

# CHANGING IRELAND

ISSUE 2

The National Newsletter of the Community Development Support Programmes

WINTER '01

## Life, The Liberties and the pursuit of happiness

### Inside

- Domestic violence nationally
- Dundalk to go on air
- Sex with a disability
- Family Support Agency
- Confronting Homophobic Ireland
- Men's network in the south-east



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## INSIDE YOUR NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of 'Changing Ireland' will focus, among other things, on community development projects in island communities in the West; Galway Travellers use of the media in campaigns; St. Mary's CDP, Limerick and their positive experience with asylum-seekers; art therapy; RAPID and how it is being received around the country; the continuing CDSPs regional seminars; and much more.

## THANKS TO . . .

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## Community development - invisible to the national eye

ONE of the chief aims of 'Changing Ireland' is to raise the profile of the Community Development Support Programmes (CDSPs). It is as if the CDSPs are the invisible programmes. We are seen more as a bunch of projects than a set of government programmes tackling poverty and social exclusion in Ireland.

Read the reports, listen to the media debates on poverty and disadvantage and note how much mention, if any, is made of the CDSPs. Compare it with the profile of the Local Development Programme, the Partnerships, ADM-funded groups, LEADER, the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and the National Drugs Strategy.

Often, organisations and bodies that provide funds are considered more important than the projects that receive the funding and carry out the work.

There is little acknowledgement that most national programmes (including the National Anti-Poverty Strategy) need locally-based projects to make the link with their target groups. It is the community development process that ensures the funded work is effective. There is no appreciation of the work demanded of community groups before they can apply for and spend the money. The slow process of capacity building and empowerment does not have a draw-down date. This is why we are invisible.

Within the Department, is the Voluntary and Community Section profile high and their role well understood? Do projects regard themselves as part of a wider network and integral to the implementation of government policy? We have an evaluation report from Nexus Research on the Community Development Programme that says it is really effective and tremendous value for money. We have yet to see the evaluation published. Why the wait? If we don't highlight ourselves, who will?

Perhaps, it is little wonder then that the Minister, when he appeared on a recent Prime Time report

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# An early school leaver who proved the head wrong

By Allen Meagher

**L**INDA Walsh loves the job she has today. She strolls to work in two minutes, her colleagues care for each other, she is on a career path and the work is of benefit to the people in her community. She works in a flats complex

"I just landed on my feet when I started here," she declared. "I thought I would end up in a job like factory work. I have surprised myself with what I can do. But I wanted to learn."

From Clondalkin, Dublin, Ms. Walsh left school at the age of 14, worked in a variety of low-skilled, poorly-paid jobs – including on a building site – then became a lone-parent in her 20s. Feeling the weight of her new responsibilities, she turned her fortunes around by applying herself to doing courses.

Six years ago, she started on a Community Employment scheme and soon became a dedicated staff member of School Street Family Resource Centre (FRC), based in a flats complex in The Liberties, Dublin. The area was known a decade ago as "the chemist shop of Dublin", though that is all changed now, and Ms. Walsh's story epitomises the road taken by numerous community workers who come from a background of personal experience of exclusion and/or poverty.

Ten weeks ago, she started in a new position at School St. Family FRC and she is still glowing.

"I love my job. I love the people I work with, they are like friends. ... At the beginning I was just an employee. I started part-time on a C.E. (Community Employment) scheme, became full-time with the J.I. (Jobs Initiative) scheme and now I'm project administrator. It's good that it works that way – people from the community working in the community. I am still learning every day. At the moment, I'm doing the Community Development Leadership Course, Level 2.

A bookie might have given good odds against Ms. Walsh going far when she was an adolescent and started mitching from school, "The inspectors came looking for me. I'd go to school again, but I wouldn't learn."

When she was 14, at the end of first year in secondary school, Ms. Walsh left.

"I wasn't interested in school. When I was in 6th class the headmaster told my mother that I had a brain but would never use it. That did knock my confidence. My mother had six girls and one boy and I was more trouble than all of them put together. I had a friend in secondary school and we were both giddy, we were more often in trouble than anything else.

"After I left school, I worked in sewing factories, then hairdressing. The money was terrible. I even worked on a building site for six weeks to make money. I did waitressing – I have a cert in silver service waitressing. I worked in Memorex (factory) but just left there, I don't know why. I worked in a toy wholesalers.



● Linda Walsh and Elaine Diver showing off Bart Simpson and Toy Story costumes for a children's Halloween party. The outfits were designed and manufactured by the Enterprise Centre which is closely linked to School Street Family Resource Centre.

I had 14 jobs in all and I wouldn't put all of them on my C.V.

"And then I got pregnant at 22. When I became pregnant I was very down and depressed. I worked through my pregnancy – if I didn't work I think I would have been suicidal. When I had my baby something changed for the better. I knew then I would have to get a good job. At first being a lone-parent was hard, but I got loads of support from my family.

Ms. Walsh's daughter, Niamh, was one-and-a-half when she started work part-time in School St. Family Resource Centre as a receptionist/secretary – except she had nearly no secretarial skills.

"I couldn't do nothing, I lied my way in at the end of the day. But I did every course I could because I wanted to work. I got Niamh into a crèche. After two years, the C.E. scheme was up, but my assistant supervisor left her job. I went for it, got it and did it for three-and-a-half years. And now I'm the administrator."

"At the end of the day I matured, I knew I wasn't stupid. And I knew I could teach other people things.

"From eight years ago to now, I see a big difference in myself. My confidence was very low, but it has built up over the years when I was on the Community Employment scheme.

And people gave me the chance... I got working with Leo (Scales) and Elaine (\*\*\*) and I'm assistant director for the FRC, a limited company.

"The teamwork here is great, you meet a lot of new people in this job. Residents come to us with all kinds of complaints. If the Family Resource Centre wasn't here, a lot of good things would never happen. Even simple things – like people leave their keys into us for minding if a delivery van needs to drop something off in their flat during the day and they're at work. We provide a lot of social welfare information. A lot of people in the flats know me now, though I keep to myself after work."

"In my spare time, I swim, go to the pictures, go to pubs and clubs. And I go to England three or four times a year because I have three sisters living in London. It's a very active life I suppose, now that I think of it.

"Community Development is great – it encourages people to go back into education and boosts their confidence. I'd encourage anyone to get back into education, just because you might have a child you shouldn't let that get to you."

Linda Walsh has proved her point.

# Sexual Orientation

## Homophobia bars community participation

By Sharon Browne

**T**he degree of homophobia in society is usually under-estimated. Intolerance can be so great, for example, that lesbian women who invest time in working for their community often feel they receive very little support or solidarity in return. Such negative experiences make it difficult for people to volunteer or get involved a second time.

These and other barriers to full participation by lesbian women in particular, and others, in community development were outlined in a presentation by Marie Queiry at the Sexual Orientation Strategy Day.

Ms. Queiry reminded her audience that homophobia remains the biggest barrier for the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual communities (GLBT). The degree of homophobic violence cannot be underestimated. Lesbian women (and presumably gay men) have very low expectations when it comes to receiving a fair hearing and seeing justice being done. In a climate of intolerance how is it possible for GLBT people to declare their sexual orientation, not to mind get involved in community development to take a stand on sexual orientation issues?

***“Throughout the Community Development Support Programmes (CDSPs) there is a low level of awareness and participation of lesbian and gay people”***

To compound the problem the negative experiences of the GLBT community leads to low self-esteem which also inhibits participation. Throughout the Community Development Support Programmes (CDSPs) there is a low level of awareness and participation of lesbian and gay people. Many do not feel secure in “coming out” and are not confident about receiving a positive response when they do. This type of invisibility leads to a lack of accurate information on gay and lesbian issues. This makes it impossible to develop targeted responses when the nature of the problem is not fully understood. How do you develop services without knowing the number of people who will avail of them?

