

CHANGING IRELAND



ISSUE 1

The National Newsletter of the Community Development Support Programmes

SUMMER '01

**A taste
of
things
to
come...**

Inside

- Women of the North West
- Religious persecution in Ireland
- No Nite-Link but a Rural Lift
- Minister Ahern interviewed
- Kerry kids in politics

Challenging stereotypes

This publication and the projects featured inside are funded by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs

Researchers find CDP work “extremely impressive”

- Though impact not widely enough appreciated

IN a recent evaluation of the Community Development Programme, one of the three programmes under the umbrella of the Community Development Support Programmes, it was found that the impact locally is “extremely impressive”. However, the positive impact of CDP work is not widely enough appreciated, at regional and national level and, indeed, sometimes at local level.

The evaluation, summaries of which are now available, was carried out in November of last year and the results are being presented to community projects around the country as and when regional seminars take place.

The work was carried out by Nexus Research, in association with Farrell Grant Sparks Ltd., and the following details come from the summary report.

The objectives of the evaluation were to:

- * Describe and present the rationale for funding of the CDP as part of an overall social development and anti-poverty strategy;
- * Measure and document the impact of the work of the CDP; and
- * Make recommendations for modifications on the Programme structure, policy or funding to enhance its effectiveness in an efficient and cost-effective way.

The researchers approached the study at both individual project level and also at overall programme level. An ‘evaluation handbook’ was circulated to 83 projects and completed by 58 of these - representing an overall response rate of 70%. When the handbooks were completed they were entered into a project database.

Meanwhile, the Programme Level Evaluation was informed by:

- * A review of documentation; including reports and plans generated by CDP projects, Support Agencies and Specialist Support Agencies; Departmental documentation on the Programme (including financial and monitoring data); and the results of other relevant research and evaluation exercises related to the Programme’s broader ‘operational environment’.
- * Consultation with ‘central Programme stakeholders’, including Departmental personnel, members of the Advisory Committee, representatives of the Combat Poverty Agency, Support Agencies and Specialist Support Agencies.
- * A survey of ‘Working Partners’:- based on a sample of representatives of various programmes and organisations with which the CDP has built working relationships to varying extents.

■ Main Conclusions

The main conclusions were very interesting and mostly positive. At Project Level, it was found that a certain proportion of CDP projects have reached the stage where the impact of their

work has become very evident within the confines of their own community and beyond. These represent most of the longer established projects (about one third of the total) and the achievements very clearly build upon a history of local capacity and awareness-building, group formation, support and networking over a number of years.

For these projects impacts are extremely impressive - both in terms of the local development infrastructure created and sustained; and in terms of the partnerships formed with statutory agencies to develop and/or mainstream new responses to social exclusion. Furthermore, there is also clear evidence of real improvements in living conditions resulting from this.

For the majority of projects not yet at this stage of development, current outputs strongly suggest a movement in this same direction - through building capacity both in individual and in organisational terms.

The overall impact represents very significant strides forward in particularly disadvantaged communities for relatively small amounts of investment.

Results from the evaluation confirm that Community Development Projects have contributed very significantly to changing circumstances and creating opportunities in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the country. This is true across a range of indicators used, including:

- (a) Progression and improvement in circumstances for individuals through the design and delivery of targeted training and education; and the ongoing provision of information, support and resources.
- (b) Enhanced capacity of people in disadvantaged areas, and from disadvantaged groupings, to identify their own needs and become involved in developing their own appropriate responses. CDP activity has very clearly contributed to the establishment of a successful ‘local development infrastructure’ in most cases in this respect; and has attracted considerable resources to the community as a result.
- (c) Led to improved changes in the ways in which other services and programmes are delivered locally - based on forming working relationships with a range of service providers and development agents; and on a cumulative understanding of community and target group needs.

N.B.: These overall conclusions are undoubtedly linked to the sustained voluntary commitment of a large number of people within these communities.

■ At programme level

Secondly, at Programme Level, internal structures and procedures have evolved to accommodate fairly rapid Programme growth over a relatively short period of time. In a

positive sense this has allowed for:

1. An approach to project funding and support that offers the opportunity for some stability in planning and implementing long-term appropriate interventions in and with disadvantaged communities.
2. Effective networking amongst projects at regional level.
3. Representative mechanisms for ensuring the contribution of all Programme stakeholders to national Programme development.
4. A fairly open approach to communication and sharing of information on an ongoing basis.
5. Consistency in project development, through the work of Support Agencies (especially in relation to community development approach and principles, skills enhancement, and good practice generally).

Effective and mutually beneficial working relationships have been developed with a range of other development programmes and initiatives at community level. In the vast majority of these cases, the Community Development Programme is acknowledged as a key contributor to combating social exclusion. This was evident from the survey of ‘working partners’ at local level. However, these relationships are not as manifest at national level.

Most outstanding issues or challenges are associated with the need for greater clarity in some areas; the need for standardisation and consolidation in others; and the need for a longer-term strategic dimension and effective promotion of this at the national level.

■ Greater clarity needed

Greater clarity is needed in relation to:

- * The rationale, criteria and procedures employed to arrive at decisions in a range of areas - notably regarding decisions to support new projects or new programme initiatives; as well as decisions to continue or discontinue such support.
- * The precise roles of Regional Support Agencies and Specialist Support Agencies in supporting projects across a wide range of development needs, locations and challenges; and in contributing to building policy-related Programme capacity in the regions.
- * Differences, and relationships between, Family Resource Centres, core-funded projects and Community Development Projects - and what are the implications of these differences for selection, support, evaluation and other Programme functions?
- * The extent and role of support and liaison functions associated with Departmental staff in relation to both internal Programme and external interests - this is becoming more important with Programme expansion.

• Main findings - see p13

INSIDE

This first issue of 'Changing Ireland' aims to show the wealth of work being produced under the Community Development Support Programmes. It features the views of people working in community projects funded by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. The stories cover Family Resource Centres, Community Development Projects and Core-Funded Groups around the country. Not every area or issue is covered (city projects, especially in Dublin, will feature strongly in the second issue due out in October). The following issues received coverage in this issue: disability, women's movements, travellers, anti-drugs work, strategic planning, health, regional networking, among others. A strong sub-theme of the stories was to focus on the role played, not alone by staff, but by volunteers in community development. Attention is given to the controversy surrounding Minister Ahern's surprise announcement of a new agency for Family Resource Centres. And of course there are interviews on page 27 with women who practice an oft-despised and misunderstood religion - check your prejudices out when you read this article.

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INSIDE YOUR NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of 'Changing Ireland' will focus particularly on city projects, especially in Dublin. Continuing our focus on the Community Development Support Programmes, we will look at the role of Support Agencies and Policy Workers. We will look again at how Family Resource Centres are reacting to their rapidly changing circumstances. Other articles will examine; the work of the Conference of Religious Superiors in Ireland; RAPID and implications for the CDSPs; working with refugees and asylum seekers. A regular page focusing on pilot projects

UN ranks Ireland high - in terms of poverty

This month, Ireland was ranked a lame 16th out of 17 Western states in the latest league table published by the United Nations Development Programme. Proportionately more people in Ireland live in poverty compared to any other industrialised country, excepting the U.S. As the Combat Poverty Agency highlighted last December, "in a fast-growing economy, a rising tide does not lift all boats equally."

The Community Development Programme meanwhile, according to the recently released Nexus Evaluation (see opposite page) has been hailed as a major success in delivering value for money, partly because of the huge voluntary commitment by people around the country working in their local areas. For the government's £17 million investment (up substantially on previous years) the impact was "extremely impressive."

The Nexus Evaluation should not be dismissed as heavy reading. It is enlightening to finally have evidence that community development work in Ireland makes a real and substantial difference. The report's findings, while particular to CDPs, are indicative of positive impacts across the community development spectrum, including all three programmes under the umbrella of the Community Development Support Programmes (CDSPs).

This newsletter was established to promote the work of projects country-wide and to assist the constituent parts of the CDSPs to network more effectively. It is funded by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs.

Originally the newsletter was intended for projects in the Community Development Programme. However, as the Community Development Support Programmes umbrella took shape, the newsletter was given the wider role of servicing the three constituent programmes. In mid-May, Minister Dermot Ahern announced that a new agency will be set up to administer the Family Resource Programme. The planned changes have yet to take place. In the meantime, the CDSPs remains a three-programme family and 'Changing Ireland' aims to address the interests of every reader.

Meanwhile, regarding Ireland's position on the U.N.'s league table on poverty, if the situation is to improve, the investment by government in community development must continue to increase.

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CDN Moyross takes on 'Changing Ireland'

SINCE April a small bungalow in Moyross, a local authority housing estate on Limerick city's northside, is the headquarters for this new national newsletter of the Community Development Support Programmes. "Changing Ireland" is produced from an office at Unit 3, Sarsfield Business Centre, Moyross. It is the result of the work of management and staff of the Community Development Network Moyross (CDNM) who responded to an invitation from the Profile Sub-committee two years ago. The sub-committee sought proposals from projects, support agencies etc. to publish a newsletter and raise the profile of the Community Development Programme.

It was Tony Lynch, a resident of Moyross for over 25 years and a founder member of the CDNM, who first suggested taking up the challenge. The experience of producing a local newsletter and their involvement in organising a community journalism course provided the confidence it could be done. The conviction that such an initiative should be led by its target group provided the motivation for the CDNM to apply.

Tony and staff members Juan Carlos Azzopardi and Geraldine Clohessy began the process and got great help from Limerick Leader journalist Billy Kelly and media trainer Tommy Byrne. The sub-committee and the Department were keen on the idea of locating the newsletter in one of the communities and that one of the CDP's take the responsibility.

"We felt and still feel that the newsletter should be project focused and be produced

by and be about the people with experience of poverty and exclusion. If readers feel it's full of jargon and empty of real people struggling to better their communities then we're not achieving what we set out to do," said Juan Carlos Azzopardi, Project Co-ordinator with CDNM.

In March, Allen Meagher was employed as editor of the national newsletter. Allen is a journalist with experience in regional newspapers in both Northern Ireland and the Republic and as a development worker in West Africa.

The editor's role will be to put this vision into practice by setting up a network of regional reporters, an editorial team and provide appropriate media training to support those projects and people who participate.

"Changing Ireland" is non-profit making and will be distributed freely to readers throughout the country who work with Community Development Projects, Family Resource Centres and other project receiving core funding by the Department. It will also go to other government departments, Local Development groups and other organisations in the community and voluntary sector.

"It is a source of great pride to us in Moyross to be spearheading this national initiative. The fact that the office is located here and not in Dublin or even in a city centre location shows everything doesn't have to be centralised and it is a vote of confidence in a local project's ability to deliver nationally", said Elaine Slattery, Chairperson of the Community Development Network Moyross.



● Allen Meagher

The Editor

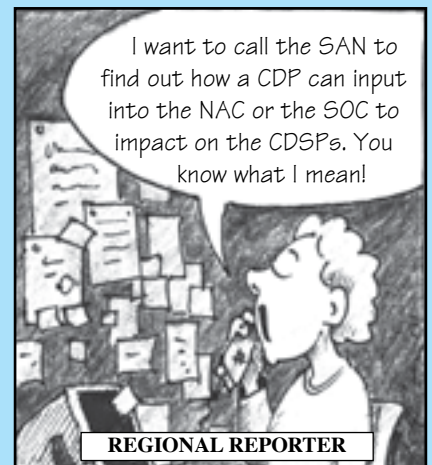
Before starting as editor of 'Changing Ireland', Allen worked as a journalist in a variety of local newspapers. In 1995, he went as a volunteer to The Gambia, West Africa, then under military rule. The APSO posting saw him work for over 2 years in a civil service position as a journalist / publications officer for the National Council for Arts and Culture.

In 1999, Allen graduated from UL with a Masters in International Studies and lectured in media studies and sociology.

He is delighted with his new position as it should allow him to bring together the skills he has learnt in journalism, development work and media training. He was also pleased the project was located appropriately in a community setting.



● Geraldine Clohessy, administrator and development worker with Community Development Network Moyross Ltd, the project responsible for producing "Changing Ireland".



As 11 year old passes ECDL . . .

. . . children in Co. Wexford become computer course teachers

UNBELIEVABLE but true. Children are teaching computer classes to other children in Raheen, Co. Wexford.

Four years ago, the voluntary management committee of Raheen Family Resource Centre had a decision to make - what first to buy? Even though none of them knew how to use a computer, they decided to get one.

The committee, including two priests, immediately signed up for a Beginners Computers Course and the ball rolled from there. Now, two local children are running courses for other children in the I.T. centre attached to the Family Resource Centre. One of them, Ian Curtis, is the second youngest person in the country to pass an ECDL course (European Computer Drivers Licence).

"I'm not the youngest, but nearly. There was a girl on the Late Late Show once who was 10 when she finished it," said Ian.

Only for he got chlorine in his eyes swimming and had to miss a day in the I.T. centre because his eyes were sore, he would also have been 10 when he finished the course. (He finished the last module on the day of his 11th birthday).

"My mammy was doing the course and she said I should try it. I started off on a Saturday night and I think it lasted two months," recalled Ian.

Now he gives classes with another Raheen girl, Maura Carroll, who was 12 when she passed the course. So who better to explain what ECDL is all about!

"ECDL is just basically seven modules or separate mini-courses," said Ian. "You do, for example, Powerpoint which is you get pictures and do presentations. It's brilliant, it's my favourite module. You do an Internet



● Computer teacher Ian Curtis, Raheen, Co. Wexford with Nicole Cody from Adamstown in the computer classroom.

module and a Wordprocessing module. The Database and Spreadsheets modules are like each other. With Spreadsheets, for example, it's mostly about maths. Say you get a group of people and put in their names and a number of days and how much money they have, you might want to figure out how much money they spend on different days. The computer will do it for you," he smiled.

Ian can type fairly fast, though only with two fingers and he wants to work in computers when he grows up. Incidentally, his favourite websites are yahoo.com, playstation.com and phone_a_friend.com.

Last summer, Ian and Maura trained seven other children in a Beginners Computers Course. They got the students, all still in

primary school, to produce a mock-up newsletter and each one produced a personalised school timetable and labels for their copybooks. It was a 15-hour course, spread over five days and Ian and Maura received £35 each for doing the training.

"Each student paid £10 to do the course, so that was £70 and we split it between Ian and Maura. It was better than picking strawberries," said Marie-Louise, referring to the more traditional summer work sought after by children and teenagers in Wexford.

