Collins, backed by Concern, slowly developed the strategy, testing it, gathering scientifically measured positive results, and testing it some more.

Last year, it was backed by the United Nations and, later, at an Irish Aid meeting in Nairobi, Kenya announced it was rolling out the strategy, now known as "community-based management of severe acute malnutrition" across the country. Malawi has already made it a cornerstone of its public health policy.

IRISH AID'S HUNGER TASK FORCE

The strategy is one of the elements in the recent report of the Hunger Task Force, a group of international experts asked by Irish Aid to recommend how aid money can

best fight global hunger. The report's key recommendations have the simplicity that comes with ideas that seem, in retrospect, obvious:

Focus on smallholder agriculture, it says; improving the access of poor people to the land will increase productivity.

And promote breastfeeding, and school meals, amongst other ways of improving the nutrition of mothers and children.

Against a bleak background of rising food prices and increasing hunger, the report notes intriguing successes: Brazil has given cash to small farmers; Malawi has given them fertilisers (which the country could barely afford). In each case, incomes and productivity have risen, and hunger levels fallen.

There is an idea that runs through these successes, and lies implicit in the task force report. It is that even the poorest people must have a say over how they are helped, and freedom in how to use the help they are given.

THE BUSINESS OF AID

It may seem, sometimes, like the business of aid is blighted by task forces and special commissions, high-level panels and international quangos. But methods change, and lessons are learned, and somebody needs to roll them out.

The idea behind the Hunger Task Force was to position Ireland as a world leader in developing solutions to global hunger. Our experience of colonisation and famine makes us a natural lobbyist for those countries for whom such events are recent history, or current affairs. And it may help us give those who are struck by crises our empathy, and not just our sympathy. That, combined with good ideas, and political momentum, could be a potent force for change.

* Colin Murphy was a volunteer in Kenya with Concern in the past and today works as a journalist.

Data-Sharing as an Anti-Poverty Tool



city & county development boards

In Plain English: CBDs

County/City Development Boards (CDBs) were established throughout the State in 2000 as part of an effort to improve local government. One of the board's core tasks is to promote sustainable development. The guidelines state that each Board's Strategy must aim "to improve the economic, social and cultural quality of life while ensuring a high quality environment."

There are 34 Boards in the State and their membership includes local government politicians and officials and representatives from the social partners, state agencies and local development agencies.

Still wondering? Log onto: www.cdb.ie/whatare.htm

Fingal lead in data-sharing impresses EU

Fingal Development Board has developed a Data Hub, an internet-based, data-sharing initiative that has been singled out as an example of good practice nationally. A full public launch of the Data Hub is scheduled for this year.

Statistical information is now shared – while respecting individual privacy – between

agencies in Fingal and should make for better planning and spending in the future.

Fingal Development Board – as with other such boards around the State – is charged with improving the co-ordination of public services at local level. Data-sharing fits the bill and is a proven anti-poverty measure.

In October, 2008, the Data Hub was welcomed at Ministerial level and in December it was highlighted in a report by Comhar in a list of seven examples nationwide of good practice by City/County Development Boards. And this year, the project has been chosen for its excellence to represent Ireland at EU level.

The Data Hub works by cross-referencing data from various sources and finding out, for example, the number of community groups and volunteers for any one area of Fingal. For instance, Blakestown has 66 community groups and 2840 residents engaged in volunteering and the information is publicly available at: www.fdb.ie/fingaldatahub/. The website is being used as the broom to sweep up the data and present it for cross-referencing.

The partners behind the Data Hub are: Fingal County Council, Fingal County Childcare Committee, the Department of Social and Family Affairs, FÁS, the Blanchardstown Area Partnership, Co-operation Fingal and the HSE and VEC locally.

New data is slowly being gathered to load into the hub and the project aims to have a full public launch in the coming months.

The Data Hub relies on new software technology to "geo-code" statistics, a practice that has become popular among local government bodies in Britain. Data-sharing has been used in London to help respond to anti-social behaviour, among other things.