There is also a balancing act between raising awareness of lesbian and gay issues in local communities while not stirring hostility towards them.

When the dominant view of a society is generally hostile and homophobic, lesbian and gay people come to believe and internalise the negative images and insults. This internalised oppression has many implications, such as a lack of self esteem, lack of confidence, and inability to be open about sexual orientation. This makes it difficult for lesbian and gay people to organise together as a group to represent the GLBT communities.

***“Many GLBT people experience discrimination in accessing employment, promotion or training opportunities”***

Taking on the role of spokesperson for a group can be difficult. Within a group there can be arguments and divisions regarding who the spokespeople are and what image they are presenting of the movement. The aim of representing a united movement is virtually impossible because not everybody is “out”.

The GLBT community experiences a general lack of support from their families and often people will not be open about “coming out” for fear of hurting or offending family members. A lesbian woman, for example, who is living in an intolerant and uninformed society is even more isolated when there is no family support to balance negative community reaction or play a role in educating the community. Intolerance can be so great that some lesbian parents are even apprehensive about bringing a child to a doctor for fear of their ability as a parent being questioned as a direct result of their sexual orientation.

Many GLBT people experience discrimination in accessing employment, promotion or training opportunities. In other cases gay men and lesbians who may not be “out” have low self esteem and confidence and will not put themselves forward for training or promotion. The net result in both cases is unequal access and unequal participation in a variety of fora and opportunities.

## Unequal Ireland and sexuality facts

Being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual (GLTB) means that life is more of a challenge than for the ‘average’ person. Because of discrimination based on sexuality, 8% of people who identify themselves as part of the GLTB community left school early. A quarter of respondents to surveys had been punched or beaten because of their sexuality - and, to add to that, 65% of assaults on GLTB community people are not reported to the Gardai. However, on the plus side, almost everyone agreed that ‘coming out’ to family members had improved their lives.

These and other startling facts and figures were outlined on September 12th by Brian Sheehan, one of the speakers at the Sexual Orientation Strategy Day. The event was organised by an equality sub-committee of the Community Development Support Programmes.

### HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- 49% became aware of their sexuality before the age of 15

- Almost all stated that “coming out” to family members had improved their lives
- Levels of distress higher for those living in poverty.
- 33% homeless at some stage.
- Gay men 7 times more likely to attempt suicide, lesbians 2.5 times more likely than their heterosexual counterparts

### EDUCATION

- 57% experienced problems at school - isolation, depression, bullying.
- 8% left school earlier than anticipated as a result.
- There is a reluctance to talk to anyone about problems at school, least of all official sources of help.

### HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

- A research thesis by a Garda found that 79% of the respondents were either physically or verbally assaulted (5% physically, 32% verbally, 42% both physically and verbally

assaulted). 65% of physical assaults not reported to the Gardai. 89% of verbal assaults not reported to the Gardai.

### EMPLOYMENT

- 7% reported being dismissed from jobs because of their sexuality.
- 15% found current workplace hostile to lesbians and gay men.
- 21% avoided work for which they were qualified and 39% avoided certain categories of employment through fear of discrimination.
- 33% on training courses experienced bullying.
- 50% experienced harassment at work.

Sources for the above facts and figures include: The Economic and Social Aspects of Discrimination (1996), Combat Poverty Agency, The Gay and Lesbian Equality Network, Nexus Research. Some additional sources and international research are also quoted.

## Quarter-century marked by some progress

- Taken from a presentation by Ger Moane at the Sexual Orientation Strategy Day

**1970s:** Characterised by no acknowledgement of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered (GLBT) communities. Total silence and absence of discussion around sexual orientation. For individual lesbian or gay people it was close to impossible to be open or to “come out”.

**1974:** Irish Gay Rights Movement (IGRM) established

**1978:** Liberation for Irish Lesbians (LIL) established. This signified the beginnings of mobilisation and the dominant feeling was one of solidarity with other gay and lesbian people, making contacts with others was a powerful and motivating factor.

**1980s:** Characterised by a back-lash to the GLBT community and seen as quite a regressive decade. But it also saw the development of a lot of key, front-line services; telephone lines, and practical support for people “coming out”. The Hirshfield Centre in Dublin was set up and was hugely significant in that it gave a physical space to meet in. The emergence of AIDS and HIV focused a lot of attention on health issues while in the political context homosexuality was decriminalised and an entitlement to equal treatment was set out.

**1990s:** Throughout the 1990s more people were involved. Lesbians Organise Together (LOT) was established with an emphasis on providing services and facilitating people in meeting and working together. Services included telephone help line, support work, outreach work and education. The Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) was set up. Much attention was also focused on health, HIV and AIDS in the 1990s.

**Today:** There is a greater degree of openness today around sexual orientation but greater openness does not always imply greater tolerance. The GLBT community has increased in size and strength as more people have “come out”. Pride and visibility are two key issues. It is important not to hide away or be silenced. There are some tensions around organising at national level. Some groups for example want to remain as local/regional bodies while others are interested in developing a national platform. There have been significant and dynamic political developments, for example the implementation of equality legislation. In urban areas the degree of change is quite obvious but it is much more difficult to bring about or sustain change in rural areas.

## Projects can be pro-active on sexuality

**R**ATHER than waiting for the issue to emerge over time, it is necessary to be pro-active and purposely raise sexual orientation as an issue within projects and within the Community Development Support Programmes generally. This proposal was among a number of recommendations made to projects on September 12th when a Sexual Orientation Strategy Day was held in Limerick.

The recommendations are to be pursued within the Community Development Support Programmes (CDSPs) to promote the inclusion and equal status of people from the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered (GLBT) communities. Some of the recommendations include:

- Resource the GLBT community, for example through capacity building, community development initiatives, and research.
- Mainstream GLBT issues at all levels of the CDSPs. Work to ensure that sexual orientation is an issue for the wider community sector.
- Resource the Programmes. For example, projects and support agencies could engage in inter-project training, develop a GLBT fund, as well as develop pilot programmes and models.
- Training: Explore models of training provision and resource development of models.
- Core Funded Groups: Core funded groups might provide an opportunity to develop actions and raise awareness at local level. It is important not to allow the issue to become isolated and confined to the agenda of the core funded groups rather than the wider programme.
- Specialist Support Agencies: There is a role for the specialist support agencies at

national level.

- Support Agencies could extend their training programmes to include reps from the GLBT community.
- The role of policy unit and policy workers in relation to sexual orientation issues needs to be explored.
- The DSCFA could mention sexual orientation and a commitment to this issue in all of its literature.
- Having a place on the Advisory Group for representation of the GLBT community could be examined.
- There needs to be more discussion around the use of a code of practice.
- Look at how we can build on existing structures and activities within the programme.
- One simple and effective way a project can demonstrate its ethos and make clear its position on sexual orientation is by displaying posters, notices, and Gay Community News (GCN) in local projects.
- It is necessary to be proactive and raise sexual orientation as an issue within the CDSPs rather than waiting for it to emerge as an issue over time. This must also take into account the people who are already active in the Programmes but who may not feel secure in being confident about being a member of the GLBT community.

*\* The Strategy Day was organised by the Equality and Anti- Racism Sub-Committee of the Community Development Support Programmes. ‘Changing Ireland’ is grateful to Anne Maria Kennedy from Tosach Support Agency for her notes from the day.*



# Passion and focus on men's issue

## The South East Mens Network

By Denis Shanahan & Lorcan Brennan

Since its foundation in 1996, the South East Men's Network has worked with focus and passion to raise awareness of the issues affecting men's lives. Under the leadership of Alan O'Neill, Liam Bolger and a host of voluntary members the project has engaged with men at many levels focusing on building confidence, self-esteem and self-respect with men from a broad range of backgrounds.