Ian and Maura were booked to train more eager students this summer.

About 60 children, women and men representing 10% of the parish population have completed the ECDL course in Raheen.

'We need a pub and a graveyard'

LIKE many successful projects, the community in Raheen, Co. Wexford, consulted everyone in the community to identify the most pressing needs. Marie-Louise Byrne, manager, explained:

"Molly Carroll, Raheen, did a rural development course in UCD and that got the ball rolling because we then did a social audit with the 548 people in the parish. Young fellas on pushbikes went all over the place asking questions. That led onto a workplan and much more. The first need was for childcare. Another top need was for a graveyard, which we still haven't got. Yeah, that's right - childcare and a graveyard! But, the main need was for a pub. There were two post offices, but no pub, though we can't do much to fix that!"

Today, Raheen Family Resource Centre is the only community creche for 12 miles around (the next nearest being in Ramsgrange) and the Centre therefore caters for a large rural area.

Fortunately, the area is not afflicted by the problem of early school leaving.

"And there is not really a problem with teenage pregnancies either. Mostly the Family Resource Centre provides support for lone parents," said Breda McDonald, Childcare Manager.

This summer, there is excitement among management and staff at Raheen as the Centre is due to join the Department-funded Family Resource Programme.

"It's been described to us as being the key to open many other doors," said Ms. McDonald. "And it adds to our credibility. The first year will be spent sourcing funding for a purpose-built childcare/training centre which will be totally family-orientated and will also cater for the elderly.

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● Kathleen Delaney, Lorraine Sheridan, Marie Louise Byrne and Eileen pictured in the school grounds beside Raheen Family Resource Centre, Co. Wexford.

Kerry kids get into politics

SPICE Junior for Dáil na nÓg

“You know how the grown-ups vote for special people to go and work in the Dáil, talk about ideas and make changes. Well, the government wants children to do the same. So they are going to set up a children’s Dáil, called Dáil na nÓg. This is a place where children can get together and talk about the really important issues in their lives, and tell the government what they think.”

This statement from the National Children’s Strategy’s captured the imagination of young people involved in SPICE Junior, in Tralee, Co. Kerry. This group is attached to SPICE, a local core funded support network of single, separated, divorced and widowed mothers and fathers who are parenting alone. The group uses community development principles to work towards empowerment and social change in the interest of one parent families. The name stands for Single Parents

Initiative in Community & Equality. (And by the way the group was set up before the Spice Girls!)

Alongside parents, children meet in their own parallel group, SPICE Junior. This evolved from what was originally a simple childcare arrangement to enable parents attend the support group. But as the children grew older they wanted more than childcare. They needed developmental opportunities.

In response SPICE developed a proposal to train the older members as Junior Leaders around the theme of active citizenship and community participation which the Irish Youth Foundation has chosen to fund over the next two years.

In tandem with this training programme some young people from SPICE Junior will be participating in Dáil na nÓg, a new initiative being set up by the government

under the National Children’s Strategy’s. This is the government’s plan to improve the quality of life for all children in Ireland over the next six years.

Dáil na nÓg is due to commence in September. Children and young people from all over Ireland will meet with the Taoiseach and Minister for Children when they travel to Dublin to participate in a day of workshops.

In preparation SPICE Junior members will be doing some work on their issues as young people. Those going to Dáil na nÓg will have to represent the views of others in the group as well as their own. They will also be asked to report back to the group after the event to let everyone else know about what happened. It is possible these will be among the youngest public representatives in the history of the State!

Active citizenship & voter education

EVER wonder why it took the nation this many tribunals to realise that many of our systems of power and decision-making are rotten to the core? Because we let them away with it! Yes the scandals are elite and complex. And yes the majority of the general public feel powerless to change this. But the public has a part to play as well. If people don’t vote the corrupt politicians out, then they are effectively voting them back into office. The harsh reality is that the general public did not know enough, or maybe even care enough to ask the right people the right questions while all these scandals have been brewing over the last 20 odd years.

To combat voter apathy, and to get the voting public to realise that collectively they have the power to influence change, projects such as Mayfield CDP in Cork have run very successful voter education programmes in the past. The most recent was held over six weeks in April and May (see photo).

“Our group were a very political group, yet they were flabbergasted by what they found they didn’t know,” said Mayfield development worker, Bina Brennan, “Being politically aware is one thing, Voter Awareness is quite another.”

Now in the aftermath of the Nice Treaty, Tralee CDP is planning to run an active citizenship programme to address the increasingly low turn-out at elections polls by encouraging people in the area to register and use their vote.

* The programme aims to explain how



● Sharon Browne, Tralee CDP, is a regional reporter with “Changing Ireland”.

the Irish political system works.

* It hopes to demystify local political structures such as Urban District Councils, County Councils, County Development Boards and Strategic Policy Committees.

* Participants will look at the current issues and players in Irish politics.

* The focus will also be on learning in a fun way. So the style and format of the programme will be varied.

The Tralee project is hoping to bring participants to see the Urban District Council and the Dáil at work. At the end

of the active citizenship programme participants will look at ways they can collectively challenge politicians on their manifestos and election promises.

The programme is based on a political voter education pack produced by the Vincentian Foundation for Justice. To date Tralee CDP has run a brief pilot voter education programme and a leaders workshop. These workshops explored participants’ vision of a just society and got participants to look at reasons why they don’t vote.

Two key things really hit home with the pilot group. Firstly they realised that all over the world people have had to fight for their democratic rights which can be both precious and fragile. Secondly, by looking at all the narrow margins in recent electoral history the group came to realise that their individual votes matter very much (e.g. Dick Spring, Ben Briscoe, and the late Tommy McEllistrim). In some cases 3 votes made the difference.

The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness specifically states that “a new Electoral Participation Initiative will be instituted with the task of encouraging maximum voter participation in elections, including a voter education programme”. Though there seemed to be little evidence of this in the run up to the recent referendum.

Tralee CDP’s plans to run an active citizenship programme are timely considering that a General Election is not very far away and who knows we may even end up voting on Nice again.

The nun and the lolly

- Challenging Stereotypes in the Name of Community Development

Anun wearing stubble and licking a lolly. A project co-ordinator in top hat and dicky-bow. A 15 year old dressed like Tiger Woods. These and other images are currently on display in an art exhibition in the Hunt Museum, Limerick. Created by St. Munchin's Community Arts Project, Limerick, in collaboration with Eoin McCarthy, a Fine Art student, the project was two years in the making.

The exhibition is designed as one 15 year old participant, Amanda O'Donnell, put it "to see would people cop on."

The exhibition grew from Mr. McCarthy's wish to merge his Fine Art practice with the process of Community Development work. He targeted people who either worked or lived in the Thomondgate area of the city with the idea of establishing an arts group and in January, 2000, St. Munchin's Community Arts Project was born.

Each photograph features a member of the arts group taking off the behaviour or wearing the clothes of fellow group members. Seeing as the group consists of young and old, men and women, the title 'Generation' was chosen to encapsulate the theme - challenging traditional stereotypes of what it is to be young, old, female or male. Fixed notions of class are also scrutinised.

Amanda appears as a smartly dressed golfer. Her friend Sarah Quin sports a motorcycle helmet. One of the most dramatic images is of Sr. Mary Carmel whose appearance suggests she is a man eating an ice-lolly. Where other participants were happy to borrow an item of clothing or



Sr. Mary Carmel sporting stubble and an ice-lolly as part of a Community Arts Project.

jewellery from someone else in the group, Sr. Carmel, an art therapist, wanted the group co-ordinator Eoin McCarthy's stubble.

"I was always struck by it. No matter what time of the day or night, he always seemed to have stubble. It was an extraordinary experience to take on stubble. I got my hair cut shorter than normal for the photograph and they put sooty stuff on my face. It was like getting into the experience of knowing the exterior of a man you see regularly."

"The generations have changed so much over the years. Now there is freedom of the sexes," she noted.

And the lolly?

"Amanda was always sucking lollies, so I wanted one of those too. It's a young person's lolly," said Sr. Carmel.

Speaking at the opening of the exhibition, Eoin McCarthy, said, "Everything in the exhibition came out of talking - the older people talking about old times, the young ones talking about nightclubs, each one wanting to experience something of the other people's lives."

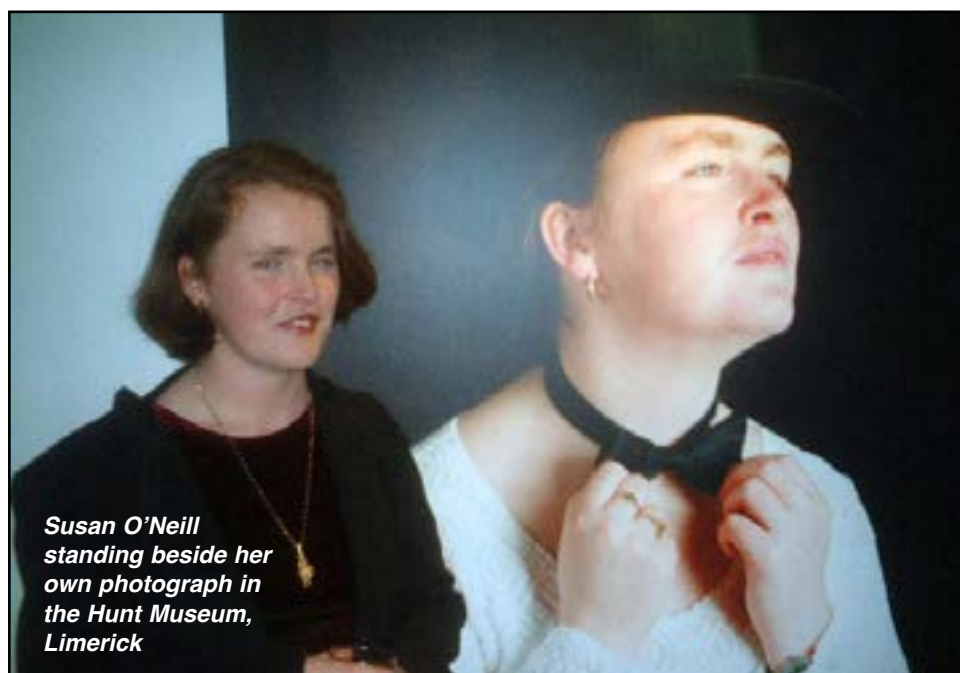
Included in the funding for the project was an allowance for an independent evaluation of the project's achievements. Susan O'Neill, co-ordinator with St. Munchin's CDP, was also a participant and she is convinced it was money well spent.

"The group used art to challenge stereotypes. So people who otherwise wouldn't have had an appreciation of art now do. Previously, the Hunt Museum was a middle class world. The work gave us an insight into the importance of art in our lives and how it can be used to get messages across around different issues. The group also developed an appreciation of how community development works."

The community development principles employed by the group were: to share collective responsibility for the project; to share equally resources, services and information; to develop confidence and skills in the practice of Fine Art; to have equal ownership of the project and artwork produced.

Previously, the same group exhibited work as part of Limerick's biggest annual art event, the EV+A 2001 exhibition.

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Susan O'Neill standing beside her own photograph in the Hunt Museum, Limerick

What is peer advocacy?

“Peer Advocacy simply means that I’m also a user and survivor of the Mental Health services, thereby allowing me to truly understand how you’re feeling at this time, and the possible issues confronting you,” explained Gary Finlay, chairperson of the Kerry Advocacy Network.

Peer Advocacy is vital to recovery. By speaking up for themselves, users of mental health services are empowered as citizens to avail of their full civil and social rights. Peers, by helping the service users identify their own needs, work with them to realise those needs. Peers and services users support each other “to regain control of our lives, identify and understand our own life experiences and take responsibility for our own choices and decisions”.

The Kerry Advocacy Network is one of 11 networks of people

who are users of the mental health services and/or are survivors of mental ill health. The networks together form the national organisation known as The Irish Advocacy Network, with its head office in Rooskey Community House, St. Davnet’s, in Monaghan town.

The Network’s primary aim is to provide information and support for mental health service consumers and survivors to enable each person to be empowered to speak up for themselves to achieve recovery.

All the Kerry Advocacy Network members are volunteers and are either people who use mental health services or their family members. KAN was assisted in establishing itself by the Kerry Network of People with Disabilities, a core-funded group.

Survivors of mental ill-health are networking nationwide

A new service run by volunteers has begun in County Kerry and similar networks have sprung up around the country as survivors of mental ill health take responsibility for supporting people who are currently availing of mental health services.

Gary Finlay, Chairperson of the Kerry Advocacy Network explains how the Network operates:

“We provide emotional support and provide information and try to take away the stigma of having had a mental health difficulty. It’s a ‘user-driven peer strategy’. It is true empathy we have, rather than something you learnt from a book. The worst thing you can say is, ‘I understand what you mean,’ when you don’t. But, if you can understand from your own past experience of mental ill-health then you can establish good relationships.

“We get referrals from places such as the Rape Crisis Centre, Tralee CDP and the Citizens Information Centre. We are totally independent and are there for the individual. We are not just there to get them help but we do help them explore every option to help them achieve whatever it is they want. They can feel very empowered through our work as advocates. Our approach is to help them change their lifestyle and they have a chance.”

Asked about the number of hours each volunteer puts in weekly, Nora Moriarty, a KAN member, smiled and interrupted her work on recycling brochures (the phone number for KAN kept changing because they had no fixed premises, but now the number is permanent).

“We are the advocates. We are the management committee. We do the administration... it’s all voluntary,” said Ms. Moriarty.

“I became an advocate because I have been through the system and it’s a very difficult system to survive. There’s no help out there and if you can survive the system, a lot of that survival is self-done, up to now, and that’s where the need for advocates comes from.

“You get a lot of fulfillment from it and it takes very little effort. You don’t have to do something outstanding to help. If someone has had a mental health difficulty they don’t get the same opportunities as other people. So, a lot of time as an advocate, you just give support so they can do stuff by themselves,” said Ms. Moriarty.

Added Mr. Finlay: “It’s a listening service mostly. However, one of our most serious difficulties in working with people is the stigma attached to mental ill-health. In the past, it was always kept behind closed doors, and still, even in hospital wards, people don’t want to talk about it. The idea that we won’t report back what they say was never there before. But, no matter how little or much we do, it can’t hurt because the hurt has already been done.