Not all CDBs intend to invest in formal, resourced data-sharing to the extent that Fingal has.

However, since 2007, there is an EU requirement on all public bodies holding spatial data related to the environment to advertise the fact that they have it and its availability. The EU directive is termed 'Inspire'.

St. Vincent De Paul is also reported to be adopting data-sharing as an anti-poverty strategy, while the Combat Poverty Agency has long shown how good data is a key to highlighting poverty and to identifying workable solutions.

Resource links:

Visit the Data Hub at: www.fdb.ie/fingaldatahub/

Check out the 'Report of the Fingal Data Sharing Initiative' at: www.co-operationfingal.ie/download/report_Co_Data_Initiative.pdf

For perspective: www.communityindicators.blogspot.com/

To read the 'Feasibility Study for a Local Poverty Index' written by Trutz Haase and published in March '08, check: www.combatpoverty.ie/publications

Visit the EU's partly-unfinished site to promote data-sharing in Ireland at: www.b-inspire.ie

Data-use since the 1830s

Data-analysis is not a new concept, though data-sharing marks an advance.

In the 1830s, in the USA, the temperance movement used data from poorhouses and jails to show that alcohol was the cause of crime. The American statisticians then measured the acreage of grain devoted to alcohol production to show that production was economically wasteful.

European countries began using 'social indicators' around the same time to evaluate social problems, leading to today's EU 'Inspire' directive on data-sharing on environmental matters.

Fingal Development Board

Forbairt Fhine Gall



Data sharing can lead to redesign of a whole city

Says Ann Brophy of CAFTA

we have collected, so what do you think we should do with it'. They then had focus groups and workshops and divided the work into thematic groups and that's how the redesigning of Boston city came about."

An anti-poverty strategy

"In 2006, through the Anti-Poverty Network here in Ballymun, we looked at data-sharing as an anti-poverty initiative and my work with the Data-Hub enabled us to look at and give a presentation around the fact that data-sharing is an anti-poverty strategy and a very effective one. But it is a long-term strategy and not a short-term one and it needs to be [supported] at a very high level within agencies and departments, it needs to be driven and it needs dedicated member groups."

Best practice in delivery

"The most important outcome when you are doing local area plans, seeking funding or trying to make the best use of resources in an area, is to have very up-to-date data so you can see where there is duplication, you can see where there are gaps."

"Data-sharing results in more effective

planning of services, training, education... it results in the best practice. If you want to put in a funding application, you can see who your target group is going to be and you can show there is an interest among named agencies in setting up a project.

After 'geo-coding', cost is nominal

"The most expensive part of data-sharing is geo-coding. Once your data is geo-coded, then the expense is quite nominal. Geo-coding is linking data to District Electoral Divisions, though one of the difficulties is that not all agencies store data in the same format or the geographical boundaries are different," added Ann.

Target-groups become numerically visible

Minister Eamon O'Cuiv spoke last year of his desire to see greater use made of small area statistics in delivering services. The people in Ballymun and Fingal are the ones to watch.

To read about Boston's experience, see page 23.

Ann Brophy is a CDP co-ordinator in Ballymun and a resident of Fingal. She chairs the committee that manages the Fingal Data Hub which has been invited by the EU - because of the project's excellence and good practice - to represent Ireland in a data-sharing project this year.

In late '08, Ann outlined the data-sharing concept to Minister of State, Mich  el Kitt, and received his enthusiastic backing. When implemented fully, it can lead to the redesign of a whole city or county.

Ann's involvement is backed by her board of management in Ballymun and she also contributes some extra hours as a volunteer with the Data Hub. Here, Ann talks to 'Changing Ireland':

Boston City was re-designed

"There's a brilliant project called the Boston Indicators Project and Charlotte Chan, the head, was in Ballymun and Fingal recently and we met her. Ten years ago, they were where we are now. This is what I would love to see - they gathered their data in Boston, went to all the agencies and community groups in Boston and said 'This is the data

Boston is sharing data for 10 years

- in a city where children go to bed hungry

Today, Boston is to the forefront in global terms in showing how data-sharing works. A decade old, the Boston Indicators Project (BIP) has become a cornerstone of the American city's plans for dealing with social issues.