Core-funded by the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs the project through its two full time staff have reached out in their work across a number of groups in the south-east including in Wexford, Waterford, Carlow, Kilkenny and Tipperary.

The Network connects with all men but its target group is primarily men who are disadvantaged due to the effects of unemployment, marginalisation, poverty and men's conditioning.

### ■ WELL-ESTABLISHED

Through their experience of working with men from 1996 (and many years before, in a voluntary capacity) the men involved with the network have devised, through experience, a basic programme for working that is now well established.

The procedure is focused on building confidence and self-esteem and it does work. Firstly men are contacted and invited to join a Men's Development Group. Through the group they are supported and encouraged to develop skills and take more responsibility for all areas of their lives.

Through working with the men in this developmental approach the network has helped many men attempting to deal with change.



● *Brothers in arms: back row, l. to r. Paul Clifford, Lorcan Brennan, John O'Rourke; front row, l. to r. Bernard Morgan, Liam Bolger, all members of the South East Men's Network.*

As men get to know each other through their group support they are encouraged to organise and run a Regional Men's Day inviting other men from the south-east to come along and explore issues relevant to living and coping in today's world.

### ■ SHARING

When two such events have been successfully run the same men are invited to organise and run the Men's Summer

School inviting men from all over Ireland and elsewhere to share in a weekend experience of sharing and working together.

Over the past five years, men's Development Groups in the South-East Region have, with the support of the South East Men's Network (S.E.M.N.), run several successful Regional Days, Issue Based Days and Summer Schools at different venues.

As an organisation, the S.E.M.N. has also been very active in raising awareness regarding issues affecting men's lives through its written submissions and conference work at regional, national and international level.

In recent times, the S.E.M.N. has moved to a new premises at 30 O'Connell Street Waterford, having lost its old location to a fire. Following the successful re-location, the network is re-grouping and re-launching its work plan in a reviewed and matter-of-fact manner. Despite losing essential collected data in the fire, the Network staff and members continued working to support men across the region.

## North/South Men's Forum launch

Co-operation Ireland was scheduled to hold the inaugural meeting of the North/South Men's Forum at Bellinteer house, Navan, County Meath, on Friday, November 16 to 18th.

The Forum is open to men's groups and organisation throughout the island of Ireland, whether single or multi-issue, who are committed to the development of men's work in Ireland and internationally.

For further information, contact:

**Joe Kelly, Project Officer, Co-operation Ireland, 37 Upper Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01-6610588. Fax: 01-661-8456.**

**E-mail: [jkelly@cooperationireland.org](mailto:jkelly@cooperationireland.org)**

## Education takes men off the margins

A Men's Education Project aimed at improving the quality of life has been set up by the South East Men's Network

The target group is primarily the same target group as the Men's Development Project. Both projects will compliment and support one another in assisting men to end the cycle of hopelessness, despair disadvantage and marginalisation.

Funding for the project came from the Department of Education and Science and allowed for the recruitment of a new staff member. Following the funding approval, Andrew Doherty, from County Waterford, was appointed educational development worker and is now some months into developing the Men's Education Project.

Mr. Doherty's position and work plan is an important pillar of development for the S.E.M.N. programme in the region. The Men's Education Project has identified three essential areas of work so far:

### ■ Pre-Development Work

Providing outreach and support to men in

situations of learning or educational disadvantage is essential as a starting point for setting up the education programme. This is because "men in situations of disadvantage are more likely to be unhappy and depressed, unable to make decisions or unable to face their problems" (ESRI 1991).

### ■ Preparing to return to Education

Even when the essential pre-development work has been completed men face challenges around deciding on courses to attend. There are access and funding issues to be considered alongside time commitments. Previous negative educational experiences can also play a huge role in holding men back. The Men's Education Project will support and promote the pre-development work through a structured programme involving knowledge inputs, group discussion and the exploration of educational experience.

### ■ Ongoing support in Education

Once men have returned to education there exists the need for on-going support and

reassurance. This will be provided through individual meetings, phone support and group meetings.

There is no doubt The Men's Development Project will be strengthened and informed by its association and contact with the Men's Education Project and vice versa. Meanwhile, new developments within the S.E.M.N. have added to the freshness of approach and focus of the organisation for the years ahead. As Van Morrison says, "The Best Is Yet To Come".

### For More Information contact:

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- Denis Shanahan & Lorcan Brennan

# Men's Odyssey in the south-east region

**I**N exploring the idea of men's lives as a journey consisting of different stages of development the Summer School run by the South-East Men's Network stirred participants to speak of past hurts and to strive for fresh attitudes. Hosted by the Kilkenny's Butt's Men's Group, the theme for the weekend was 'Men's Odyssey 2001' - a theme that attracted a large attendance.

Throughout, participants looked at how men start life in a stage of connection, support and friendship with each other. This is later replaced by a stage of gradual separation, isolation and rigidity. The event in Kilkenny looked at ways of re-connecting and re-building support for each other as men.

Participants were invited to begin un-doing the harmful effects of some of their earlier experiences. Men were invited to speak honestly within the safety of the weekend about experiences that had shaped and influenced their relationships with each other as men and also with women and children.

### ■ HURT RAN DEEP

For many men this was not easy as feelings and experiences of hurt ran deep, but with support many found the courage to look again at areas of their lives where pain and difficulty had not been acknowledged before.

When asked after the weekend why they felt

it had been such a positive experience, participants said that the discussion-guidelines of safety and confidentiality had helped them take significant steps toward exploring their lives in a new and hopeful way.

While working together one of the key aims was to encourage men to understand and respect difference. This means checking out our preconceptions and prejudices towards men who are different than us in any way. This can mean changing our attitudes to men of a different class, creed, ability, sexual orientation, race culture and attitude. The key steps are to listen and learn in order to understand difference.

### ■ WITHOUT PREJUDICE

As at the Summer School, and at a time when all of us are attempting to listen without prejudice and promote equality and inclusion in all walks of life, the South East Men's Network continues to promote its message of empowerment for men through as many channels possible.

It continues to be the firm and experienced belief of those associated with the South East Men's Network (S.E.M.N.) that empowering men is the key to good relationships with themselves, each other, their partners, families, women, children, community and society. The Network has impacted in positive and creative way in the lives of many men not just within its

regional brief but nationally and internationally.

It has also worked to promote better relationships and better dialogue between men and every area of community and society. Those working with and through the S.E.M.N. believe that even though much has been achieved to date through the organisation's outreach programmes, the real work of promoting better lives for men is just beginning.

### ■ RESTRUCTURING

Within the organisation, and with the view to developing the work of S.E.M.N. across its next three-year plan, essential restructuring has taken place.

Alan O'Neil has moved position to become director. Liam Bolger has taken over as the new co-ordinator and Lorcan Brennan was recently appointed as the new development worker.

With these changes in place the process of growing the Men's Development Project continues within the context of what's possible and feasible with limited resources - two workers are responsible for co-ordinating in the regional area. As part of future plans to support its workers effectively, the Network hopes to secure additional funding to employ an administrator to collate, research and evaluate the work on a continual basis.

# Freire in modern times . . .

## Dublin hears how to change the world

By Sharon Browne

**F**ATIMA Freire, daughter of the famous Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, was in Dublin during the summer and spoke to 'Changing Ireland'. Along with authors Anne Hope and Sally Timmel, she was among the guest speakers at a global gathering of Training for Transformation organisations from 27 countries which was held as part of the Millennium Nourishment Day hosted by Partners.