“Everybody thinks that having a mental health difficulty means not being able to think properly, but that’s not the case. You do not lose the ability to think and analyse. When you have been through the system you are totally aware of what is wrong with the system. (If it came to changing the system, the Psycho-Social Approach is

preferable to the Medical Model of Treatment.)

“The advocacy is all voluntary work at the moment. It shouldn’t be funded as a salaried job, but it shouldn’t cost you to do voluntary work either. I could have to go to Dingle in the morning if someone wanted me,” he said, explaining that the volunteers often have to pay their own expenses.

“We have six trained advocates in Kerry. ‘Mind Yourself’ have asked us to take on and facilitate further training. When we started the network in Kerry there were only five networks. Now there are 13 networks, north and south [of the border].”

All office-bearer positions within KAN must be held by trained certificated and actively available Peer Advocates.

“The networks in Cork and Kerry work hand in hand because we deal with the same health board. In Kerry, we have the use of a room in a psychiatric ward in Tralee, so in Cork if they ask for the same they should get it,” said Mr. Finlay.

KAN provide coverage at Tralee General Hospital’s Psychiatric Ward office on Fridays from 2-5pm and Tuesdays from 7-9pm each week.

Events are progressing at a quick pace, with issues transforming on a daily and weekly bases, as the Kerry Advocacy Network springs to life. For example, a Healthy Living Programme is to be established this year in Kerry.

For further details, contact KAN.

Tel: 066-7128496.

E-mail: kanireland@hotmail.com

Let's play a game!

Visualising inclusion

By Martine Brennan

LET'S play a game! What country does this person live in? She will never have a choice about where she lives, she will have only a one-in-five chance of getting a job and she will never own her own home. There are few buses, if any, and even if there is a bus, she is prevented from getting on it. The country is Ireland and the group of people who face these challenges are people with disabilities.

This information emerged recently when the Kerry Network of People with Disabilities launched its innovative research project called "Visualising Inclusion", in association with the Nexus Research Co-operative. Altogether, 104 people with disabilities in Kerry were interviewed by people with disabilities.

■ Housing hassles

Half of all respondents live in the family home with their parents. 17% of those surveyed live alone, in private-rented or local authority housing. Only one third of the respondents own their own homes.

"People with disabilities are often forced to live at home with their families through poverty, lack of available appropriate accommodation or the difficulties involved in accessing appropriate personal assistants. Every time someone is forced to live with their parents or family, this reinforces the stereotyping of people with disabilities in our society," says Ann Marie Flanagan, Development and Training Officer, Independent Living Community Services.

■ Education hardships

In the area of education, one tenth of the respondents were still in formal education and nine tenths had left school and/or college. A shocking third of respondents did not go to secondary school. People with sensory disabilities were most likely to leave school early, followed by people with physical disabilities, people with learning disabilities and mental health disabilities.

The age at which people develop their disability has a sizeable impact on educational achievement. The majority of people who left school early had their disability from birth or under four years of age. The majority of those who reached third level education had developed their disability after completing their third level course.

■ 'Imposing'

In terms of training and employment, a



● Staff at the KNPD offices, Tralee - Gary Finlay, information/research officer, and Sabrina McKiernan, receptionist and membership support officer.

third were unemployed, 23% in training, 23% employed and one fifth unable to work. Eight out of ten of respondents are available to work but less than a quarter are employed. Of those who are unemployed, six out of ten have been out of work for two years or longer. Meanwhile, over half those in employment are in part-time work.

"Flexibility is essential in providing equality of access to employment for people with disabilities," says Gary Finlay, Chairperson and External Liaison Officer for the Kerry Advocacy Network.

■ Pub, cinema, sport

Difficulties in the area of transport were highlighted in the research. Half the respondents depend on family and friends' cars on a regular basis. Of this group, eight out of ten were greatly restricted in choice because the car was not available at the times they most needed it or they felt they were "imposing". Out of 104 people with disabilities, 51% said there was no public bus service available and one third saw the public transport service as inaccessible to them.

Tom Farrelly, Project Worker with the Kerry Network of People with Disabilities, says "Without accessible public transport, there can be no equality for people with disabilities. Providing training and education is pointless when people can't access them".

The most frequent form of social participation for those surveyed was either the local public house or the local church.

Less than 20% visited the cinema monthly and only 10% participated in any form of sport on a monthly basis. Almost half of respondents named lack of transport or cost as the most prohibitive factors.

■ G.P. satisfaction

In terms of availing of services the highest level of satisfaction expressed was with the G.P. and the lowest level with local authority housing service. Respondents were happiest with voluntary as opposed to statutory bodies when seeking information.

Sampling of the total Kerry Network membership allowed for the representative inclusion of different age groups, geographical locations, gender and forms of disability. 42% of those surveyed have a physical disability, 26% a sensory disability, 17% a mental health disability, 6% a learning difficulty and 9% a hidden disability.

■ Report available

Summary copies of the report are now available. The full report and a CDrom outlining the research process will be available in the Autumn, from the Kerry Network of People with Disabilities, James Street, Tralee. The Network will be launching their next three year plan in December based on the research findings.

Tel/fax: 066-7180611
Email: kerry@pwdi.org

FRC forum reacts to plans

THE Family Resource Centre Forum called an emergency meeting on Friday, July 6th, to consider a response to Minister Dermot Ahern's announcement in May that a new agency was to be set up to administer Family Resource Centres. While the meeting, held as much to inform members of what is known of the planned changes as to decide a strategy for the future, did not arrive at any major

decisions, another meeting was planned for later in the month. By then, representatives at the national meeting will have reported back to their management committees to seek their opinion on how to influence and play a part in the development of FRCs nationally.

A statement was released following the national meeting: "The Family Resource National Forum met on July 6th and

invited the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, Family Affairs Unit and Voluntary and Community Services to present and respond to questions regarding the proposed Family Support Agency. The meeting was well represented and has agreed to meet again at a national level on July 18th to consider its position."

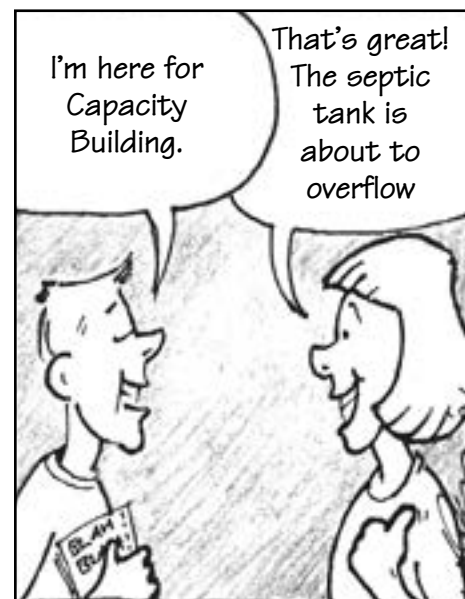
New family support agency

IN a press release on May 15, the International Day for Families, Dermot Ahern, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, announced that a new support agency for families - the Family Support and Mediation Service was to be established. The press release stated that the new initiative was "a key step in the Government's Families First approach which is designed to put families at the centre of all its policies."

"The new Service will co-ordinate the main Government programmes designed to help prevent marital breakdown, assist couples who have decided to separate, support ongoing parenting relationships,

raise awareness about family and parenting issues and work with voluntary groups in an empowering way to promote the well-being of families. It will provide a comprehensive and coherent response for families who have need of support services.

"The new Family Support and Mediation Service will be overseen by a Board made up of members with experience and expertise in the fields of family mediation, counselling, research, family law and parenting. The Service will be accountable for investment amounting to some £12 million this year. The Minister will be publishing the necessary legislation in the coming months," stated the release.



Family Resource Centres Network Forum aims to influence

THE Family Resource Centre Network Forum, which was set up in May 1999, aims to support those using an integrative approach to community development in addressing the needs of families experiencing disadvantage. It aims to be a well-structured and vibrant group with clear work practices and with the ability to influence change. The values to which this Forum ascribes are equality, empowerment, openness, inclusiveness and good practice.

Involvement in the Forum enables members to acquire skills, exchange ideas and experience, and offers peer support and guidance with regard to the Family Support Programme.

The National Forum brings together four Regional Family Resource Centre Forums. Details of your local contact person are listed below.

The National Forum is represented on various committees within the Community Development Support Programmes. These include:

- the National Strategic Planning Committee (rep, Leo Scales);
- the Advisory Committee to the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (reps, Jeanne Garland and Dick Hickey);
- the Policy Unit (reps, Anne-Marie Duffy, Jeanne Garland and Leo Scales);
- the Eastern Regional Standing Operational Committee (Maura Callaghan).

The National Forum is planning a seminar for October and more information on this is available through your local representative.

Given current changes in state agency practice and structure it is important that we come together for support through this change as a collective voice to influence policy and practice affecting Family Resource Centres.

Aims and Objectives of the Family Resource Network Forum:

- To represent the views of all FRCs nationally in all arenas;

- To influence national policy on issues regarding FRCs;
- To ensure a quality service amongst all FRCs;
- To introduce structures to support the work of co-ordinators and management;
- To establish committees and the ongoing development of FRCs;
- To provide a platform to facilitate networking between FRCs;
- To provide an opportunity to enhance skills through the Forum;
- To prioritise and evaluate training needs and programmes.

For more information on the Family Resource Network Forum, please telephone:
Eastern Region - Sandra Campbell (01-2965025) or Pauline Davey (01-2954826).
South Eastern Region - Mary O'Hagan (056-42800).
Western Region - Maura Callaghan (079-63473).

FRCs 'Not Envisaged' in CDSPs – Minister Ahern explains

Minister reveals Government thinking on new agency for FRCs

Q: Is this new development part of the RAPID Programme?

Minister: No, it's not. But there is a meeting between the (FRC) Forum and my officials next week and hopefully a lot of the concerns that people might have will be taken care of. I mean, it is a government decision and there was quite a lot of discussion whether or not these (FRCs) would be included in the family support agency and it was decided that to leave them outside the family support agency wouldn't really make any sense, seeing as they are Family Resource Centres.

So, that's the reason and obviously any of the concerns that people might have, you know, we will take care of them. I can't see there being any major problems and I wouldn't see that the type of direction they have been going on would change in any way.

Obviously this family support agency would still be answerable to the Minister, we're discussing the legislation tomorrow and hopefully we will finalise the legislation and we'll publish (it) very quickly. It's all ready to roll really, so hopefully in the next session, after summer, we'll be able to get the bill passed if we can get space.

Q: A lot of FRCs work from community development principles - all of them aim to - will they be able to continue doing so?

Minister: I don't see why not. It's a principle that has worked very well and that's the type of direction we want communities to take. So, I don't see any difference. There's no agenda, it's purely and simply a logical thing to do. To have them outside the family support agency would, in my view, not be correct.

Q: You say "in your view" and "no agenda" - the Department has built up a lot of trust with the various community projects around the country through consultation going on for years. This decision seemed to be made at a higher level, at government level, without any apparent consultation with projects or

representatives.

Minister: Well, fair enough, but I'm all for consultation and at the end of the day people have to make decisions and we made the decision. To be honest I think it's the best decision. As I said, it got quite a lot of discussion at Cabinet level, so from that point of view the government were happy (the decision) was in the right direction. It wasn't just on the spur of the moment - there was quite a lot of discussion about it - there was some discussion with some groups but not on a formalised basis because, to be honest, I wanted to get this bill out quickly because I want to move this agenda on. It's an agenda which particularly the Taoiseach has a big interest in and has asked that I move the agenda on accordingly.

And, if anyone has any suspicions, all you have to do is look at the amount of funding which is being given since this government came to office. It's dramatically increased. Family Resource Centres have gone from 10 in 1997 to 70 this year so that speaks for itself. And the same for Community Development Projects - they have gone up from 90 to 130 in the four years. There is a big commitment there; the overall budget for this area is £17 million.

Q: Would FRCs have the option of staying in with the Community Development Support Programmes?

Minister: No, I wouldn't envisage that they would. The government made a decision and that's a solemn decision of the government to bring them in under the umbrella of the family support agency. You couldn't have the situation where some would be in and others would be out. I do know that some of the Family Resource Centres have followed the CDP model, but there's nothing to stop them from continuing on that road, even under the family support agency. As I said earlier, the family support agency is still answerable to the Minister of the time, so the general policy direction is dictated to by the Minister and the Government so there will be plenty of opportunity, even if people



● Minister for Social, Family and Community Affairs, Dermot Ahern, T.D., outside the new premises of St. Mary's CDP, Limerick, on June 25th.

have difficulty as things move on, they will be able to sit down with Departmental officials who will have an operational interest in the family support agency.

Q: Is there any sort of protection for the community development ethos? Is there any safeguard built in to protect their way of working? 'Family First' is the government's emphasis, but I suppose they come from a 'Community First' or 'Family and Community together' approach.

Minister: I can't see the two being mutually exclusive. If a certain group is taking a certain direction, there's no way that passing a piece of legislation or putting it under the aegis of another sub-agency of the government is going to cause it any difficulties. If there are concerns in that respect, we can accommodate them, but I can't honestly see there being any huge difficulties in the continuation of the Family Resource Centres as they have been.

Q: To what degree will FRC representatives be able to be involved in the board that is set up under the new agency?

Minister: We will just have to wait and see. Decisions haven't been made in that respect by government. But we will be setting up the agency hopefully fairly shortly.

(In an interview with Allen Meagher)

Viv Sadd shares the role

South-West regional rep

"WE are the only region that has split the role between two Reps. To make things more manageable I go to the Standing Operational Committee and the other Rep goes to the Advisory.

"When I first took on the role the idea of meetings every six weeks didn't seem too much. But soon arms and legs started to grow out of the work, usually in the form of working groups, such as the one set up to make an evaluation of the Programme. Though the workload is substantial, when you are up there and the passion is flowing it's hard not to get dragged into things. It's challenging and enjoyable.

"But the huge amount of commitment required will pay off in raising standards and providing guidance for voluntary managements on matters such as pay and working conditions. To help push issues like these the Regional Reps come together before meetings so that when we go in there we can try to be a strategic collective voice."

Eleanor Moore highlights networking advantages

South-West regional rep

"THE Regional Network is very important from a networking point of view. It really is one of the few places where voluntary management members can meet. Project Leaders have their own support network, so do the admin workers, but there is no network per se for voluntary management members.

"One of the policy successes we have had as a region was putting a pension plan in place for the programme nationally. That started in the South-West and through the advisory became a national policy. We are hoping to do the same with salary scales.