"In low-income neighborhoods of Boston, one child in three goes to bed hungry," points out Margaret Sloat of Project Bread.

Boston has shown that - while data gives us a measure of poverty - it is better again when agencies and communities share data, because it can lead to positive change on the ground.

The project aims through number-crunching and making wise decisions "to make Boston a better place to live, work, play, and learn." Over the years, the BIP's focus has shifted from data-sharing to strategizing to policy making. Now, the BIP does all three.

On crime, the BIP found that 85% of the city's crime was concentrated in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury. These areas also experience the greatest poverty. And, in looking at the city's rich-poor divide, the BIP found that the richest five per cent of Boston's population saw their real incomes double over the last two decades while the poorest people experienced a meagre 16% rise.

The BIP was established in 1996 as a "one-stop shop" to address data disarray and the project seeks to democratise access to data, foster informed public debate, and track progress on shared civic goals. The project is guided by a diverse and cross-sectoral group and has led to greater cohesion and consensus than was previously imagined possible.

BOSTON'S TEN GOALS

Loosely speaking, just as the United Nations has its Millennium Development Goals, Boston has ten socio-economic, cultural and democracy goals. It falls to the BIP to measure progress on: civic vitality, cultural life and the arts, the economy, education, the environment, health, housing, public safety, technology, and transportation.

Over the years, the BIP has brought thousands of people together - from school children and engaged residents to academic and community-based experts.

The project seeks to build consensus, or at least broad support, for achieving its goals. The BIP claims to work "because it gets stakeholders to imagine a shared future beyond traditional time constraints, such as election cycles, and to venture across traditional boundaries, whether geographic,

socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, or generational."

It says its work is more than just a project: it is a tool for civic engagement and collaboration. The project has laid the foundations for collaborative action that will have to be sustained for a generation to fully attain what it wants.

SIMILAR CHALLENGE IN IRELAND

However, the BIP warns that "institutional resistance to change affects Greater Boston's collective ability to address important social problems". Similar resistance to change is said by Limerick Regeneration boss Brendan Kenny to be as big a threat, if not the biggest of all threats, to successful regeneration in the city.

Nonetheless, if Boston's experience shows one thing it is that data-sharing feeds directly into lobbying for policy change.

In Ireland, to a certain extent, the Combat Poverty Agency part-fulfilled the roles of data-collection, analysis and lobbying for many years. The agency is currently being absorbed into the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

Meanwhile, a new EU directive, called INSPIRE, has ordered Governments in Europe to engage in greater data-sharing at regional and national level. Boston's experience in this area may be worth learning from.

BOSTON LINKS:

www.bostonindicators.org
www.tbf.org/indicatorsProject/
www.articlearchives.com/environment-natural-resources/land-use/966894-1.html
www.unlv.edu/centers/cdclv/healthnv/introduction.html
<http://slaverevoltradio.blogspot.com/2006/08/poverty-in-boston-what-poverty.html>
www.projectbread.org



He's one of us!

Obama started out as a Community Development Worker

He's one of us! Barack Obama worked as a low-paid community organiser in the mid-80s. For a paltry \$10,000 a year, he campaigned in challenging housing estates in Chicago's South Side, where black families struggled to get basic services. It was the unglamorous work typical of all community work - getting asbestos removed, getting landlords to undertake repairs, but with an explicit focus on helping local people to be the agents of change, not doing it for them. "It's your

community," he is reported to have insisted.

Obama has spoken of the huge impact of those years in community work. "It was on these neighbourhoods that I received the best education I ever had" he said in the speech announcing his candidacy. It "taught me a lot about listening to people as opposed to coming in with a predetermined agenda."

Community workers are collaborators, we work to bring people together around shared goals, and his commitment to those values



resonated throughout the campaign - and will be sorely needed in the coming months.