Partners is the Irish organisation that has been running Training for Transformation (TfT) workshops for 20 years, in order to provide community development training using Paulo Freire's theory of adult education.

Speaking of her father's work, Fatima Freire stated:

It is a legacy that is both difficult and rich at the same time. I see it as a source of energy and empowerment for the world in the process of enabling transformation. What I learned from my father was to never stop being curious and to never stop questioning. I can remember at school, the child who used to sit next to me never had a lunch. I would go home and ask my parents why. Little by little my father explained and helped me to understand the political problems of our country.†

### ■ ACTIVE AGENTS

Paulo Freire believed that schools train us to merely adapt to our world as it is presented to us. Schooling he said was about domestication rather than transformation. Traditional education deposits knowledge into the empty heads of participants and kills their creativity, leading to apathy. His work was about getting people to recognise that together they have the power to be active agents of positive change.



● Sally Timmel, Fatima Freire and Anne Hope who spoke at an International Training for Transformation Workshop Day in Dublin.

At home in Brazil Ms. Freire carries her father's message by training teachers in his methods. She says that the key issues that concern her own community are the huge divide between rich and poor, the lack of democracy, the social problems that arise from widespread alcoholism, and the exploitation of young children at work.

### ■ STEVE BIKO

Also speaking at the event were the two authors of the Training for Transformation Handbooks that have been used in communities all over the world for over 30 years. Anne Hope spoke of the work Paulo Freire had done with Steve Biko in South Africa at the height of Black Consciousness in 1972.

Sally Timmel told the gathering of her work over the last ten years as a lobbyist in Washington D.C. with church groups. When asked how Freire's principles can be used to tackle issues in the context of an ever increasing

culture of contentment and consumerism her advice was to broaden the base of groups that we all work with and to think strategically.

### ■ SEIZE THE MOMENT

"There are moments for openings and then there are moments when things are not open. You have to seize that moment. In the 1990's, 76% of US citizens said the health care system was not working for them. There was heat in that. It was an opportunity to motivate people on that issue. We felt that was one institution we could crack."

Timmel says that the challenge for us in the developed world is to use Freire's principles to work towards economic literacy, so that the people can make informed ethical choices and lobby their governments to do the same.

For more information about Training for Transformation contact Partners at 24 Northbrook Road, Dublin 6. Tel (01) 667 3440.

### BOOK REVIEW

## At last – Freire's teachings in an Irish context

'Partners Companion to Training for Transformation' by Maureen Sheehy is a very useful Irish companion to the Training for Transformation Handbooks for community workers. These handbooks have been used all over the world for the last 30 years, and while the original 3 books are excellent in themselves all the illustrations and much of the other resources in them are presented in a developing world context. So for community workers in Ireland this new companion is particularly good because all the visuals and games are much more relevant to the modern day Irish context.

The Companion is a compilation of the work of many facilitators over several years and draws mainly from the experience of Partners workshops in the north and south of Ireland, Wales, England and Scotland. It also draws on the experience of Partners facilitators who have been associated with other programmes such as DELTA in East and South Africa, with KOGI and DELES in West Africa, with Training for Transformation in Pakistan, and with Concern America.

Besides new and adapted exercises the manual also gives some examples of how Training for Transformation has been used as a tool to do listening surveys. Useful codes and problem posing materials are also included. These are at the heart of Paulo Freire's methodology. Freire believed that the starting point in community work was to go out and listen to people in their everyday, informal settings. Listening for

him meant observing what people talk about with emotion. The common issues that people talk about are called generative themes.

Freire stressed the link between emotion and motivation. In other words if you want to motivate people into community action it is necessary to start with the issues that affect people most. Freire would then mirror back people's own issues through the use of codes. Codes are representations of people's issues and situations.

Other useful exercises and resources are given on the topics of adult education, facilitation skills, introduction and energiser exercises, listening, trust, team building, power, participation, leadership, social analysis, debt, poverty, gender, refugees, the environment and much more.

While any facilitator can dip in and out for specific exercises, the manual is mainly written for those already conversant with and skilled in the Training for Transformation experiential process methodology.

*(Readers may be interested to note that there is also a fourth Training for Transformation Handbook written by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel)*

For more information and to get your copy of the Partners Companion to Training for Transformation contact: Partners, 24 Northbrook Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6. Tel: (01) 6673438. E-mail: partners@tinet.ie



# Training for transformation

## Are the concepts still relevant?

By Sharon Browne

**P**AULO Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is best known for his methods of radical liberatory education which he used to teach literacy to the poor and to mobilise the masses of his native Brazil against oppression and injustice.

Though his ideas have been largely associated with the developing world they still hold relevance for modern industrial societies. Oppression is not just a feature of the developing world. Oppression may be less obvious and of a different nature in the developed world, but it is there.

Freire maintained that the hidden agenda of school, serves to up-hold and preserve the vested interests of the most powerful controlling elite. In what Freire described as the 'banking' method of education, passive learners receive deposits of pre-selected, ready-made knowledge. The learners mind is seen as an empty vessel in which deposits of approved knowledge are placed. This process suppresses critical thinking, thereby conditioning people to be passive, unquestioning recipients of approved knowledge from experts. This creates a myth of dependency.

### ■ DEPENDENCY

We depend on Doctors for our health, yet their very existence depends on us being sick. In order to be informed we depend on media institutions that self-censor and manufacture a diet of pre-packaged news. We think they are in the business of telling the truth, but they are actually in the business of selling advertising, making money and providing entertainment.

We depend on schools to educate and develop our children. But are schools meeting the needs of our children or the needs of the economy? Freire held that those who do not succeed in this system or become fluent in this approved knowledge are effectively silenced. The servants and services of these institutions, like Freire's banking educators, often project an absolute ignorance onto others, characteristic of the ideology of oppression.

On the other hand education which is liberatory encourages learners to challenge and change the world, instead of uncritically adapting themselves to it. The purpose of liberatory education is to seek political, economic and personal empowerment.

Freire believed this type of empowerment was only possible if people were enabled

and encouraged to identify their own needs, and set their own agenda, instead of relying on experts to do it for them.

### ■ MERE SPECTATORS

Freire's ideas and methodology also have the potential to contribute to a healthy participatory democracy. Our current system of representative democracy consists of a specialised class of 'irresponsible' people (mostly white, middle-aged, middle-class, able-bodied, Catholic, straight men from two parent families). They do the thinking and planning and yet purport to understand the common interests. The rest of us are spectators rather than participants in the action. Though we do have the privilege of choosing our leaders every now and again (which is what makes a democracy different from a totalitarian regime).

Democracy as observed in Irish society, as in many other places today, could be said to be based on a culture of silence. There is no true consent, rather silent consent. This is evidenced by the very low turn out of voters at elections, particularly among the dispossessed. Some people don't vote because they don't feel their vote counts. Their feeling of powerlessness, their experience of being ignored, has made them buy into the myth that they are incapable of changing anything. This is what keeps people silent.

### ■ WE CAN BE FREED

Freire developed the idea of problem-posing education, which has social analysis at its heart. By enabling people to see the links between their personal situation and the wider cultural, socio-economic forces in their world, people can be freed from self-blame and failure and instead see and act on possibilities for change. Through critical thinking, reflection and action, people learn to value their own life experience and to think for themselves. They no longer see problems as individual accidents, but instead start to see the structural causes of their problems.