"Another example would be in the Eastern Region where they have been proactive about pushing for a national policy unit. They have developed a good model of policy work. That proposal is with the Department at the moment.

"Time out for projects to look at what is happening on the national agenda is another key benefit. And that's critical because otherwise we could all very easily get caught up in what's happening locally."

Eleanor Moore is Project Leader at Tralee CDP, Co. Kerry.



The function of CDP regional networks

THE National Community Development Programme is divided into eight regions along the same lines as Health Board areas. Meetings for project workers and volunteers are held twice annually.

The overall aim of the regional fora is to be a support mechanism for the projects by providing a channel for representation and by communicating information between the local, regional and national levels. A key aspect of the regional meetings is the opportunity they give voluntary management members and workers to network

together.

Regional Representatives then bring the collective issues identified to national level through the National Advisory Committee (NAC) and the Standing Operational Committee (SOC). The Eastern Region has three Reps, the South-West has two and the remaining six regions have one Rep each. The Reps meet at these committees with Programme staff from the Department of Social, Family & Community Affairs, and Reps from the various Support Agencies and Specialist Supports Agencies.

The Role of the NAC is to make recommendations on issues of policy and structure in the Community Development Programme to the Department and to the Minister. The role of the Standing Operational Committee is to look at the operational issues of the Community Development Programme.

The Regional Reps have responsibility to bring back information on policy, new initiatives and ideas that may be happening at a national level.

Deirdre Commins looks ahead

New Western Regional Rep

"I am new to this role. So far I have been to one Advisory meeting. It is very exciting because the potential of the Region Forum is huge, particularly for airing issues at the National table, networking with support agencies and linking in with other groups.

"I think the Forum can also raise the profile of the Programme, which is low and can help to ensure that the work being done is what we were set up to do.

"It's important to remember why we are there and for me that is all about putting community development on the agenda. It is essential that a fora like this exists, but it's only worth something as long as we are working from community development principles."

Deirdre Commins is Project Leader at Westside CDP, Galway.

Reflections from a veteran

Former Western regional rep Jim Power

"LOOKING back I have an over-riding sense of all the extra time away from the Project and the extra workload. But I must say that though the work with the National Advisory Committee was sometimes hard, it was challenging and I enjoyed it.

"It can be difficult for the Reps when they are trying to reflect the view of the region, if there is a sense that we do all this work but then sometimes things seem to be decided by the Minister. That sense of powerlessness is not very conducive to working in a partnership approach.

"But involved at that level you get a great overview of the National Programmes and the impact the programmes are having. It's really worthwhile being part of the bigger picture. It demystifies a lot of stuff. It helps put faces to names. Having that kind of personal contact contributes to building healthy working relationships."

Jim Power is Project Leader, Parkside CDP, Ballina, Co. Mayo

From the depths of the dept.

(The Diary of Horace McDermot, Faceless Bureaucrat)

Monday 2.22pm:

Met with Ivy Houseman from Foreign Affairs (known as FA for short because of the amount of work they do) and Stevie Greenemount from Justice, Equality and Law Reform for an Interdepartmental Nourishment Discussion (lunch).

Stevie was telling us about the brilliant policy they have to deal with asylum seekers. They call it "direct provision". They put them in hostels, feed them and give them £15 a week. I can't understand why we didn't think of it. It could be the answer to many of the countries problems.

First we in Social, Community and Family Afffffaaffairs could build large hostel accommodation for anyone on social welfare or benefit (there is a site in Abbotstown that would be perfect). We could give them a place to sleep, food and £15 for fags and because they don't want to work anyway they wouldn't mind that they're not allowed.

This would take all the disadvantaged and socially excluded people out of disadvantaged areas making them

disadvantaged areas no longer. No disadvantaged areas means we wouldn't have to fund CDP's and Family Resource Centres to work in them (what a saving!).

Tuesday 9.40am:

Met Abbie Streetwise from Environment and Local Government - she thinks my idea is a winner. Sorting out those 25 disadvantaged areas means a further £15 billion saving from RAPID which would pay the hostel building and food costs.

The estates could then be put up for sale bringing thousands of houses onto the market thus solving the house price crisis in one fell swoop and generating massive revenue for the Local Authorities.

Wednesday 12.15pm:

With affordable house prices the huge wage demands threatening the PPF agreement would be gone and inflation would come down according to Oprah Marion in Finance.

Thursday 5.05pm:

The clincher came to me talking to Donie Airmhirgin in Arts and Heritage. He pointed out the added spin offs of repopulating the islands and Gaeltacht areas while revitalising the Irish language. Hostels or Direct Accommodation and Meals Provision (DAMP) buildings could be situated on the the Blaskets, Aran and Tory thus repopulating these areas.

Here's the ingenious method of revitalising the Irish language. Only have TG4 on the TV without sub-titles. As all they can do is watch TV they'd have the perfect incentive to learn the language.

Friday 4.45pm:

Can't figure out yet how "direct provision" can help the peace process. Ivy Houseman in FA says they tried something like it in the North a while back. Seems they stopped it after some of the people wouldn't use the toilets or eat the food. "Internment" or something she called it. Any way the memo's drafted and I reckon it could catapult my career in the civil service.

Why we need a long-term strategic approach

- from the summary of the evaluation of the Community Development Programme

A longer-term strategic approach and enhanced capacity to promote the Programme is needed, in the first instance, as a pre-requisite to effectively dealing with the challenges already noted (see page 2). It is also important because:

- (a) The precise nature and contribution of community development and the CDP to tackling disadvantage is not always recognised or understood. This is not easy to communicate since the most significant contributions are over the longer-term; and are not always demonstrable in quantitative terms. The challenge must be taken up, however, if value is to be added to current achievements, and if the expertise and experience accumulated through the Programme is to contribute effectively to other relevant policy and practice.
- (b) The effectiveness of relationships between the CDP Programme and other relevant initiatives, judging by experiences at community level, can vary greatly from area to area. More work is needed - at national level, involving relevant development partners on an ongoing

basis - to define the most efficient and effective mechanisms and procedures for achieving synergy between the CDP and other Programmes. This is particularly relevant in the case of local area Partnerships and County Development Boards.

- (c) The Programme is now operating in a very different environment to the one in which it was established.
 - The CDP is uniquely placed to contribute to the development of consensus, or a longer term strategic vision, to meet some of the new challenges arising.
 - The Programme is already effectively moving into a new phase to the extent that efforts are being made to translate lessons from local practice into policy responses regionally and nationally.
 - This, and other development challenges, would benefit from a longer-term strategic plan - setting out the vision for the Programme and for community development in Ireland generally; as well as the procedures and mechanisms required to work towards it.

MAIN FINDINGS OF CDP EVALUATION

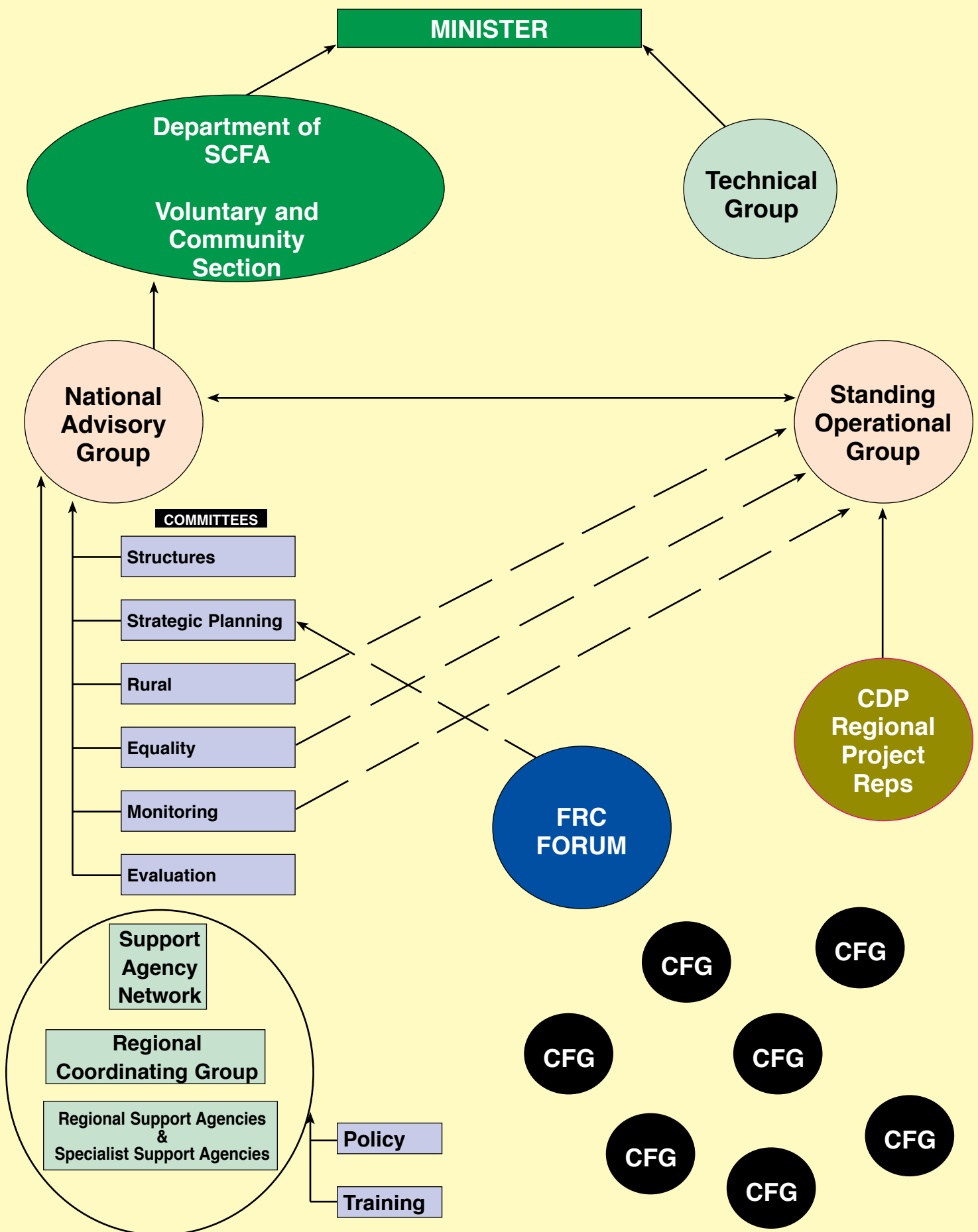
(continued from p2)

In effect the community development expertise and experience, as well as local structures for participation, are essential to the successful implementation of a whole range of other initiatives. These include, but are not restricted to, area Partnership, County Development, Regional Health Board and Programme for Peace and Reconciliation plans - in that many aspects of these are based on the premise that involvement and active participation of the local community is both necessary and desirable. Very briefly, the following was recommended:

1. The establishment of a Strategic Development Group.
2. The development of a systematic approach to recording activities, outputs and impacts of the Programme.
3. A review of Programme supports in the light of evaluation findings and recommendations.

The CDSPs Structure

- as administered through the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs



Minister opens St. Mary's CDP

Dermot Ahern, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs on Friday, June 25th, visited Limerick to officially open St. Mary's Community Development Project new premises at Verdant Crescent, King's Island.

"Initiatives like St. Mary's CDP help to address marginalisation and exclusion. The community development principles of equality, empowerment and participation are very evident in the focus of your work," said Minister Ahern.

He spoke of the success of the Community Development Support Programmes in place around the country - by the end of this year some 260 projects will be up and running, 130 of which will be CDPs.

"The work of voluntary and community organisations such as yours is central to the Government's mission to develop and inclusive society. They enable individuals to contribute to the development of their communities. By so doing, they promote citizenship, help to re-establish a sense of community and make a crucial contribution to our shared aim of a just and inclusive society," added the Minister.

Barnardos in Limerick

Barnardos is holding the WorldForum 2001 in Limerick from August 28-31. The theme is: 'The Children's Agenda - Familiar Issues, Emerging Concerns'. For more information contact Barnardos.

www.barnardos.ie

'Westside' opened by President

"Walls of harnessed opportunity" was how President Mary McAleese described Westside Resource Centre, at the project's official opening, on the 6th June 2001, which was attended by over 300 people.

The President said what makes Westside Resource Centre so unique is that the state agencies and voluntary bodies work together, under the one roof, in the heart of the local community.

Established in 1992, the centre offers a wide range of support services to the local Westside Community. It houses a crèche, pre-school and after-school service, as well as offices for: People with Disabilities in Ireland, Westside Family Services Springboard Project, The Western Health Board, Jobs Initiative (Galway City Partnership), Schizophrenia Ireland, and The Local Employment Services Network.



Guide to Map on Opposite Page

The full-page map of 'The CDSPs Structure' is a guide to members of projects nationwide who wish to have a better understanding of how the Community Development Support Programmes is structured. The straight unbroken arrows mean there is a direct relationship between the groups concerned. A broken line indicates a looser level of relationship.

Notice that CDPs have their Regional Project Representatives and FRCs have their National Forum. However, Core-Funded Groups are not yet organised on a regional or national level. The map marks the current situation and is open to change. *Thanks to Cecilia Forrestal for the map.*

CDSPs Expansion



TOTAL = 240 LOCAL PROJECTS

- All addressing poverty issues
- All have those who will benefit involved in the design and delivery of Actions

Clare O'Shea – she has transport in her Bones



CLARE O'Shea has transport in her bones. Though only a few weeks into her new job as Transport Worker with Community Connections, a rural CDP in Blacklion, County Cavan, it's as if she was born for the job.

Rural Lift was established in 1995 to lessen the isolation experienced by people living in rural areas - "a backward area" as one local termed it. Clare obviously enjoys co-ordinating the project. Her screen-saver features a train station and the office walls are papered with various bus and train maps, including Rural Lift's existing and planned routes.

Clare's late Grandfather, Francis Henry Smyth, was General Secretary of the General Railway Workers Union, (now part of SIPTU) from 1971-'79 and his career always intrigued her:

"I remember when I was small we were fascinated with his passport - he used to go all over Europe and had stamps from everywhere. He was very much a man who fought for the man on the ground, because, as he'd say 'Without those people we wouldn't have a job'".

■ From Kerry

Even Clare's surname has a transport connection.

"The O'Sheas worked their way around the country as stonemasons on the railways. The surname comes from Kerry and that's how we came to be here," she recounted.