• The above report was written by Radhika Bynon who posted her comments on a British website promoting social change. From an Irish perspective, Obama is "one of us" in an even deeper sense, having Irish ancestors. The website Radhika posted her comments to provides a British perspective on Community Development issues: <http://comlinks.beepweb.co.uk/linksuk/>

Funding for Galway garden projects

Two projects in Galway received funding from the Department of the Environment under the Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund to develop their community gardens. Westside Community Organic Garden gets €500 while Ballybane/Mervue CDP receives €1,351 for their community organic garden.

Issue 27 of 'Changing Ireland' was a green edition (in terms of production as well as content) and reported on Ballybane's success. To read more, log onto www.changingireland.ie and download Issue 27 or go to the Resources section where there is even more detail.

Cork's 3 new teams

Three new Primary Care Teams (PCTs) were launched in West Cork - in Dunmanway, Skibbereen and Mizen - in mid-October of last year.

More teams are being set around the country. The Combat Poverty Agency are currently working in partnership with the HSE (through its Consumer Affairs Unit and its Primary, Community and Continuing Care Directorate) to pilot models of community participation in PCTs in 19 areas.

Who gets

CHANGING IRELAND

The next print edition of 'Changing Ireland' will be published in May. While we are expanding our website, the printed magazine remains just as important as before. It still reaches at least twice as many people as we reach through our website.

'Changing Ireland' has a print circulation of 5000 copies and goes to a lot more people than those working in or managing CDPs.

While 11% of our readers work in CDPs and they are the most avid readers, our readers are also drawn from the wider world of community policing, local development, elected TDs, Senators and MEPs, students of community development, university libraries, city and county enterprise boards, disability organisations, NGOs, trade unions, national umbrella bodies, state agencies such as the NESC, the media, RAPID, CLAR, LEADER and other programmes, Pobal.

The magazine is distributed to senior civil servants and to other staff working in community-related positions. The magazine also goes directly to the homes of a couple of hundred Community Development workers and volunteers who have subscribed independently over the years.

Up to 2,200 more people download the magazine from our website.

To subscribe or unsubscribe to our print edition, contact the administrator by email at admin@changingireland.ie or phone 061-458090 to talk to Tim directly. The editor's number is 061-458011.

Read about an already established and successful scheme - and the role of the local CDP in that success - on pages 18 and 19. The World Health Organisation has drawn attention to the work accomplished in Donegal.

Campaigners afraid to speak out

The Equality & Rights Alliance (ERA) has continued to campaign following Government decisions that have led to the demise of the NCCRI, the impending absorption of the Combat Poverty Agency into the Department of Social and Family Affairs and a decline in the position of the Equality Authority and the Human Rights Commission.

"The state bodies established to support social justice and fairness for all have been dismantled in a matter of months," says the ERA. "What's worse, many representative groups are afraid to speak out in case they too are silenced under the guise of recession economics."

ERA represents many national and local organisations and groups, including CDPs. It recently urged members to write in protest to the Taoiseach.

More info: www.eracampaign.org

Projects down 6% as Programme provides €21m

Core funding of €20,802 million has been allocated for 2009 to 177 projects under the Community Development Programme.

The Programme pays the salaries of around 350 workers who are employed by the voluntary boards of local Community Development Projects and it also covers overheads in community centres run by these boards.

While Programme funding is down 15% from the €24.5m allocated in 2008, projects' frontline services and activities have been protected to a degree in that costs were reduced elsewhere, at regional support level and within the Department.

Nonetheless, the drop in core-funding means CDPs have had to cut their spending in 2009 by 6%. Partnership Companies and other Government-funded community initiatives have also experienced cuts.

As far back as November, the Minister acknowledged the reduction would "present significant challenges in the short-term" but added that the Programme will "continue to support the mobilisation of local communities to tackle disadvantage."

A number of projects have written to the Department and the Minister to point out the negative impact of the 6% cut on activities at local level.