The increasing specialisation and accreditation of education, even in the informal sector, makes it difficult to work with people without a pre-set agenda or time scale. For example in local development and community development, there are many demands and boundaries of funding agencies to be considered. There is also a preference for education and community

work projects that produce hard outcomes relating to employment and progression through approved and preordained systems that are given value by those in power.

Freire's ideas, applied whole, are unworkable in the mass schooling system. Although the informal education sector is becoming increasingly professionalised and standardised there still remain many opportunities to apply Freirean ideas, particularly in community development work. In practical terms the use of Freire's ideas and methods demand time, patience, belief in the possibility of change and most of all a willingness to share power. Though we may not always meet these demands, Freire's key concepts remain as relevant as ever.

### Paulo Freire (1922 - 1997) - The Facts

- In the 1950s, Freire ran literacy campaigns with small farmers in the poverty-stricken north east of Brazil. His teaching programs and materials were designed around the lived experience and the social, political and economic context of the people he worked with.
- In 1964, there was a right-wing military coup in Brazil. Freire was jailed as a subversive and subsequently spent 15 years in exile.
- Freire wrote his famous '*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*' in 1970
- During his exile his ideas became better known around the rest of the world. Literacy and consciousness raising programs organized by Black, Hispanic and feminist organisations used Freire's ideas.
- Brazil stayed under military rule for two decades. During this time Freire's ideas on education were banned.
- He returned to Brazil under a political amnesty in 1980.
- In 1989 Freire was made Education Secretary of San Paolo, Brazil.
- Freire died of a heart attack on May 2nd, 1997.

# Dundalk Community intends to go on air

By Maurice McConville

**R**UNNING a Community Radio Station may not be something that many Community Development Projects would consider, but it does have the potential for involving a wide variety of groups in a stimulating activity, which can empower those taking part.

This is part of Alan Byrne's vision for a Community Radio Station for Dundalk.

Mr. Byrne has an ambition to bring community radio to Dundalk by Spring 2002. This new project will set up The Dundalk Community Media Centre and could create 6 jobs under the FAS Social Economy Programme. Training in video production as well as broadcasting will be provided.

Mr. Byrne's father worked in a TV factory and used to provide "community services" by fixing friends and relatives televisions. Mr. Byrne has worked on a video conferencing on a cross border project with early school leavers and with Drogheda local radio.

He recently carried out a public survey where 82% of people said they would listen to a local radio station and 28% said that they would like to take part in broadcast training.

Community Radio is an "ideas factory for all ages", according to Mr. Byrne and he is hoping to get hundreds of volunteers involved in making their own programmes.

He wants to involve schools with children presenting their own programmes on drama, music, news, etc. Mr. Byrne also wants to broadcast in different languages and it is hoped that programmes can be made for and by ethnic minorities. There are a wide variety of possibilities for involving individuals and groups in promoting their issues and organisations. Mr. Byrne plans for Dundalk



*• Ciara Byrne playing D.J. Her father, Alan, is working to establish a Community Radio Station in Dundalk.*

Community Radio to be "owned, managed and controlled by the community."

Local support, crucial to Mr. Byrne's plans, will be forthcoming from community projects in Dundalk, for as they see it, Community Radio is another medium through which the community development process can operate.

There are 13 Community Radio Stations in Ireland, each licensed by the Independent Radio

and Television Commission. To gain a license from the IRTC for Community Radio the Commission needs to be satisfied the station involves the community it is set up to serve.

For further information contact Alan Byrne on 042 -9339211 or email [dundalkcommunitymedia@ireland](mailto:dundalkcommunitymedia@ireland) or The Broadcasting Commission of Ireland 01-6760966.

## Knowledge is never a burden!

1. Of the 10,938 Asylum Seekers who entered Ireland in 2000 only 71 were granted refugee status.
2. African countries shelter more than twice as many refugees as Europe, North America and Australia combined.
3. In Malaysia if 5 or more people want to gather publicly they need a police permit.
4. 270,000 Irish adults have a weekly income of less than £193 per week which is below 60% of the average industrial wage.
5. Unemployed women are more than twice as likely to give birth to low birth-weight babies as women in the higher professional socio economic group.
6. Unskilled male workers are more than twice as likely to die prematurely and 8 times as likely to die from preventable accidents. (Inequalities in Health in Ireland – The Hard Facts)
7. Defaulting fathers in the US owe \$11 billion in court-ordered maintenance to their children.
8. Last year DSCFA spent £5.3 billion in welfare payment. 18.9% went to one parent families.
9. The risk of poverty for one parent families has risen from 17% in 1987 to 29% in 1994 and has remained level since then (NESF report).
10. We have two eyes, two ears and only one mouth – so use them proportionately!
11. Since August children's school books can be ordered and paid for through An Post.
12. A woman boxer became Ireland's only professional boxer to win a gender discrimination case taken against the Boxing Union of Ireland (Equality News).
13. Age related cases made up to 10% of the Equality Authority's casework for the year 2000.

Discrimination against Travellers accounts for 59% of the Equality Authority's casework under the Equal Status Act 2000.

*- By Sharon Browne*



# 25 years tackling domestic violence

Women's Aid - Specialist Support Agency

By Allen Meagher

**W**OMEN'S Aid is in business 25 years, though the project has really grown in the last five. Among other things, Women's Aid has taken on a role as Specialist Support Agency to projects nationwide in the Community Development Support Programmes. In tackling domestic violence, the organisation reaches out to women who are experiencing sexual, mental or physical abuse in a relationship.

A campaign by an Inchicore-based project co-ordinator, Rita Fagan, led to domestic violence being taken seriously as an issue in the community development sector. Ms. Fagan pioneered the first community-based response to domestic violence against women and it was her St. Michael's Family Resource Centre, Inchicore, who convinced the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs to set up a Specialist Support Agency for the CDSPs regarding domestic violence. Women's Aid applied for the job and have been working with projects around the country since July, 1998.

"One of the difficulties for us is that all projects have a lot of issues on their agenda and they don't always feel that domestic violence is a priority issue," said Mary Logue, co-ordinator of Women's Aid's Community Development Support Agency Team.

## ■ BLANCHARDSTOWN

"It can be difficult for women to disclose that they are the victims of domestic violence," added Marie Harding, support worker. "But if there is someone in a project with a keen interest in domestic violence, then it will stay on that project's agenda. It is best if projects take collective responsibility by working together on the issue. Then they can have a greater impact in lobbying for resources for their area. In Blanchardstown, for example, four projects (three CDPs and one FRC) are developing a community response and they are soon to get a Women's Aid Refuge Centre. To support them, we did training with accident & emergency staff at James Connolly Memorial Hospital in Blanchardstown so they can identify incidents of violence against women."

"If communities can come together and use existing networks, then they can politicise the issue of domestic violence locally or regionally. For example, when ICON (a well-established network in inner-city Dublin) lobby politicians, they get a response," added Ms. Harding.

In the North-West, the community development project Action Inishowen are developing their own response, one suitable to a rural setting, in conjunction with nine other projects in the region.

Colleen Boyle, Women's Aid support worker, pointed out that "the important ingredient there" is the role of the local Support Agency, Holywell Trust.

## ■ LIVING FULLY

"Domestic violence so prevents women from living fully and having the quality of life they are entitled to. We are trying to get all the projects in the North-West to work together on this," she said.

While Dublin-based, the organisation has a strong national focus. If Women's Aid find distance a problem, "we are absolutely able to put projects in touch with the best people locally with knowledge around domestic violence," according to Ms. Harding.

"And we can help projects to develop work-plans. First, we would have a good chat on the phone, and this would be followed up by a preliminary meeting. We might get the project to do some preparatory work before the meeting. Finally, there is no limit on our time-commitment," she continued.