Clare studied Rural and Environmental Management at the University of Essex, specialising in agri-tourism.

"We also looked at rural infrastructure, which included transport, which is funny when the university was only 30 miles north of London and therefore close to one of the best transport networks in the world. It's very different here."

She finished her studies two years ago and, with the family having a farm, she became involved in the Young Farmers Enterprise Programme. It was supported by the Prince's Trust and the Partnership for Peace and Reconciliation.

When she's not at work with Community Connections, Clare raises rare breeds - Dexter cattle and Tammworth pigs - "They're orange haired. I wanted to show children that pigs do have hair".

■ Foot and mouth

She was serious: A trailer had been specially constructed and leaflets printed to promote her 'travelling farm' so city children could see country life without leaving home. Just at the wrong time, 'Foot and Mouth' struck, the business fell through and she applied to Community Connections for work.

Community Connections' area is vast, including north Leitrim, west Cavan and south-west Fermanagh:

"Under the EU we are supposed to have freedom of movement, with no boundaries, but you see the boundaries here alright. Between the border, the lack of transport infrastructure and the lakes, there is pure isolation for many people living here."

■ Hardships

"The hardships are more evident here

in the South; in the North people have better medical treatment, housing and so on. One-in-five houses for sale in north Leitrim is unoccupied. In the North, such houses would be snapped up and bought. At the same time, many new houses being built are of the 'We have arrived' variety - I mean they are huge. It's very much a status thing to build a big house. So we have people who have 'arrived' and others who have 'departed'.

"The push towards third level education for young people has also put an awful stress on rural areas like Blacklion.

"And there is too much forestry because people who emigrate sell the land to the Forestry Service - Coilltte - or plant trees themselves. In turn that makes the place less attractive for people to live in the rural areas," she continued.

The trees are not the only reason for the exaggerated sense of isolation people in the north-west experience.

Said Clare, "There's a phrase from Fermanagh: for six months of the year the lakes are in Fermanagh, for the other six Fermanagh is in the lakes."

One of the keys to tackling the isolation people in rural areas feel is to provide a transport service; hence the importance locals attach to the Rural Lift service that Clare co-ordinates. She follows in the footsteps of the project's first full-time worker Maeve Kennedy Grimes, who was appointed in 1999 and remains involved in an advisory capacity. (Local opinion of the 'Rural Lift' project is tested in the attached report.)

Cursing Forestry problems

PROBLEMS with forestry crop up in many rural parts of the country. In north Mayo, for example, it really is "a curse", according to Marian Flannery, co-ordinator of Women of the North West.

"It has changed the landscape. There's something about looking at a mundane bank of trees. The trees add to your isolation and your moodiness and you feel hemmed in. The forestry should never have been left in to the area. The Forestry - and remember that is the state - have covered bogs in Moygownagh where there were historic sites," she

says.

In the border area around Blacklion, Co. Cavan, over-forestation is also an issue.

"Ireland is always trying to catch up with Europe," explains Clare O'Shea who works with Community Connections, the local CDP. "The average European country has 9% of its land forested. We have 4% or 5% forested. The problem is that most of that 5% is probably carried by the north-west, counties Donegal, Cavan, Leitrim and Sligo."

Giving Rural people a Lift – literally

Allen Meagher reports

IF Community Connections has one project that is visible in the public eye, it has to be the 'Rural Lift' project. Started in 1995, the service operates on six routes to date, reaching some of the most isolated areas in north Leitrim and another four routes are soon to be launched. The service will also be useful to tourists during the summer season.

While Bus Eireann run a service between Sligo and Enniskillen three times daily, obviously it only serves the main road. By contrast, the Rural Lift service is directed at people in outlying areas and is timed to link up with Bus Eireann times.

Funded by, among others, the Peace and Reconciliation Fund, Rural Lift is "like a cross between a bus and a taxi - it is a mini-bus that will collect you from and return you to your doorstep."

Bus-owner, Vincent McGovern, Glengenvlin, Co. Cavan, does two runs each day, picking up grateful passengers who otherwise would have to hitch or not go out at all.

"What we have done is create a local transport system for people to get to the shop, post office and bank, collect their pensions, and to socialise and link up with bus routes to the bigger towns," said Transport Worker, Clare O'Shea.

"Before Rural Lift, older people used only get out on Sundays to get to Mass. It has improved their outlook on life and we are certainly filling a need. At least half of

all passengers are elderly people with free transport passes. It is as much a social thing as anything else; the transport is not just to satisfy people's basic needs."

Certainly, the free bus pass is no good if no bus passes, but there is good news

To test local opinion of the service, 'Changing Ireland' took to the streets of Blacklion interviewing service users.

"I live 12 miles from Blacklion and I used to have to thumb in," said Rose Cassidy.

Michael Melanaphy was reticent: "My father was 93 when he died, he had a free bus pass but never got to use it. A lot of people used to have bus passes but they were no good to them."

Owne McGovern said he used the service to link up with the bus to Enniskillen so he can visit his sister.

Myles Hynes declared: "I think it is a great idea. I do meet people I haven't met in years. There are old people I love to meet here in Blacklion and only for this bus they wouldn't be here at all. It's a mighty idea."

Meanwhile, John Maguire, from Curraghnaha Cross, finds the Rural Lift "very valuable - anyone living in a backward area like we are should have a service like this. It would be terrible if we didn't have it."

The only odd complaint was that the bus did not run more days.

However, Maureen Dolan, Mullaghboy, was very enthusiastic: "It's the best thing that ever came on the road. I used to thumb and many is the time I had to walk the four miles up and down hills to the shop, though the shopkeeper would always drive me back. We are very lucky now. I use it to go to the Day Centre, go shopping or go to Carrick (on-Shannon) for the day. It's great to get out!"



● Michael Melanaphy (left) and John Maguire enjoying the luxury of a glass or two of Guinness in Fitzpatrick's Piano Bar, Blacklion, thanks to the Rural Lift service initiated by Community Connections (CDP).

nationwide, as Clare explained: "A sister group to Rural Lift exists in Fermanagh and there are already quite a few bus services like this in the North, for example FAST in Fermanagh and south Tyrone. In north Donegal there are plans to launch a similar initiative. And, in Kilkenny, the Royal Oak Society are developing routes. Nationally, a Community Transport Association of Ireland was launched only last month in Dublin and membership remains spectacularly low if anyone would be interested in joining!"

My job: campaign for a Skatepark

A skatepark might be no good personally to Sean Ward - he doesn't skate - but his greatest wish is for a skatepark in Limerick. The extreme sport has boomed in Limerick in recent years and a campaign is underway to convince the corporation to provide proper facilities.

Sean works as the 'link worker' for St. Munchin's parish for the 'We're OK Youth Project' and is employed under the Limerick Drugs Strategy.

"I visit people working in the community, listen to their ideas and look at ways of assisting them to improve what exists at the moment for marginalised youth. Part of my job description is to raise awareness of drugs among young people. It's prevention work."

The skatepark was one of the first facilities he recognised demand for and by assisting in the campaign he also finds it a handy way of making links with young people, "because it is something they wish to initiate themselves."

The skateboarders have written to the Corporation looking for a suitable site, while Sinead Doldy of the PAUL Partnership is seeking funding to do a feasibility study on the idea. Also backing the campaign is outgoing Lord Mayor, John Ryan.

"Over 70 teenagers have approached me on the subject. It is a healthy active pursuit," he told the Limerick Leader recently.

Leading campaigner and two-times All-Ireland skateboarding champion, Dave Hurley, a civil engineering student, clearly sees it from the point of view that prevention is better than a cure.

"It would be absolutely great if Limerick got a skatepark. It is a shame we don't have one yet because we keep getting moved on at the moment. The interest in skateboarding in the city has doubled in the last year. So many young people end up in trouble from drugs and crime. Skateboarding is something positive for them to put their

energies into," he said.

The Republic's only public skatepark is in Cork - serious skateboarders from Limerick travel down when they can to use the facility.

The most popular venue in Limerick is Johnsey's Shop near Hasset's Cross where between 15 and 20

skateboarders gather regularly.

In Dublin, as Sean Wards explained, there is a private indoors skatepark.

"Drumcondra Ramp & Rail' is no more than two floors of an old warehouse, it's rough and ready and was built at no great cost, but it attracts a serious number of youngsters. In the U.K., there are loads of skateparks," he said.

"Antagonism is natural between young and old in a community and that's why they want their own facility.

They are very pro-active, moving the campaign along to achieve its aims, involving the Lord Mayor, the corporation and others."

"I'd say skateboarders are 'street-kids'. They're a real mixed bunch with loads of different backgrounds and social types who happen to share the passion for skateboarding. The communication that happens between skateboarders is great - they talk in a meta-language, they have their own slang."

"Paul Kiely, a youth leader at St. Munchin's Youth Club, has got a very good relationship with the guys and this has helped me. The skateboarders have had run-ins with the Gardai; they got warnings because they skate on private property and on the public highway and can be seen as a nuisance."

Sean intends to stick with the skateboarders: "So many project ideas just fade away. But, if we get public support, get people talking about a skatepark, things can



Skateboarder Owen Lloyd O'Connor, at Clontarf Place, Limerick

Why did Jack have to wait?

By Martine Brennan

Jack is a six year old autistic boy. A month ago he began to suffer severe dental pain. He cannot put a toothbrush in his mouth and his teeth had begun to rot. Jack has a medical card because of his disability. His parents asked their private dentist to refer him to the general hospital for dental surgery when it became clear that the teeth had to come out. He waited one month for his appointment, in pain and on medication for that pain. Jack doesn't understand where pain comes from and why it can't be fixed immediately.

The night before the surgery, his parents emptied all the food from the fridge and the cupboards so that they could show Jack that there was no food in the house. He would not have been able to understand fasting or the need for it. Having had no food or drinks since 10 p.m. the previous evening, Jack arrived for his appointment at 9.45 a.m. Thirteen hours more passed. Finally, in a 25 minute procedure, Jack had his four teeth taken out under anaesthetic.

Why did Jack have to wait? The dentist was on standby from 10 a.m. The ward sister organised a private room for Jack because he was unable to remain in the main ward. The nurses tried to distract him from his hunger and thirst but Jack is afraid of strangers. Jack was so thirsty that he begged, on his knees, for drinks from "fearful" strangers. Jack howled and screamed and slammed his head into walls but he could not be given sedatives because no-one knew when he would have his surgery. Total strangers cried for Jack, as did members of the nursing staff. Why did Jack have to wait? Simple answer, there is no theatre set aside for children who come for dental surgery.

And worse again at 7.30 p.m., Jack's mother was informed that in cases of special need, dental surgery can be performed privately and free of charge which would have meant..... Jack wouldn't have had to wait the month in pain and a day of hunger, thirst and confusion. Why aren't we told of these services?

Jack now has no more dental pain. Instead he screams every time he is in the car anywhere near the hospital "HOSPITAL". He does not trust his mother because she wouldn't give him a drink or take him away from the "bad hospital". It took Jack two years to become toilet trained as opposed to three months for most children. Nobody knows how long it will take him to overcome this

With an eye to the future . . .

WANTED: Regional reporters for 'Changing Ireland'

THE next edition of 'Changing Ireland' will be different in that, where the editor researched and wrote many of the stories for this first issue, in future the vast majority of articles will be written by Regional Reporters.

The Community Development Network Moyross Ltd, who publish this newsletter, envisaged from the beginning that the newsletter would contain "timely information tailored to the audiences interests". The idea is that if the newsletter is to interest the readers, they should play a part in producing it.

If you wish to become a reporter you must be working as a staff member or as a volunteer with a Family Resource Centre, Community Development Project or Core-Funded Group or one of the Specialist or Support Agencies. You must also have some basic media training and/or have experience in writing and reporting for your local newsletter or newspaper.

Additionally, regional reporters should



● 'Take our picture!' cried three children from Sligo's north-side, Aaron, Lee and Dillon

have a keen interest, indeed passion, for community development work and the issues surrounding the work. Regional Reporters must be broad-minded and willing to report on a wide variety of issues and to look to the three programmes under the CDSPs umbrella and not just the programme their project is funded through.

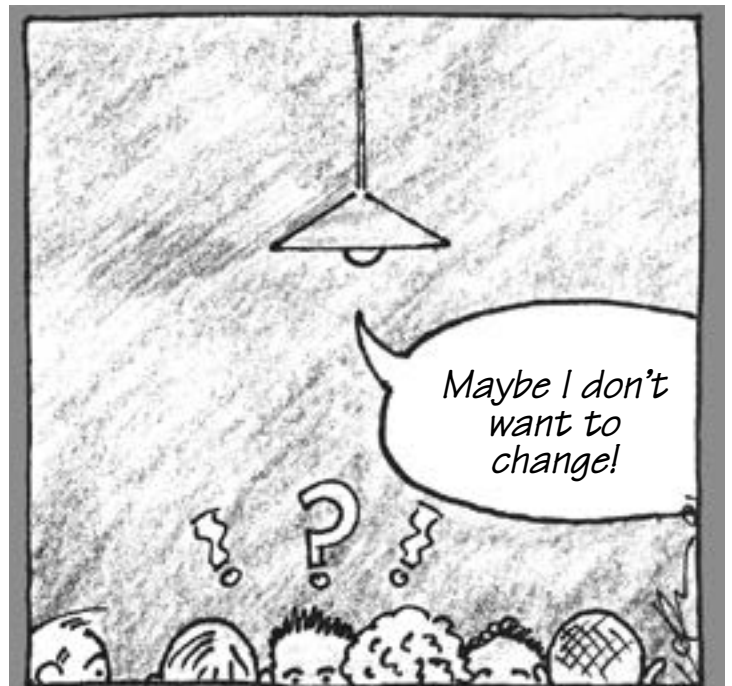
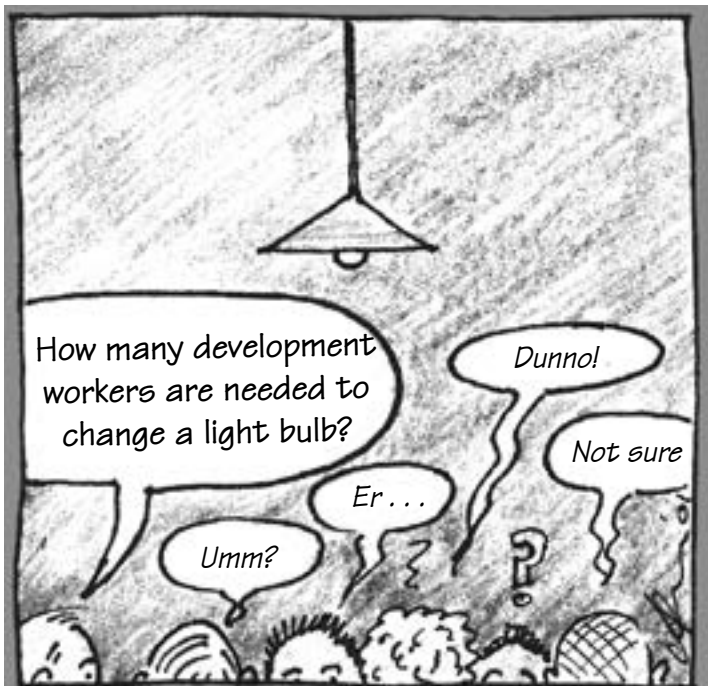
In return for their commitment to work as Regional Reporters, those chosen will be paid for their reports (at reasonable rates) and will receive appropriate training. The editor will also provide support on an ongoing basis. The experience will particularly benefit those who already produce their own

newsletter or wish to improve their relationship with the local media. Training will be provided in such basic areas as: News Gathering, Reporting and Editing; Writing Intros; the Basic Ingredients of a News Story; Feature Writing; Law and the Media; Handling Quotes; Writing Techniques; etc.