In the past, the Programme's Support Agency structure accounted for 10% of the overall Programme budget and this was dropped during 2008, prior to the recession biting hard. During 2009, technical and legal services are being provided directly or indirectly from the Department to projects on a need-only basis.

Without the Support Agencies, projects are now networking more in some parts and collaborating to fill the gap. The Department also recognised the need to connect more with projects at regional level and in November the Eastern Region Network meeting of CDPs was jointly organised by the CDPs and by the Department. However, this practice may not be continued.

Currently, some projects are being reviewed, although it is not precisely clear what the

purpose is. This follows a review of the Programme which took place last year. The Programme is now in its 19th year and has been regularly reviewed. It represents some of the best value spending by any Government Department. For every euro received by CDPs, two more euro are raised elsewhere to triple the impact, as CDPs in the Eastern Region demonstrated two years ago. Nationwide, tens of thousands of volunteer hours are also given freely.

Meanwhile, projects are planning a national meeting shortly to address questions over the reviews and other matters of concern to CDPs and their communities.

Two-thirds of CDPs are in urban areas, one-third in rural. There are about 180 projects, with 118 in RAPID areas and 19 in CLAR areas.

Independent study of Programme

The Ballymun-led study into setting up a bottom-up National Structure for the Community Development Programme is progressing with Grainne Healey and Hibernian Consultants carrying out the work.

The Programme for many years had a National Advisory Committee, but it was disbanded over a year ago as the Department began a review of the Programme's structures. A regional network survives in most regions and projects have their say through bodies such as the Community Workers Co-op, The Wheel and through the regional networks, but the Programme currently lacks a collective voice to speak up for the most marginalised communities in Ireland.

The researchers have received 111 filled-out questionnaires and met with projects at five locations around the country. The aim is to identify possible models for a national office for the Programme. Of 111 projects polled, 110 supported the concept.

So far, it has been suggested that the following would be necessary for a national structure to work: there should be a minimum of two staff and the office could be located in an existing CDP, the Regional Networks would need to be strengthened, an Annual National Conference would determine the remit of the national body, and a variety of funding options need to be examined.

Dublin projects, through the Eastern Region Network, said the study should include a review of the 110-plus submissions made last year to the Department as part of a review of the Programme.

"We are trying to establish a national voice to advocate on behalf of and support the



Emma Freeman.

Programme which is important especially in these times of cutbacks," said Emma Freeman who is one of those behind the study.

"Other development programmes – RAPID, Partnerships, FRC's and LDTF's have such a voice, the Community Development Programme is the only government funded local development programme not to have one."

The Programme is 19 years old this year and supports around 180 volunteer-led CDPs around the country.

Emma urges projects that have not yet made a contribution to the study and who wish to do so to contact her. Emma works with CAP in Ballymun. T: 01-883-2159. E: emma.freeman@axis-ballymun.ie

The Programme works: Measured impacts

The following shows part of the impact of the Community Development Programme in disadvantaged communities in 2006:

- 153,660 hours contributed by volunteers (equaling 4390 weeks' work or approximately 94 years' work).
- Over 6,000 groups received information/advice.
- 367 new groups were started up.
- 30,697 people were in education and training through CDPs.
- 257,704 people received resources/services
- 240,174 people received information/advice.
- 1,400 additional staff were employed through CDPs.
- €35 million in additional funds was generated by CDPs (on top of the Programme budget).

The statistics were quoted in a background paper on the Community Development Programme prepared by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in 2007.

A number of projects are currently being examined to establish the Programme's impact in greater detail.



Regeneration and Tenants Participation

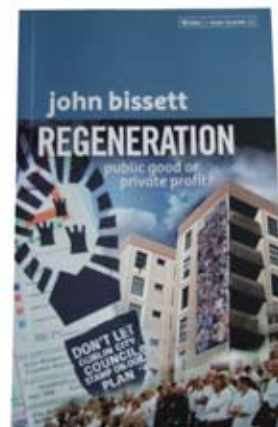
Literature review:

REGENERATION WORKS IF THERE ARE NO VESTED INTERESTS

The research article here was born out of a CDP co-ordinator's frustration and it shares useful information for anyone engaged in Community Development and working to promote tenants' participation in housing issues.