Women's Aid staff keep in contact with the core issues: "Within the organisation, we have women who go to court on a daily basis with women seeking barring orders. And everyone in Women's Aid works regular shifts on the Women's Aid Helpline," said Ms. Harding.

The Women's Aid website receives between 7000 and 8000 hits per month, a sure sign of interest in an issue that was taboo to even talk of 25 years ago.



● Members of the Women's Aid 'Community Development Support Agency Team' in their Dublin office: Marie Harding, support worker, Mary Logue, co-ordinator and Colleen Boyle, support worker



# THE REFUGE - one woman's story

By Martina Brennan

**E**VERY day, and every night women all over Ireland flee their homes seeking safety in the 15 Refuges for women and children at risk of violence. Many of us carry a stereotypical image of this woman in our minds. She is poor, downtrodden and her husband is a docker or manual labourer of some kind. She left school early and has many children.

This picture could not be further from the truth. Women at risk of violence come from all walks of life.

"I never thought it would be me. My husband is a professional man with a very-well protected image in the community. I thought we had a good marriage until after the birth of our son," says Angela, a woman in her forties.

"We had been married for ten years, great years. Everyone said he spoiled me, whatever I wanted I got. Gradually though things began to change. Always for good reasons, we needed to tighten our belts to save money for our holidays, so I had to be more careful with phonecalls or we needed something for the house so my new shoes had to wait. He would say that my friend was not such a good friend really or members of my family were taking me for a ride and I'd be better off without them. We could share the car but he always needed it more than me. I became more and more isolated without realising.

"I would wake in the night to find him lying there staring at me. If I became upset by how difficult everything had become he would accuse me of being hysterical and say that he would need to slap me. I couldn't believe what was happening. I couldn't tell anyone, how could I, people were still telling me that I didn't know how lucky I was born. I didn't believe myself not to mind trying to convince anyone

else.

But I had no money of my own. No-one came to our house anymore and I could tell no-one, I felt so ashamed. I truly believed that it was all my fault and that if I could only be a better wife and mother none of this would be happening to me. Nothing I did was good enough for him and he would wait until I was exhausted and then insist on lengthy "chats" about my problems or demand sex when his words had cut me to the quick," continued Angela.

"Finally, things had become so bad that I knew I would have to leave. I thought we would starve by the roadside, knowing nothing about social welfare. And when he almost killed me in what would have looked like an accident I knew I could wait no longer. I looked up the phone book and saw the number of a refuge listed. I rang them and just said, 'can I come in'. They said yes so on a cold winters night I landed in feeling so bad.

"I hated being there. Women like me didn't end up in places like this. I wouldn't talk to the woman I felt so ashamed. I left the following day and went to a friends house. Now I am so grateful to that nameless woman - did she know how I felt that she didn't push me to talk? It took a night in the Refuge for me to really acknowledge to myself even that I..... (tears welled up in Angela's eyes and she choked on the words) .....am a battered wife.

"We are safe now, we live far away, he doesn't know where we are but I always know where the Refuge is. I used to think that the Refuge wasn't for women like me but now I know it is. I know now that there is one safe place in the world for women like me."

## Women's Aid services & freephone

In 1999, a total of 9000 women used Women's Aid services. As a Specialist Support Agency for projects in the Community Development Support Programmes, Women's Aid provide the following services: Training; National Freephone Helpline; Refuge and Confidential Referral; Personal Advice Visits; Court Accompaniment; Support Groups.

If you or someone you know is being physically, emotionally or sexually abused by a husband or partner, then advice and support is available.

Contact the Women's Aid Freephone (open everyday from 10am to 10pm): 1 800-341-900

## Reasons to Contact Women's Aid

- W.A. are the Specialist Support Agency on the issue of domestic violence. They are funded to provide a support service to projects. As one staff-member put it: "We don't charge projects for our expertise - we are already being paid to support them."
- W.A. studies found that one in five women in Ireland have experienced or are experiencing domestic violence. There is a huge vacuum of knowledge regarding domestic violence, even within projects as well as with statutory agencies. However, W.A. have the information and the statistics and years of experience of working directly with women.
- Besides providing support, W.A. also acts in solidarity with people and projects on the issue. Anyone in a project can call the Women's Aid Helpline to get advice on what to do, for example, with someone who calls in complaining of abuse, seeking legal advice, or wanting to know where to go.
- W.A. can link projects who are working on the same thing.
- If the issue of domestic violence is not spoken about at project level then that in itself is an example of exclusion against women. As a W.A. support worker says, "It's fine for a project to say, 'We have bigger issues to deal with', but we say don't ignore domestic violence."

Contact: Women's Aid, P.O. Box 791, Dublin 1.

Tel: 01-8745026.

Fax: 01-8364849.

E-mail: [projects@womensaid.ie](mailto:projects@womensaid.ie)

Website: [www.womensaid.ie](http://www.womensaid.ie)

## CDSPs Specialist Support Agencies

There are currently five Specialist Support Agencies for projects in the Community Development Support Programmes. Each is an agency with a national focus and expertise of working with specific groups or on specific themes. They receive part-funding from the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs to support projects.

- Women's Aid.
- Partners - Training for Transformation.
- Pavée Point (Travellers' support organisation).
- Interact (Irish Wheelchair Association).
- Dublin City-Wide Drugs Crisis Campaign.
- A new S.S.A. for projects and the arts should be coming on stream shortly.

## UN world conference against racism

The final declaration of the UN world conference against racism agreed on the following resolution, among others: We recognise with deep concern the ongoing manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including violence, against Roma, Gypsies, Sinto and Travellers and recognise the need to develop effective policies and implementation mechanisms for their full achievement of equality.

Another resolution stated: We not with concern and strongly condemn the ongoing manifestations and acts of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance against migrants

In the next issue of Changing Ireland we hear from Maureen Ward of the Irish Travellers Movement who was in South Africa for the conference.

# 70 women dead in 6 years

By Rita Fagan

**L**INDA Dunne died this year as a result of male violence. Her partner was arrested for stabbing her to death and also for attacking her mother. Linda Dunne was the 70th woman to die on the island of Ireland since December 22nd, 1995. Twelve of these women were from the North of Ireland and all the others were from the South. Some of their perpetrators have gone to jail while others have yet to be brought to justice,

Male violence is an issue for us in Ireland. An issue we must face up to. An issue we must deal with in our communities. Male violence takes the form of threats, verbal abuse, battering, rape and murder. Children are often its first witnesses – sometimes they are used as tools against their mothers. Many women victims of domestic violence live in fear of pain and death. They are isolated, often lacking in self-esteem and blaming themselves for what is happening to them. They live in communities, the ones you and I live and work in.

## ■ COMMUNITY'S ROLE

What is the community's role when its women and children are experiencing violence and abuse? Do we have a responsibility to address it or do we go along with the same old response, "It's private, it's best not to get involved"? Is this response one of sticking one's head in



● The "Once Is Too Much" exhibition features white lilies to represent women killed in Ireland by men since 1995.

the sand and hoping the issue will go away? Well, it won't go away.

We in the Family Resource Centre St. Michael's Estate, Inchicore, have been building a response at community level for ten years now. We had the sad and unfortunate experience of losing one of our volunteers to male violence. She was 37 years old. Her life was gone within minutes. Her community had to face the reality that some men kill. Not all men are violent to

women but some are and their behaviour serves as an enforcer of their institutional and personal power.

## ■ RISKS INVOLVED

Risks are involved for projects who take on the issue, but that should not be a reason for not getting involved. Community Development must create the conditions for change. We must educate on this issue, build the analysis, make it safer for women to disclose their pain and get support where they live.