Two Regional Reporters are already working for 'Changing Ireland'. If you are interested in joining the team, contact the editor, Allen Meagher.

Tel: 061-458011 or 086-8591-676.

E-mail: allenmeagher@hotmail.com



Rosemary Kerrigan, Goatfarmer and National Advisory Committee Member - In Profile

WHY would someone in Leitrim who is a small-time organic farmer, a grandmother, the chairperson of the local CDP's management committee and a lover of the countryside travel to Dublin eight to ten times a year? Rosemary Kerrigan of Dromahair, Co. Leitrim is a member of the National Advisory Committee (NAC) to the Community Development Support Programmes (CDSPs). She is currently the only voluntary management committee member.

The NAC meets four times annually and an affiliate committee, the Standing Operational Committee (SOC) around six times a year. It's all committees and acronyms at this level. But when you meet Ms. Kerrigan at her homeplace, life seems simple and undisturbed, which belies the fact that she has not had the easiest of lives. Yet she rises to every challenge. Including travelling to Dublin for all the meetings.

However, Ms. Kerrigan feels the meetings should move around the country to make them more attractive to potential committee members, especially volunteers. Three regions currently have no representative on the committee - the North-East, Mid-West and South-East.

Travel and other expenses are naturally covered and if a project worker is attending regularly their project can receive extra funding to make up for the time the worker is away from normal duties.

Asked could video-conferencing work, Ms. Kerrigan said, "The personal interaction is very important, especially if there are initial suspicions between people. So, we usually have a meeting before a meeting!"

The involvement seems worthwhile:

"We have definitely progressed in the last two to three years. The policy workers have come aboard when it was recognised that regional representatives needed support and there was also a need to promote networking to enable projects to work together.

"There was a fear that, if the Community Development Programme didn't move quickly, the ethos and community development

principles would not be replicated as local government reformed and development then would not be from the bottom up. It took a lot of hard work then to get policy workers aboard.

"Some projects have found their local policy workers are a real help to them," said Ms. Kerrigan, giving an example of a policy worker who smoothed relations between a CDP and the local authority when it came to housing.

Though information was only becoming known at the time of interview, Ms. Kerrigan expressed concern over the planned move of the FRCs to another agency. Not everyone in a volunteer's shoes would be so clued in.

"By joining the NAC you personally get a global view of the CDSPs," she outlined, "and you enable your region to have a voice at national level. A vacancy will soon arise though because I have been there a long time. In the past, there were more voluntary people involved in the NAC, but it's difficult for people now if they have a full-time job."

Ms. Kerrigan, originally from Oxfordshire, England, came to this country intending to stay no longer than two years while she worked in a hospital:

"And then I met an Irishman!"

Ms. Kerrigan moved to the area with her husband Jack in 1979. Jack died seven years ago and one of her sons Paul was killed in a road accident a couple of years ago. The double-tragedy upset but did not discourage her from striving forward.

Jack was an inspiration to her from the start. When Ms. Kerrigan met him he was in a wheelchair, having been badly injured in an accident and being told he would die. He went on to become one of the founders of the Irish Wheelchair Association.

"We broke the mould by getting married. The priest was one Fr. Leo Close, who in the late 1950s became the first wheelchair-user to be ordained. We met resistance elsewhere, but he was very positive about Jack and I getting married," she recalled.

The first years of married life were lived in north County Dublin, "but the pull of the north-

west (Jack was originally from around Bundoran) and the hills pulled us back and we settled in Dromahair. Gradually, Jack became more involved in the community here," said Ms. Kerrigan. She picked up as strong an interest in community and related matters and became involved in development work, increasing her workload after Jack passed away.

Ms. Kerrigan is still impressed at the memory of when the local Community Connections became part of the Community Development Programme in 1995.

"It was incredible. It took me quite a long time for it to sink in that we were going to have ongoing core funding to pay the rent and the workers," she said.

Regarding the locality, she loves her adopted homeland.

"This is a beautiful area and, as you say, 'You can't eat scenery', but you can show people how to enjoy it. We have a superb environment, the extended family still counts here, and it is a marvellous place to raise young people. My son's children have the freedom to run around where they like and people are very welcoming here.

And is she happy in community development?

"Well, I am in it ten years and I haven't got out of it! If you feel you can enable people to have a better quality of life, it's worthwhile. It's not a religion, but I was a member of a caring profession before when I worked in communities as an occupational therapist," she replied.

"As for relaxation, I ride - I have a small horse called 'Star' and I find it very therapeutic."

She looks fit and healthy to prove the point.

Ms. Kerrigan is passionate about the environment, wishes there was more recycling, is a member of the Irish Peat Conservation Council, Irish Seedsavers and, also, Amnesty International.

It keeps her busy. There has been death in the family, but also alcoholism.

Yet, she thinks of unfortunate people abroad: "I see people in Bosnia who have had their whole family taken away and they are surviving."

She has survived and grown, despite difficulties, due to the support of some very special friends.

"They helped me in my life and tolerated me when I was not functioning. Life does this to a lot of people and I am no different to anyone else."

Returning to her membership of the CDSPs national committees, had she any wishes?

"I often feel I don't properly get to report back to the region. I haven't been used yet as a conduit for complaints, but maybe there aren't any! Though it's possibly because people feel the NAC is at a far remove from the day-to-day work of the CDPs. Both the Department and the NAC are trying to raise people's awareness - through regional meetings and seminars for example."

And finally, what does she do on the NAC?

"As someone who is a volunteer I sit and observe and listen to the ding-dong and, interject, hopefully with practical suggestions!"



● Rosemary Kerrigan on her organic farm in Dromahair, Co. Leitrim.

Becoming Volunteers - By Accident

It is a mystery to some people how someone else comes to be on this or that committee. 'Who does so-and-so think he/she is?' they might ask. Sometimes it happens by accident, as the following voluntary management committee members explain.

Mary Walsh of Kiltimagh said she "drifted" into becoming a volunteer, literally, by walking into the wrong shop by accident. The premises occupied by Kiltimagh CDP used to be a shop run by a friend of Ms. Walsh's and she didn't know there had been a change.

"I charged into the shop to see my friend, I thought this was still a shop. Then I got talking to the people there. And here I am!"

Now Ms. Walsh is a very active member of the local CDPs voluntary management committee and was most recently involved in helping put together a local book of folklore 'A Taste Of Times Past'.

"I would be going for a walk around town and I know people must ask how I got on the management team - 'Has she pulled or something?' they probably ask," added Ms. Walsh.

Ann Sullivan was also somewhat of an accidental volunteer. After her mother passed away and her children moved away to study, she called into her local CDP looking for work. She remembers the carpet was just down - so new was the office.

"I didn't know what community development was then no more than the man in the moon. But I joined a women's group, then a couple of management people left and I was asked to become a member. I said I would try. That was 1998."

Ann Donald thinks the local community were looking for new faces when a member of the local community council asked her to join Forum, based in Letterfrack.

"I did happen to have an interest in what was happening. I always thought this area was being left behind. When I joined I often thought to myself - what are you doing here at these meetings? But then you look back on 10 to 15 years of fact-finding, lobbying and working for changes and finally you achieved something. It's a very long process, but I was always wanting to empower people and it has worked so well it's fantastic."

So much for the mystique which sometimes surrounds how and why people become involved in committee work!



● Ann Donegan, co-ordinator with Sligo Northside Community Partnership.

Sligo CDP are busy and homeless

SLIGO Northside Community Partnership is typical of a Community Development Project which has been established for some years, in this case since 1994. The CDP was set up as a response to a community survey which identified the need for specific action that would target the social, economic and educational needs of the people of the area. The CDP works in the North Ward of the town where there are over 1200 households; a mix of public and private housing estates, one official halting site and two unofficial sites. A quarter of the area's population are under-18 and 15% of households are welfare-dependent.

Sligo CDP has a busy schedule of activities, as described by co-ordinator, Ann Donegan.

"We have a women's arts group doing training and they are hoping to have an exhibition. There are about 15 to 20 in the group and these were women with absolutely no experience and no belief that they could paint. They are mainly in the 40 plus age group, people who perhaps missed the boat the first time around when it came to education. Now they see the world through different eyes. They helped with a millennium quilt project and now they're doing computer classes as well.

"We hope to get more groups going in different estates and to replicate the model of the women's arts group. We need to branch out because new estates are being built all the time.

"We also get a lot of requests with regard to cross-border work. We have a cross-border Information Technology project up and running between ourselves who are urban and a rural group in Glenties, Co. Derry.

"Through a Community Employment Scheme, there are 15 people employed in various works.

"Also, we have a nursery and we have just

secured funding from the Department of Justice and Law Reform to fund two core staff for the playschool.

"There's a specific Traveller project funded under LEADER, but we also take an interest in Travellers because there is a significant percentage of Travellers living in the North Ward. So, our homework club and youth club is integrated and I am pleasantly surprised to say it works very well. They get on well and there isn't any hassle - local people want it to work. We just don't make an issue of differences between settled and travellers. You can have all the theory in the world, but it's got to be in the heart if it is to work. The children had a Christmas Concert and all the parents came to it; moments like that make the work worthwhile.

"We are also starting to get into social economy and there is a three-year contract for that project with full-time positions available though applicants must be over-35 years and that doesn't suit a lot of single mothers who might like the work," added Ms. Donegan.

Besides being busy, the staff of Sligo CDP are currently office-less. (The meeting for this interview took place on a streetside bench.) Some six months ago, Ms. Donegan and staff were told by builders that the refurbishment of their base, the Northside Community Resource Centre, would mean they would be temporarily dislocated for six weeks. Despite having to work from home, Ms. Donegan has taken it in her stride - soon they will move into a very fine premises. Meanwhile, project administrator, Marian McTiernan, took advantage of the opportunity of being away from the hustle and bustle of the office to computerise the project's accounts.

A significant portion of the cost of refurbishing the building, an old school, was funded by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and is very near completion.

Emancipated Women of North Mayo

By Allen Meagher

Feeling free for the first time in history to stroll around alone in public. Driving tractors without getting frowned at. Going to functions without a partner. Playing sport. It sounds like freedom for women in Ballycastle, Co. Mayo, was a long time coming. And it is genuinely a fresh emancipation for local women, most of whom experienced discrimination within their own lifetimes.

However, it's not as if members of the Ballycastle Women's Group don't realise what has happened - they made it happen for themselves.

As Liz Munelly-Winters, a member of a highly successful local arts group, tells it, "Women used to work awful hard at farming. Feeding calves would keep you busy, and keeping pigs, milking cows and at night spinning wool to make blankets. Now keeping pigs is gone, there are milking machines and people plant less crops. Now women have more freedom and more time for leisure."

Ms. Munelly-Winters left the land and moved into town and today works producing arts and crafts products, colourful gloves, hats and scarves. She appreciates her new lifestyle

The arts group established through Ballycastle Women's Group has established a firm foothold in the community with a crafts

shop located on the main street. The fact that they had trouble gaining credibility from day one means that this is no small achievement.

"When we started up this Women's Group everybody thought we were completely anti-men. That was said to me on many occasions... when I was in the pub. And on my own in the pub - something that you wouldn't do before," said one member of the women's group.

The group developed out of the local branch of the Irish Countrywomen's Association and joined with Women of the North West (WNW). It is an autonomous group based in an area of wild beauty and poor job prospects. The unemployment level locally stood at 36% some years ago and remains high relative to other parts of the country.

"We are too isolated, too far from anywhere. Ballycastle is over-dependant on FAS schemes, but if they were gone there would be nothing. People fight around here to get on FAS schemes," explained WNW co-ordinator, Marian Flannery.

Former President, Mary Robinson's family came from nearby Ballycastle and her example had an influence in inspiring the spread of women's groups.

Said Ms. Flannery: "Mary Robinson is a role model."

Added Maeve Dunne, a member of the

WNW voluntary management committee: "Women are going out on their own now and that's new. I'd never have faced into a pub for even a quiz on my own before. Now it's OK for women to go to various functions on their own."

"And women drive more now," noted another management member, Kathleen McDonnell.

Said Ms. Munelly-Winters, "It's better times for women now. We are more outgoing. I like what I see. Women get the chance now to do what they please. Women are very much to the fore in the Church - you couldn't go inside the altar when I was young unless you were there to clean it."

"It's more accepted for women to be driving trailers and tractors. In 1985, two women got onto a FAS scheme. There are nearly too many women on FAS schemes now. The problem was if a man got on a FAS scheme he was likely to drink the money and his wife saw little of it."

The Women's Group is financially sound; the cost of hosting classes is paid for from the proceeds of the arts and craft shop. Another plus is that the art teacher, Aine Connor, is a local woman. Ballycastle people, particularly the men, have got used to the idea of the Women's Group.

As Ms. O'Donnell said, "The craft shop gave us a standing in the community. We have a voice in the community and government agencies have to at least be seen to consult us."

For example, the bus service was poor. Since the local secondary school closed last year, many local teenagers began attending secondary school in Ballina, so the Women's Group entered discussions with Bus Eireann about improving the service.