In the author's case, a Regeneration programme was announced for a dilapidated estate, the community's hopes were raised and a sustained period of consultation followed. Then everything stalled. The consultation cost €1m and there was little to show for it. The local residents' group resigned from the process and folded up in desperation. The CDP in the area was the main local representative group, but relations with the local authority were not what they should have been. The CDP co-ordinator invested time in researching housing law and found to his surprise "a clearly worked out step-by-step policy" that made it legally binding (since 1992!) for local authorities to involve tenants in estate management. "This might have national implications as it is probably the same in other areas," said the co-ordinator. Perhaps, though estate management is the norm in many places. With equal surprise, the community were caught off guard – this time in a good way – by the appointment of a new Chief Executive of housing in November. "Suddenly, Dundalk Urban District Council completely changed their tune. The new man is all for tenants participation, he wants to get powers delegated to estate management committees, to get the committees set up quickly... it's all action once more," said the co-ordinator, Maurice McConville of Le Cheile CDP.

In the meantime, not to be caught out ever again, Maurice – a reporter for 'Changing Ireland' – has highlighted the law on housing. Local authorities need to be held to account across the country, he says, and CDPs are in the right place to do so.



A new book has been published that lifts the lid on failed regeneration schemes in Dublin.

'Regeneration: public good or private profit?' by John Bisset is available from all good bookstores, priced €15.

Maurice McConville writes

The concentration of disadvantaged people in local authority estates is not an accident. It is the outcome of planning or the lack of planning, over many decades. If CDPs are to have any impact in run-down urban areas, we need to address housing as an issue. To do this we need to have a handle on how we have got to where we are now.

Most disadvantaged people in Ireland live in local authority housing. This is a simple fact but why is this the case? The reasons are mostly to do with Ireland's historical treatment of social housing, as welfare housing.

Cathal O'Connell in 'The State and Housing in Ireland' explains that the concentration of disadvantage within areas of social housing is because of continuing government policies favouring home-ownership. O'Connell's book is an in-depth and historical study of housing in Ireland. Home ownership rose from 60% (in 1961) to 82% (in 1999) and is one of the highest in Europe. At the same time, Ireland's social housing has shrunk from 18.4% (in 1961) to 8% (in 1999). Compared to other European countries, Ireland's social housing is small, with Netherlands at 35% and the UK at 25% (according to an EU survey in 2001).

O'Connell says we have a two-tier housing system here with "public squalor amid private

affluence." Successive governments have viewed public housing as some form of welfare and not given it the support and finance required to develop a strong public housing sector, as exists in other countries.

Attempts to rescue social housing from decades of neglect were made in 'A Plan for Social Housing' (a 1991 White Paper) which led to the Housing Miscellaneous Act 1992. This law beefed up the responsibility that local authorities had for housing, increasing their responsibilities.

Local authorities were also made more accountable towards their tenants and the wider community and obliged by law to be more strategic in the planning. Under Section 9 of the Act, local authorities have to produce a written "statement of policy for the effective performance of their function of managing their rented accommodation." This has to include how they engage with their tenants. This is useful information if you are attempting to work with the local authority around housing issues and tenants' participation.

Unfortunately, the expected progress in the management of social housing has not materialised as expected. The reasons for this has been explored in an article published in 2002 by Michelle Norris and Cathal O'Connell called 'Local Authority Housing Management Reform In The Republic Of Ireland: Progress To Date - Impediments To

Future Progress.'

The article raises the question: "Why has progress been slow and patchy throughout the country?" The authors conclude that local authorities' progress in reforming aspects of housing management has been impeded by powerful vested interests within the system.

In his book, O'Connell dismisses, "...too much tenants participation practice as being too narrowly focused around the interest of the dominant power holders within the housing service."

In our work, many CDPs will try to promote tenants' participation. However to do this we need to be clear where it is leading and not be used to deliver another unequal system, where tenants and residents are responding to an agenda set by vested interests within the system.