In Inchicore, we have an outreach centre, a counselling centre and we offer training. We journey to the courts with the women. We campaign and work on building structures which aim to prevent this crime from occurring.

Our exhibition 'Once Is Too Much' is travelling the country highlighting the issue and will soon be in Tralee to support Community Development Support Programmes projects there who are tackling the issue.

If, as a sector, we say we work to address oppression and make social change, then we need to Walk the Walk, rather than Talk the Talk. This is a life and death situation. Let the community take the lead, we have a vast amount of experience.

● Rita Fagan is Project Director at St. Michael's Estate Family Resource Centre.

## Anti-violence exhibition to visit Tralee

The Once Is Too Much exhibition focusing on the 70 women killed by male violence since 1995 visits Tralee, County Kerry, in the new year.

The Open Door Network, the network of agencies who provide services for women and children experiencing violence in Kerry, is co-ordinating the exhibition which will take place Siamsa Tire, Tralee, from mid February to the end of March.

Once Is Too Much is a large exhibition encompassing several rooms and is the work of the women of St. Michael's Resource Centre, Inchicore, County Dublin.

It is a community's response to violence against women and is supported by the Irish Once Is Too Much advocates zero tolerance to violence against women and children using painting, sculpture, fresh flowers, videos and a variety of other methods.

Further information regarding the exhibition will be available closer to the time from the Open Door Network.

# Projects in West respond to domestic violence

By Marian Walshe

**P**ROJECTS in the West have joined forces so that community development people have a strategic input into policies aimed at reducing levels of domestic violence. Under the umbrella of the Community Development Support Programmes (CDSPs) four projects came together in April of this year and a further ten projects are to come aboard by the end of the year as part of a new network.

The 'CDSPs Western Regional Community Response to Domestic Violence Network', while having a rather cumbersome title, is clear on its objectives and the action plan for 2001/2002 will concentrate on three objectives:

- to devise and deliver training for community development projects, their staff, management and volunteers to enable them to provide information and awareness training to their communities and to respond to incidences of domestic violence at a local community level.
- to establish a code of practice in relation to community workers and volunteers in community development projects across the western region.
- to secure links with existing community, voluntary and statutory agencies both those involved and not involved in the provision of services around domestic violence in an effort to improve the level of awareness and information infrastructure in local communities.

In 2002, the Network will further expand to reach out to other community and voluntary groups and it is anticipated that the Network will liaise closely with Women's Aid, the specialist support agency, in furthering its objectives.

This project provides for the first time, an opportunity to explore the possibilities of achieving awareness and implementation of appropriate support responses to the issue of

domestic violence at a local community level in communities across Mayo and Galway. The Western Regional Planning Committee on Violence against Women has allocated funding to support the development of the Network.

On foot of this achievement and with the support of the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs, it is anticipated that this project will have a multiplier effect nationally on the 200-plus projects in the Community Development Support Programmes.

## ■ USEFULNESS OF NETWORKS

The usefulness of establishing such a network became clear some time ago. For instance, the 1997 Task Force on Violence against Women recognised that local communities play an important role in dealing with violence against women and should be at the centre of a local response. In particular, this report strongly endorsed the role of the Community Development Support Programmes in the development of such a response.

Violence against women is a serious violation of women's human rights and occurs across all economic, cultural, political and social divides. It is equally prevalent in both urban and rural Ireland. It is a grave social problem that threatens the safety, equality and bodily integrity of every woman.

In 1999 the Annual Garda Report recorded 10,110 incidents of domestic violence, an increase of 20% over the previous year. The National Network of Women's Refuges and Support Services responded to 16,698 distress calls.

## ■ PIONEERING RESPONSES

As elsewhere in Ireland, projects within the Western Region Community Development Support Programmes find that violence against women is increasingly becoming an issue in

their work. For a number of years, some projects in the region have been involved in pioneering local responses within their own communities.

These responses have included research on Violence against Women in a Rural District, (undertaken by Tuam Community Development Resource Centre); provision of information and support to women experiencing violence; developing links with local and regional service providers; developing community-based networks; and raising awareness within their communities.

CDSPs projects in the region are informally involved in policy development around the issue of Violence against Women and this is beneficial in terms of having a policy context from which to work. However, their experience on the ground has had limited impact – until now – on the development of appropriate policies and services within the region. To address this situation, CDSPs projects in the Galway/Mayo region have established the Network and, in a second step, intend to gain CDSPs representation on the Western Regional Planning Committee on Violence against Women.

Tuam Community Development Resource Centre is the lead project in the 'CDSPs Western Regional Community Response to Domestic Violence Network' and for further information on its work contact Marian Walshe:

Tel: 093-25340.

E-mail: turmrc@iol.ie

- *Marian Walshe is the Co-ordinator at Tuam Community Development Resource Centre. Thanks to Ms. Walshe, and to Morgan Mee for his support in notifying 'Changing Ireland' of this and other articles produced in consultation with CDSPs policy workers.*

## Disabled Women's Working Group take to the road

By Martine Brennan

Good news for disabled women countrywide – the Disabled Women's Working Group is currently relaunching itself. Two meetings of four have taken place in Dublin supported by the Forum of People with Disabilities and Meitheal. Thanks to a small grant from the Combat Poverty work has begun on meetings which will take place all over the country beginning in the new year. The group aims to document the views of disabled women and begin to lobby for necessary changes.

The Disabled Women's Working Group (DWWG) was launched in 1996 as a sub-group of the Forum of People with Disabilities.

Initially, the group focussed on the lack of disabled women in leadership roles within the disability movement. However, in 1999, the sub-group felt the need to set themselves up as an independent group with its own identity and agenda and which included disabled women who had experienced violence in all its forms.

This led the DWWG to build bridges with all services for women, many of which had inadvertently excluded disabled women. To date, the DWWG has worked with Women's Aid and the National Women's Council opening up communication channels, providing information on the needs of disabled women and speaking out on their right to

access.

The agenda for the new Millennium is to reach out to women with disabilities in rural as well as urban areas to combat social isolation and work toward inclusion of all the citizens of this country. Further funding from Partnership Groups or other interested parties for transport and personal assistant costs will be most welcome.

*For further information contact: Maureen McGovern (Tel. 01-8489919 or E-mail maureen@pwdi.ie) or Niamh at the Forum of People with Disabilities, 21 Hill St., Dublin 1 (Tel. 01-8786077; Fax. 01-8786170)*



# A Traveller “in for the long haul”

Profile: Mr. George Kelly / Templeshannon CDP Management Comm. Member

The Templeshannon Community Development Project in Enniscorthy, Co Wexford was established in 1998 following 18 months of pre-development training with local community activist.

Since its establishment the project has been involved with a number of programmes. One of its key focuses has been and continues to be the support of local traveller representation and development within the surrounding area.

George Kelly has lived and worked in the area for many years and has played a vital role in growing the vision and focus of the project. As a Traveller Mr. Kelly has worked locally and regionally to bring down barriers that separate the settled and travelling community.

By Lorcan Brennan

**W**HEN George Kelly first walked into his local community centre, he was too shy to talk to anyone, but “after a few months of coming in and out I came on in leaps and bounds so I could get up and speak or speak to anybody, even 200 or 300 people at the one time.”

Here, George Kelly talks about the Templeshannon adventure, about why he got involved and why he stays, and about his hopes for all concerned:

“We started off as a few people meeting. The co-ordinator at the time asked me to come along to some meetings. I went along to share my thoughts on traveller issues within the community. Then I joined up with the Traveller Accommodation Programme. I was elected as a rep to go on that board. In other words, I’m the voice of the travelling community with and through the centre.

“As a member of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee for Wexford County Council I worked as part of a team on a report that was highly praised for being so thorough in looking at issues that

affect Travellers lives.