"The buses now run at suitable times," said Ms. Dunne.

The WNWco-ordinator summed it all up when she paraphrased an old saying: 'Go up to the cemetery and look to see if you can find any gravestones with the inscription 'She Kept A Very Clean House'. You won't find any.'

Ballycastle apart there are 8000 women living in their CDP area, living in an under-populated area spread across a huge terrain, from Ballina down to Achill Island. When it comes to improving the quality of lives and pushing for further emancipation, Women of the North-West has no shortage of people to work with.

www.womenofthenorthwest.net
www.mayoireland.ie



● Artists and voluntary management committee members of Women of the North-West: Liz Munelly-Winters, Kathleen McDonnell, Marian Flannery (staff) and Maeve Dunne.

NOW venture changed women's lives completely'

GOING since 1984 and core-funded since 1995, 'Women of the North-West' based in Moygownagh in north Mayo has won much for women in the area.

Chief among recent successes was the two-year New Opportunities for Women (NOW) programme, funded by the EU, which was completed recently. Unfortunately, a submission for additional funds to the Department of Justice and Law Reform to build on this progress was turned down - news which arrived in the post the day 'Changing Ireland' called by.

Though annoyed, the attitude was pragmatic - keep going, though the project they were turned down for would have built on the "super" successes of NOW. That programme was flexibly designed so activities could be chosen which suited the participant's lives. (As the local co-ordinator put it, "If it was only about I.T. training where would they get jobs in I.T. around here?")

The NOW programme took 33 participants in the area through a variety of courses - agricultural accounts, mathematics, I.T., business planning and personal development.

As Kathleen McDonnell recounted, "The NOW programme changed my life, completely. Before NOW, I could watch TV all day; after NOW there aren't enough hours in the day for me to do all I want to do. I hardly get to watch TV anymore.

"I feel more part of the community because the programme changed my outlook. It gives you the confidence to get involved and get things done. I don't ever want to sit at home and go 'braindead' again."

Ms. McDonnell is currently putting together information for a website about Mayo and is employed through a FAS scheme to do the research. She is also on the management committee for Women of the North-West.

The NOW evaluation found that all the participants went on to do something else positive. Three people went onto further education or to work in social economy; two women went into the family business; another found work in a mart; another in Dunnes Stores.

Commenting on their recent application for funding meeting with a refusal, co-ordinator, Marian Flannery, said, "So much for [supporting] women's movements on the periphery, but there's no point in getting negative about it. Though you put loads of work into it - all your energy goes



● Ann Cawley, administrator with Women of the North-West.

into it."

"The EU were happy to use our work as a model in Derby, England, and Andalusia, Spain. We were one of only two projects in the country to receive this EU 'Equal Opportunities' funding. It was an ambitious programme, it was about training women (paid under a FAS scheme) to question their society. The EU wanted to see how it would energise communities.

The outcomes speak for themselves, for example regarding health:

"We had representation on the women's health advisory committee and last year for the first time the Health Board asked women in the community what they wanted and needed. The Health Board is now giving small grants of up to £2000 to women's groups to hold classes to promote better health, so the women in the community have taken on responsibility for improving their own health," said Ms. Flannery.

The attitude seemed to be - you live to fight another day.

Watching your 'Ps and Qs'

"A project doesn't happen overnight," says Marian Flannery, co-ordinator of Women of the North-West. "It grows bit by bit. In the 1960s, we tried to promote camogie and the Church was against us. Now in 2001, we are being actively supported by Moygownagh GAA in promoting women in sport and giving women the same access to facilities as men.

Both the co-ordinator and administrator at Moygownagh enjoy their work, despite difficulties. They quoted the example of a woman who came into them in such a state she was crying - they got her on a course and now she has a full-time job and her life has changed for the better.

"It's almost like gardening," said Ms. Flannery, "making sure the weeds don't come back. We are both doing this since before we got paid for it. We are really more activists than development workers. But I watch other development workers and they mind their 'Ps and Qs' because they have their eye on jobs higher up."

'Go on The Mom, Go on The Mom!'

CDP scholarship fund profile of a beneficiary

By Sharon Browne

"Go On The Mom, Go on the Mom", that was all she could think of. Sitting there. Terrified. Final exams for a Degree in Youth and Community Work. Four years of slog. Then that vision came to her of her nine year old son roaring words of encouragement out the window at her as she headed to Maynooth.

Kathleen Higgins started out in life as a hairdresser. But she soon embarked on a personal journey through adult education that began while volunteering at her local youth service the Kerry Diocesan Youth Service. In her time there she completed a Youth Work Practice Skills Certificate course (UCC accreditation). Since then she has travelled the community arts road completing a VTOS programme in Community Theatre (NCVA Accreditation). At the same time Kathleen became a participant in SPICE (Single Parents Initiative in Community & Equality), a core-funded self-help support group based at Tralee CDP. In that capacity she joined the Management Committee of Tralee CDP, representing SPICE. She has since become the Chairperson of the CDP.

Eventually she decided to do the Degree in Youth & Community Work at Maynooth. This choice was rooted in the fact that she wanted to broaden her qualifications to have more choices and mobility in employment. But there were other reasons too. She wanted to learn more about social analysis. She felt this would give her a framework to understand the wider community and societal issues she is presented with every day in her work. Learning about policy work would give her an avenue to start addressing the root causes of some of the issues

she was dealing with at the CDP.

"The Degree demands a high level of commitment because it involves four years of financial hardship, study, travel by car from Tralee to Maynooth every week, while at the same time leaving a young child behind. I paid for the first year myself. I had to piece together a jigsaw of bits of small grants from various local bodies. That experience alone, and the worry that I might not be able to cover it, nearly made me give up. I definitely don't think I would have stayed but for the support of the CDSPs Scholarship fund in the last three years. This covered my fees, accommodation, books and travel", says Kathleen.

One of the things that really stands out in her mind from her course is the management training module. "Learning about the pitfalls of voluntary managements was of great use in my role as Chair of CDP. The other great learning was in the area of policy. I developed an outward vision. This kind of awareness made me see how social policies affect the people on the ground. I learned to look further than the individual situation. The great thing was I discovered that things can change, we can all have a voice, especially at the collective level. But most of all I think the course lifted my confidence, that's what really helped me as a Chairperson", she says.

The Degree is done now. Kathleen only has to wait for the results. But she already got the nicest result she could have asked for. When she got home after the exams, her young son had rung up her friends, hovered the house and threw a surprise party for her that he organised by himself.

Highlight incredible work - Minister

"The Community Development Projects are doing incredible work around the country and yet there isn't great recognition, even within some communities, that they're doing work. I would be all for letting the general public know that a sizeable proportion of their money, taxpayers money, is going into the community development budget, but also that they are delivering on the ground in a very practical way to people. I welcome the newsletter and would welcome more publicity for individual CDPs around the country. The very fact I would go around the country to projects will highlight the work that they do and that is one of the reasons that I came here today."

- Dermot Ahern, T.D., Minister of Social, Family and Community Affairs, at the opening of St. Mary's CDP's new premises in Limerick.

Youths, volunteering and the Celtic Tiger

The Celtic Tiger is neither good for the youth nor for encouraging volunteering, according to Ann Donald of Letterfrack:

"The emphasis is on greed, money and success. The Celtic Tiger is doing a disservice to the youth because youths have a great sense of a common bond and are good for looking after each other. Volunteering is to do with the common good and that is being undermined by the Celtic Tiger.

"The youth have the energy and drive but it is difficult to involve them and concentrate their drive. It would help if they could be encouraged to see that a good idea for a community can sometimes take 20 years to blossom."

CDSPs Scholarship Scheme

Community development projects of all types, particularly new ones, are finding it increasingly difficult to find qualified staff. Other projects find it difficult to replace staff who move on.

At the same time many local people who are active in their own communities are unable to get the work experience and qualifications they need to make the transition from volunteer to paid worker. Yet these are the very people who would make great community workers.

The CDP Scholarship Scheme is designed to meet both of above

needs. Funding is available to projects within the CDSP's who wish to sponsor a local person on a part-time or full-time Degree or Diploma course in Community Development.

There are many people out there who either have completed study or are in the process of doing so. Changing Ireland wants to hear from you. As this is the Year of the Volunteer we are interested in doing a series on volunteers who have used the Scholarship Scheme. Contact the Editor or Sharon Browne at Tralee CDP.

First regional CDSPs seminar held in Kilkenny

By Allen Meagher

AFTER a courtship of two years, the three partners under the CDSPs umbrella drew closer in Kilkenny on May 10th when the first in a series of consultative regional seminars was held. The seminar was held some days before the announcement by Minister Dermot Ahern that he intended for Family Resource Centres to leave the programme for a new home. The comments by participants, even in retrospect however, make for an interesting read.

Notably, most of the 130 people attending were members of voluntary management committees in urban and rural communities in the south-east. Others attending included part and full-time development workers and project co-ordinators, staff from the DSFCA and members of a strategic planning group who have devised the consultative approach. The seminars will take place around the country, concluding by January of next year.

The Seminar was hosted by Templeshannon CDP, who recently began to receive funding under the Community Development Programme. The project is based in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford. The seminar was genuinely judged useful and informative, according to a sample of opinion.

Cecilia Forrester of the Support Agency Network explained how the CDSPs structure was developing. She asked, "Where we want to be?" and "How do we get there?" and used charts to show growth and linkages of the three CDSPs sectors and Department's and other agencies' involvement.

■ Poverty issues

All three programmes under the CDSPs, she said, had something in common: "They are all working to address poverty issues and each programme and project has those who will benefit involved in the design and delivery of actions to combat poverty."

She talked about strategic planning, saying it was "about uniting so we have a stronger voice and a greater chance of challenging and changing the structures that cause poverty in Ireland."

"Seize the moment," she urged her audience. "If we don't have good relationships between each other, we have nothing, and social change is bigger than any of our differences... We are quite suspicious of each other and that is natural. We all got to trust each other. It takes a leap of faith. But it's also very exciting, especially when you think

of linking with other people around the country doing the same thing as you."

There are 30 projects in the South-East and a representative from each of the three programme types gave a description of their work.

■ Cautious

John Kiely, a Waterford-based project co-ordinator, explained about the work CDPs do and pointed out that CDPs are networked through regional forums which meet every quarter. , said while he welcomed the CDSPs process, he remained somewhat cautious. He, said while he welcomed the CDSPs process, he remained somewhat cautious.

"Our group has concerns about these changes. The South-East has had no representative for the past few months on the National Advisory Committee and so we've had no input into the development of this. But Tina has addressed these concerns," he said.

There are seven Core Funded Groups in the South East and Breda Murphy, the co-ordinator of Waterford Women's Resource Centre, spoke from the CFG viewpoint:

"I tried to get a definition of a Core Funded Group, but I couldn't come up with one. We are not a CDP, we are not a FRC. We are a community of issue - in our case, women. I am very new to the idea of meeting other funded projects at regional seminars, but among the benefits are it might broaden our work and give us more regional and national focus in our work.

Margaret Phelan, from Newpark FRC, Kilkenny, explained how FRCs worked by describing how their centre evolved from a start 25 years ago with the small creche. After years in a prefab building, three years ago they finally got their own permanent building and became a fully-fledged Family Resource Centre.

■ Challenging causes

Tina Stallord from the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs addressed the gathering. She said community development is "not just about addressing needs, but also about challenging the causes of poverty - challenging policies and challenging structures. Community development offers new opportunities for those lacking choice, power and resources. It involves people experiencing disadvantage in

making the changes they identify as important."

"We want to be more strategic in developing a collective response to community needs. We are seeking an equitable distribution of resources," she added.

"There is no plan to merge the three programmes," she assured people. "We don't have a hidden agenda about (for example) resource centres becoming CDPs. We would be happy if people went away today understanding and happy about they are part of an umbrella of three programmes."

Murt Flynn, Templeshannon CDP, thanked Laura Bracken at the Department and the staff of Templeshannon CDP, particularly Helen, Sean, George; the regional planning group and Framework (the Support Agency in the South-East); and his colleagues at Templeshannon.

Other Regional CDSPs Consultative Seminars are currently being organised.

A taste of Kiltimagh

Hedges-schools, emigration, ghost stories, matchmaking and streets covered in manure are among the topics covered in a new publication 'A Taste of Kiltimagh'. The book was produced as a Community Links Project between Kiltimagh Community Development Project and a group of Transition Year Students from St. Louis Community School, Kiltimagh. The aim was to present an opportunity for people to voice experiences and give youth a better understanding of their roots. Bridie McMahon, local CDP co-ordinator, hoped the book - "a first and very small project" - will lead onto bigger things in the future. She pointed out that the students who interviewed senior citizens for the publication discovered that their fellow townfolk had lived through fascinating times. As Alan Walsh, one of the student-researchers, remarks in the closing pages of the book: "The project really opened my eyes to how different life was back in those times for people growing up. I had an idea but I never really knew how different life was and how easily people were satisfied and how little they had."

Tullamore Travellers' Movement Celebrates its 10th Year

THERE are 90 Traveller families in Tullamore, Co. Offaly, or roughly 400 individuals in a population of around 5000 people. This year, the Tullamore Travellers' Movement (TTM) is ten years old.

TTM have achieved some major successes since it was established. Now, Travellers are included in the decision-making that effects their lives - for example, accommodation, health, education. The TTM never worked in a vacuum; it works with other Traveller groups in the county and is linked for policy-making with national associations.

One major success is in the level of members' involvement. As a Traveller-owned project TTM has an active management committee and six workgroups (dealing with accommodation, education, culture and anti-discrimination, health, youth, houses). It is the only CDP in Offaly and because it is also the only Traveller project around, staff and management are constantly being called on by Travellers in the region. (TTM is one of only two CDPs in the Midlands - some others are at pre-development stage).

Mary O'Donoghue is co-ordinator and has been with the Tullamore Travellers' Movement for the past four years, during which time she has seen some real progress.

"Where Travellers here three years ago

wouldn't go in the door of any statutory body office, now they will walk straight in and sit down at a meeting," she said.

And, at least, today Travellers have some protection under the law.

"Up to a few years ago, there was no legal process for dealing with discrimination and people faced pure and utter discrimination," said Ms. O'Donoghue. She gave the example of a woman she knew who went to a maternity hospital.