We need to understand the law around housing, the responsibility of local authorities and the rights of tenants. But we also need to see the weaknesses in the systems of management.

For regeneration to take place, the capacity of tenants and residents needs to be developed alongside a critical analysis of how housing is managed and in whose interests. If we achieve some sort of a level playing field – where the agenda is not that of housing management, but is a genuine attempt to meet the communities needs – then we can make strides rather than just inching forward.

Roscommon's Famous Quilt SHOWS UP IN BRUSSELS



The Roscommon Quilt has turned into a magic carpet as it continues to travel far and wide. MEP Jim Higgins was highly impressed and recently brought the Quilt to Brussels, along with participants and development workers from Roscommon CDP: Nora Fahy, Patricia Madden, Bernadette Downs, Monika Kaboth, Mary Mongan, Margaret Mongan, Freha Faleem and Maria Harris.

Fine Gael MEP Jim Higgins brought eight women from the Roscommon Women's Network to Brussels late last year. The women – part of the group of 28 'intercultural quilters' who produced the now famous Roscommon Quilt – were guests of Mr Higgins during a celebration of Irish and African music at the Institute for Ireland in Europe. They also attended a conference with him.

The Roscommon Quilt has toured many parts of Ireland and this was its first international venture. It was created by women from Ireland, UK, Pakistan, America, Russia, Brazil, Germany, and a number of African countries.

Mr Higgins said he was delighted to be able to showcase the CDP's work.

"I think the project is a fantastic representation of what exactly the year of

intercultural dialogue was all about. The project has brought together people, cultures and identities that would not normally come together in everyday life. We need to remove barriers to further integration we need to understand people living in Ireland who are not Irish and we need to help them understand what it means to be Irish so that we have a mutual respect for each other and our cultures," he said.

Before going to Brussels, the Roscommon Quilt was used to unveil a stone marking the UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty on October 17th.

For more information, contact Roscommon Women's Network CDP. T: 094-962-1690. E: NFahy@rwn.ie or MHarris@rwn.ie



Are Travellers off their rockers?

Dear Horace,

I hear some of them Travellers you'd be having in the magazine fancy a go at becoming Taoiseach. [Ed's note: Read our report on this on page 6] Are they off their rockers or what? I mean who'd want that job right now?

Some people love to pick on minorities. Look at poor Obama – he's black and they gave him the worst job in the world. Can we talk them out of it Horace?

Mrs. Cant Fathomchange,
Chairperson (retired),
Tiger Preservation
Association,
Ireland

Dear Mrs Cant,
Look, they may be onto something. The Taoiseach gets paid more than President Obama or just about any other leader for that matter.

On the other hand, I think leaders nowadays get penalty points if they smile. When's the last time you saw Obama or Cowen smile? Since no Dubliner could keep to keep a serious face for long, I'm ruling out all Dublin Travellers for the job. That means we're talking about a Traveller Taoiseach from the sticks.

Which brings up a new problem –if she gets elected and needs Traveller Specific Accommodation I think she'll have to commute.

I'm Dying To Find Out Is Food Safe?

Dear Horace,

Isn't it mad that a couple of months ago they could find poison in pork products yet still reassure us that there is no risk to our health even if we ate a jumbo roll for breakfast dinner and tea for the last 3 months. Before this dioxin scare those same rolls were a heart attack in tin foil. What's going on? Is it true that sausages and ham are safe to eat or is the government telling porkies?

Yours truly,
Breakfast Roll Man
Petrol Service Station

Horace Says

Dear Breakfast Roll Man,

What doesn't kill you makes you stronger but if it tastes good it's generally bad for you!

I'm Worried About The Economy

Dear Horace,

Why is the country going from bad to worse? Everything was going so well and now look at us – the housing market, the banks, the pork industry all taking a hammering. What's next and what can we do?

Sincerely

Eoin D. Banks

Don't Know How Much We Owe
Dublin 54

Horace here to help!