"It was her first time pregnant and the nurse said to her 'I suppose you'll be just like your aunt - now you've had one I suppose you'll be in here every year for the next ten years.' The woman was devastated, she had a bad labour and the child was sick. That was only two years ago. The difference now is that you could take a case against someone today who spoke so unjustly."

She said that still the greatest problem in doing community development with Travellers is the level of discrimination they face.

"Although it's different now; at least we can challenge the discrimination, be it in education, health or wherever."

She distinguished between the institutional racism and racism from individuals, and thought the latter form was the worst.

"People have to ask the question, including

people working in community development - do I have an individual responsibility to combat racism? We can all make the decision not alone not to be racist, but to resist it too."

Public institutions are now working in consultation with TTM.

"Offaly County Council have changed how they work, because we said they cannot build a halting site without ongoing consultation with Travellers on the site location and layout. Though Tullamore still only has one official halting site, it is currently being refurbished in total consultation with the users.

"In terms of collective action, we got an after-schools project going. We got parents together, young people, teachers. Then we got the three groups together at one meeting to set up and run the after-schools project. Now, we only have to maintain that process. We call around to each of the groups and hold meetings with them. We also have education workers and an education group," added Ms. O'Donoghue.

The foot and mouth crisis earlier this year meant that some of the 10th birthday celebrations had to be postponed. However, filming of a short film made by members was not seriously disrupted and it will be released later in the year.

Questions Arise Following Minister's

Staff and management in Family Resource Centres were disappointed at the lack of consultation with them, prior to Minister Ahern's mid-May announcement, going by a sample of opinion.

Leo Scales (Ballyboden FRC) represents FRCs on the National Strategic Planning Committee and he was taken aback.

"This came out of the blue. While the funding is not going to be decreased, as far as we can see, the main question in my mind is can we continue to work from community development principles? Will we get the support? And will Support Agencies still have a role to play with Family Resource Centres?"

Mr. Scales was, however, anxious to see what opportunities might come with the new development and was keen to look at the positive potentials. Nevertheless, his phone kept ringing "with people calling to express their anger at the total and absolute lack of consultation."

He responded to the hunger for more information by calling upon the resources of the FRC National Forum and mailing every project the details that are known. A meeting was held in early July and a second one scheduled for July 18th.

Fiona O'Leary, co-ordinator with O'Malley Park Family and Community Resource Centre, Limerick, said her main concern was that her Centre worked very strongly from a community development ethos and she was not sure the Family Mediation Service worked the same way."

"I would like more clarification," she added.

At Boyle Family Life Centre, Co. Roscommon, Maura Callaghan, a regional FRC representative, expressed similar concerns:

"We have a big counselling centre here - with six counsellors employed and six in training. We apply every year for a counselling grant. Yet, we wouldn't want to lose the community development side of our work."

The future for FRCs will become more clear in the weeks and months ahead. For the moment, however, some questions hang unanswered. When the Family Resource Centres move to a new administration, how will this affect the CDSPs set-up? And, what if Family Resource Centres were to become part of a new statutory body? What advantages would there be? On the other hand, would some Centres prefer to remain independent and opt out of the programme? The idea of having a statutory body to administer the FRCs has implications for the other programmes under the CDSPs; How would they react if such changes were mooted for them?

Discussion is healthy and there are undoubtedly advantages to be gained by attaching Family Resource Centres to the proposed new agency. There are also, understandably, fears, including about the absence of consultation with projects before the decision was made.

This religion is no joke

AFRAID to mention her religion in case she would lose her job. Bossed by house-mates. Needing anonymity in this article. And nervous about 'coming out' to her parents. Another 'believer' knows she is laughed at behind her back at work but remains defiant. Both are young and following in the footsteps of others who practiced the same faith and were hung or burnt for their beliefs. **ALLEN MEAGHER REPORTS.**

"Three days ago I was wearing my pagan jewellery and a street evangelist called me over. He pointed at my Ank (a pendant known colloquially as 'a witch's cross'). He asked me did I know what it was and I said 'Yes'.

"He basically said what I was - 'You Witch!' but what he had in mind was very different to how I think of Witches. I was very friendly, but he had hatred in his eyes. It was the first time somebody looked at me like that - I wasn't afraid, but I was shocked.

"Then he said, 'Limerick is a place devoted to Jesus and not a place for witches', a claim Deirdre (a pseudonym) found amusing because it wasn't until she came to Limerick that she became a Witch.

Abuse in the streets is not uncommon. Deirdre's friend, Amanda Moloney, is also a Witch and she has been similarly hassled.

■ Pagan

"I don't scream it at people that I'm a Witch," said Ms. Moloney.

"It's not tattooed on my head, though I do normally wear my pagan jewellery and I'm happy with people asking me about it. Most people I am around are fairly enlightened, but a lot of people laugh when you tell them you are a Witch and they start thinking you are stupid. I know people at work laugh behind my back.

"Why? Just look at the greatest television role model - 'Sabrina, The Teenage Witch'. It doesn't help. People ask 'Do you have a talking cat?' and 'Do you have a pointy hat?' If you're wondering if I have a broomstick, yes I do, and no it doesn't fly."

"There's no register, but Witchcraft is currently believed to be the fastest-growing religion in the world," remarked Ms. Moloney.

In the U.S., the debate over whether or not Witchcraft should be regarded and respected as a religion continues.

President George Bush, wanting a day annually devoted to God, dismissed Witchcraft as "not a real religion". At the same time, the number of Witches in the U.S. army is on the increase and army chaplains are trained in Wica (another name for Witchcraft) so they can administer to the faithful.

"What we believe is: Do what you will as long as it hurts nobody, including yourself. Witches are mostly healers - lots of them are doctors or nurses.

Explained Deirdre: "A Witch is a person, male or female, who practices witchcraft - it's a religion. I'm a very good-willed person

and being a witch makes me feel so well."

On Deirdre's initiation into Witchcraft, a ceremony which took place in her room, her house-mates were not happy:

"They knew a Pagan thing was going on and a few days later I was told I had to respect the religion of the house. In their minds, they just didn't understand."

Before Deirdre became a Witch, she was as ignorant as the average person. It was after she lost two people in her family and began



● Amanda Moloney practices a minority religion

to become more contemplative that she turned to Witchcraft and found fulfillment.

"Before I knew about it, if someone told me they were a witch, I would have just thought it was some sort of joke. I didn't know it was a religion, I just thought it was people wearing pointy hats and having broomsticks."

Does she feel discriminated against as a Witch?

"I live a normal life, but I do feel discriminated because at work if I told anyone I am a witch I would probably lose the job."

Deirdre is employed through the Catholic Church.

"The first spell I cast was for a job and the next day I got called for a vacancy (in a Catholic institution). I am glad I have the job because with what I was reading I was becoming bitter. But Catholics alive today

are doing mostly good things - I can see that from the inside. There's no more witch-burnings."

■ 'Coming out'

"The worst thing is when you 'come out' to your own friends, especially ones you know a long time. With some - all of a sudden you lose credibility. Some have a very condescending look and I don't like that."

She wouldn't dream yet of telling her parents.

Witchcraft is not a religion people are necessarily born into and Witches do not usually initiate their children into the religion. The children of a parent who practices Witchcraft are sometimes taunted at school.

■ Patronistic

"I don't think the discrimination we face will ever go away," said Ms. Moloney. "No group of people has been persecuted for as long as we have been. In the first millennium we were demonized by the Church and burned and hanged. In recent centuries, that has stopped, but we're ridiculed as people and laughed at.

"In the past, the Church blamed any bad things such as famine or a child dying on Witches. They called our Gods 'Demons'. Satan's image was constructed from one of the main gods of Paganism. We don't believe in 'Satan'.

"By the way, don't call us White Witches - that's so patronistic," said Ms. Moloney. "There are not extremities in Witchcraft; there's no such thing as all-good or all-bad, there's a balance.

Society and the media has provoked an image of Witches that casts them all as gay and radical, among other things.

"People are afraid of what they don't understand," said Ms. Moloney.

One Witches' Cult - the Dianic Cult - partly fits this description and are known among the Witching community for having a strong lesbian element and for being ultra-feminist. Almost all members of the Cult are female - the idea being that after millennia of male-dominated religions, one dominated by females provides some balance. Generally, however, believers in Witchcraft regard both sexes as equals.

Witches are present throughout society. Their relative invisibility, compared to other religions, is partly a reflection of the negative prejudices society holds against them as individuals and as a group.

Incidentally, the Equality Authority in Ireland exists to protect people from discrimination, for example in the workplace. Discrimination can be based on any of nine factors, including religion.

www.equality.ie

www.witchvox.com

www.paganireland.com

Rich and Poor

"The State pledges itself to safeguard with especial care the economic interests of the weaker sections of the community..." so says Bunreacht na hÉireann, (Art.45.4.1).

Yet despite the Constitution and the Celtic Tiger inequality and poverty are hallmarks of Irish society. Some might even assert that these are inevitable facts of life. But they are not.

Rich and Poor, a new publication from the Combat Poverty Agency and Oak Tree Press, sets out to analyse the cause and extent of social and economic divisions in Ireland and to answer a number of fundamental questions.

"Why is it that despite greater national prosperity a sizeable sector of our people struggle to survive on an inadequate income? Why do these groups tend to remain on the margins when it comes to jobs, education, health care, housing? And how can policymakers be encouraged to make decisions that will break this cycle of intergenerational poverty?"

The book discusses the link between inequality and poverty, while also examining social spending patterns in Ireland in key policy areas such as education, housing, health, taxation and social welfare. Rich and Poor explores options for achieving a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities in Irish society.

An interesting analysis of the difference between poverty and inequality is presented. How can it be that in a time when poverty is being reduced (as evidenced by the achievement of NAPS objectives) that inequality has never been higher? To reduce poverty is one thing (depending on how you define poverty) but to reduce the gap between rich and poor is an entirely different and more challenging objective.

For the community activist and general reader interested in the difference between social welfare and social justice, the book is accessible in style and useful in fact. For example the chapter on Inequality and Poverty in Ireland highlights that the "percentage of earnings paid in direct taxes by the bottom 10 per cent of the population had increased from 3.14 per cent in 1987 to 11 percent in 1994/5 whereas the percentage paid by the top 10 per cent had fallen from 28.62 per cent to 27.66 per cent".

The authors of this wide-ranging study come from different disciplines and each approaches their topic from a unique perspective, combining theoretical insights with pragmatic proposals.

Rich and Poor: Perspectives on tackling inequality in Ireland, Edited by Sara Cantillon, Carmel Corrigan, Peadar Kirby and Joan O'Flynn. Published by the Combat Poverty Agency and Oak Tree Press, £16.95. Sale Price £14.95

Madams, Murder and Black Coddle

The above is the sub-title for 'Monto' a new publication produced by the North Inner City Folklore Project, in Dublin. The book tells "the story behind Dublin's notorious red light district as told by people who lived there."

The author was Terry Fagan, born the son of a docker and one of eleven children. He grew up to love the area he comes from despite the difficulties of poverty. Terry was employed as a full-time worker on the FAS-supported Whole-Time Job Initiative while he completed the book. It is written in the words of locals, particularly senior citizens, and focuses on everything from the food they ate when times were tough to the sad stories of prostitutes and madams and the violence of The 1916 Rising on their doorstep.

For anyone interested in publishing a heritage/folklore history of their area, 'Monto' is a recommended read, as much to see how the publication came about as to read the captivating stories. Priced £5, copies are available from the Inner City Renewal Group.

Tel. 01-8557207, Fax: 8554705

e-mail: icrg@iol.ie

Prison Policy in Ireland

The Irish penal system is punitive and mismanaged, and imprisonment is grossly overused, according to a new book, 'Prison Policy in Ireland', by Paul O'Mahoney.

The book comes at a time when the Irish Government has decided to increase the number of prison places substantially. In 1999, there were 2,500 prisoners. Government plans will add another 1,500 places in the next two years. Once the new prison places are available, according to the book, the method currently in use of controlling the prison population, a process called 'shedding', will stop. 'Shedding' involves releasing prisoners early whenever the prisons become overcrowded beyond a certain point. The released prisoners are not supervised but have to report to the prison on a regular basis.

There are chapters on the Irish prison system, the Irish crime problem and the links between crime and punishment. A chapter entitled, 'The Chaos of the System', describes the high number of drug-addicted prisoners and the lack of treatment, the financial mismanagement and the lack of accountability. The final chapter looks to the future where reorganisation of the prison management might bring improvements to the Irish system.

Prison Policy in Ireland: Criminal Justice versus Social Justice, Cork University.

For more information: www.penalreform.org

At least we weren't offered MANURE yet

While workers in the CDSP's may have their different views on pay and working conditions, have a look at this - it might cheer you up. (Mind you, it could also make you mad and sad.)

"Hospital staff in Russia have been offered manure in lieu of their monthly wages. The wages deal for 400 staff in Nizhni Novgorod works out at six tonnes of manure for senior doctors.

Staff say they are used to being paid in meat or butter rather than Roubles, but they are offended by the latest offer.

"The average wage at the hospital, 300 miles east of Moscow, is £25 a month. The concept of paying Russian workers in goods rather than money is not new. A group of loggers was paid in tampons for the whole of 1994."

Taken from the Irish Times, 18 May 2001.

Why 'Changing Ireland' is like nylon

Nylon got its name from the fact that it was invented in two places simultaneously and was named after an amalgam of the two locations, New York and London. 'Changing Ireland' is similar in that a group in Moyross, Limerick, chose it as the title for this newsletter, while staff in the Department in Dublin were busy producing a publication titled 'Changing for a Changing Ireland'. (It was recently delivered to every household in the country). Neither group was aware of the other's plans. A case of great minds think alike, one hopes!

THANK YOU!

Thanks is due to the following: staff colleagues, Juan Carlos Azzopardi, Geraldine Clohessy, Francis Grimes; Elaine Slattery and the voluntary management committee at CDN Moyross; staff and friends of the Community Enterprise Centre, Moyross; our regional reporters, Sharon Browne and Martine Brennan; the working group who met prior to publication, Billy Kelly, Sean Dooley and Sharon Browne; the various people who were interviewed around the country for the stories. Thanks also to our cartoonist, Austin Creavan. Special thanks is due to one person in particular who worked late-night and weekend hours to ensure the magazine made it to the printers - Liam O'Connor. Others who were involved in setting up the newsletter project are mentioned in specific articles.

Finally, thanks to the great number of people in projects the length and breadth of the country who suggested names for the title. We are very grateful for the encouragement and ideas which came forward.