Well for a while we were all on the pigs back living high on the hog but now our asses are all in the bacon slicer because the government has made a sows ear of our silk purse economy. The tigers gone and the chickens are coming home to roost so Dublin Zoo and the poultry farmers are next to be hit. The only way we'll get through this is by paying more excise duty on alcohol, increasing our human exports and qualifying for the World Cup.



REAL VOICES: Dublin drug-users on outreach

In Inchicore, Dublin, the most vociferous promoters of the Outreach Centre are the clients. Two drug-users told Allen Meagher how they value the place and urge their pals to attend before problems lead to prison.

1st DRUG-USER: "I was locked up for a few months there, but I'm linked up to

Fergal (a counsellor) here now. When I was in prison I got a few people to link up with the counsellor here and you don't know the difference it made to them when they got out. I've told a few of my mates they should call in here or they'll end up in prison."

2ND DRUG USER: "You can get in off the street and you have support if you're having a bad day. If you think you're going to use, you can come in and have a talk with someone, you know what I mean. If you're having some family problems, they'll help you out."

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR, Rita Fagan:

"It's totally confidential, we have childcare here, there's a good team here. You've tea and biscuits and good company. It makes a real difference to drug users."

Everyone knows the cost of going to prison, to both the person and the State. Community development initiatives can save society from much harm in the long run.

For more information on the work of our CDP in Inchicore – St. Michael's Family Resource Centre – check out: www.stmichaelsestate.ie/projects/family_eng.html

On Regeneration: In memory of Katelyn Ryan

It's not widely known but a child died in an arson attack in a disadvantaged area in Limerick city in 2003. Katelyn Ryan from Prospect was four. Seven members of her family were injured and the arsonist is now serving a life sentence. The incident happened in one of the country's most deprived and gang-dominated areas.

The establishment (including the media) took little notice and the catalyst for the regeneration of Limerick's alienated and disadvantaged local authority estates came

not then, but two years later - when two more children were nearly burned to death in their car in an arson attack in Moyross. This was, in media-term, 'a story with legs' because the victims survived. The media coverage, community protests and general public outrage put pressure on politicians to take radical action.

Regeneration chief Brendan Kenny credits then Minister, Michael McDowell, as being the key politician to respond.

This year, Regeneration receives €28 million (half of which will go towards relocation, controversially) and over the next decade Limerick needs €1.7 billion from the Government to recover from the decades of

deprivation.

Read our coverage of Regeneration in Dublin and Limerick inside. Also, Nick Murphy tells how he "found his feet in Ballymun" while Regeneration was still a foreign word in Ireland.

We also report from St. Margaret's in Ballymun where the Community Development Project represent, support and include people who have lost out in Regeneration.

The coverage is dedicated to the memory of Katelyn Ryan and to all those, particularly children and older people, who suffered while the Celtic Tiger swept by without giving them a lift.

Video Competition

'Changing Ireland' is inviting you to get out your digital camera and send in your short videos. Most cameras nowadays have a video option. Win the competition and we will feature your project on our home page.

We're looking for videos no longer than 2 minutes, showing what Community Development work your CDP is involved in, the difference it makes, and the people it makes a difference to.

GUIDELINES

Videos should be made on the theme of Community Development in your area.

1. Videos must be original material produced by the CDP.
2. Maximum length is 2 minutes. If you need to, send in a number of short clips

and we can edit and merge them for you.

3. Do not include any copyright material such as soundtracks of recorded artists.

4. Competition is open to all CDPs. Other organisations engaged in Community Development are also welcome to send in videos for upload onto our regular video page.

5. Videos must be received by 5pm on Friday, April 3rd. The winning video(s) will receive full publicity from 'Changing Ireland'

and where possible from the national media.

6. Videos should be e-mailed or posted on CD in a suitable format e.g. AVI, MP3 or one of the numerous video files. Do NOT convert them to DVD format. If you wish to use a mobile phone to shoot video, call the 'Changing Ireland' office for details of where to send the video to. Remember, quality is important. Contact details on pages 2.