“I have been here in the area for a while. I’m part of the Traveller community in Drumgould and I work up there. The project from the start has had a strong focus for Travellers. We have an extension site in Drumgould with the project where we do after-school groups with the young Traveller children, then we have the active age group with the older women and we have the younger Traveller women so there is a strong link with the project.

## ■ VERY FOCUSED

“The project is very focused on getting people back to education and into community education to learn new skills. The younger Traveller people have really got involved. I went back myself because I couldn’t read or write. I went back to the literacy programme and some of the younger people took a leaf out of my own book and they went back. It’s very strong and well supported in Drumgould.

“I wouldn’t say I have a big influence on the project but I hope I had a good influence and I know the project had a good influence on me. They brought me on in leaps and bounds.

“The project is based in Enniscorthy and to drive through the town now it looks very well. The project is part of the success of the town and we have big hopes for it.

“We are in the process of altering the building now at the moment. We are hoping to have a childcare centre and crèche and that’s going to be a big improvement to the area and the town and the people who need it, young mothers who want to go back to work and people like that. That is one hope for the future.

“Enniscorthy has come on lots and Drumgould has changed

since I came into it and I’m living in it 35 years. There are new schemes of houses and more building going ahead. There are other things like the new swimming pool and cinema and people can go out in their own area without having to go off to other places.

“The swimming pool is a big success and a big change from swimming in the River Slaney, and there are new hotels. I do see myself involved in the future of the project as long as the rest of the management feel I have something to give. I’ll be here for the long haul,” concluded Mr. Kelly.



● Management committee members of Templeshannon Community Development, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford: George Kelly, Helen Morrissey and Helen Morrissey (Junior).

# Sex with a difference

People with disabilities destroy the myth of celibacy

By Martine Brennan

**T**RADITIONALLY, people with disabilities were regarded as celibate people, people for whom an expression of sexuality was impossible or where possible forbidden. Coupling was discouraged and people were encouraged to "accept their lot" and not "aim too high".

Thankfully these attitudes are changing largely as a result of people with disabilities speaking out and ignoring barbaric traditions.

However, old beliefs die hard. Marion, a woman with a degenerative disability, speaks from experience:

"When I was first diagnosed, I thought my life was over. I felt that in the space of a day I had gone from being an attractive available woman to being out of the dating scene completely. I couldn't see how anyone would want a woman who wobbles on her feet and I was afraid that I would be unable physically to have sex. I became very depressed. My family were really worried about me.

## ■ DANCE

"I continued to go out with able-bodied friends and it was so hard to see them out dancing while being unable to join them. I became more and more afraid of being jostled and knocked over.

"Sometimes a man would come up and try to pull me off my stool and dance with me and I would scream and my friends would have to help me. Getting to the toilet became a major event. So many night clubs have toilets in the basement or up steep stairs and one of my friends would have to help me. Every day I was facing the loss of my independence.

"Once again I became very depressed. Then my friends sat me down and helped me to see that I was still attracting men and having dates and these were men who either knew about my disability or could see that I had difficulties walking. I began to realize that I am still the same woman inside and that an inventive attitude towards sex makes all the difference.

## ■ ATTITUDE

"I may tire more easily than I used to but I guess this might have happened in any case as I got older. Sometimes sex can be hilarious as my partner and I come up against a new challenge. His attitude makes a big difference but then would I wasn't to be with a man who was uncaring of my physical and sexual needs anyway? I think not.

"I really don't know what the future holds but I am so glad that thinking I would never have a sex life is a complete myth. My love life is still

interesting and absorbing and my creativity has increased enormously," concluded Marion.

## ■ GALES OF LAUGHTER

Jane, who uses a wheelchair, agreed entirely with Marion. She said, "a sense of humour is a must. My partner and I end up in gales of laughter when we get ready for bed. There is his personal assistant, him and me and the two wheelchairs – sometimes it feels as though there are four too many in the room.

"All joking aside, it can be difficult to meet someone. People are often afraid of what they do not understand. I try to demystify my physical condition and I do still worry about people being turned off by my disability. It helps to talk to others with disabilities about my fears and hopes.

"Sometimes people feel too shy to talk but there is such a need for the subject of sex and disability to come out of the dark, if you will pardon the pun. Articles like this and the RTE programme "Loving and Able" really help. Sex is an important part of life and loving. It is a basic human need and it is important for us to say how we feel and say what we need. No-one else will do it for us."

# The Irish Advocacy Network

## Giving a voice to people with hidden disabilities

The Irish Advocacy Network has appointed a full-time development co-ordinator, Mervyn Tierney, whose brief is to support the establishment of advocacy networks island wide, to facilitate the development of peer support groups and to network with health boards and all groups who are involved in the support of people with mental health issues.

Mervyn Tierney has acquired substantial experience in the field of disability work with ABLE and the Kerry Network of People with Disabilities.

There are now eighteen networks affiliated to the Irish Advocacy Network. The networks are operational in the midlands region, the western region, north western, southern region and eastern region.

*For further information contact:*

**Irish Advocacy Network, Old Rooskey, Rooskey, Monaghan.**

**Tel. 047-38918 or 087-9800445.**

**Fax. 047-38918.**

**E-mail: [irishadvocacynetwork@eircom.net](mailto:irishadvocacynetwork@eircom.net)**



● **Nora Moriarty, a voluntary member of the Kerry Advocacy Network, preparing leaflets for distribution.**

# PLUGGING THE RURAL TRANSPORT GAP

**T**HE first issue of 'Changing Ireland' focused on the achievements made by 'Community Connections', a Community Development Project in Blacklion, Co. Cavan, in co-ordinating a reliable rural transport service for the area. Undoubtedly, rural transport infrastructure is a critical force in the development and sustainability of rural communities. In this article three projects in Mayo and Galway outline how they are attempting to address gaps in local and regional transport systems, in some cases with the support of statutory partners. Incidentally, this research in the West Region was carried out with the following in mind: One of the clear objectives of the Community Development Support Programmes (CDSPs) is that the positive approaches and strategies which emerge from the Programmes across the region should impact on mainstream policy and practice.

## Bohola Transport Group

Bohola is a small village in east Mayo. The village itself has a population of over 214 but the thirty-eight townlands of Bohola have a population total of 1300. Many people living in the area are at a distinct social and economic disadvantage because of such factors as rural isolation, lack of employment opportunities or lack of adequate childcare.

However one of the main issues that arose when an area profile/needs analysis was completed by the Kiltimagh and District Community Development Support Project was the lack of adequate or affordable public transport. This lack of transport left the most vulnerable people in the community, namely the elderly and women totally dependent on taxi's (which many cannot afford) or on the good will of family, neighbours or friends. Those over 66 were unable to avail of their right to free travel.

Bohola has a primary school, post office, two shops and three licensed premises. To access other services such as a bank, doctor, dentist, solicitor, social welfare office or secondary school, people must arrange transport to the nearest town's of Kiltimagh or Swinford, five and six miles away respectively.

From discussing this issue with the



● *Vincent McGovern, bus-driver for Community Connections 'Rural Lift' project in County Cavan.*

various groups and individuals in Bohola, the Bohola Rural Transport group was established, supported by Kiltimagh & District CDSP. The group is made up of members of the Bohola Parents and Toddler group, Morning Education group, and the local priest. The group is now in the process of completing research in to the lack of transport in the Bohola area in order to present an application to Bus Eireann for support for a rural transport service in the area.

## LOUISBURGH TRANSPORT SCHEME

In early 1998, Louisburgh Community Project drew up an action plan for the development of a rural transport scheme for the area in conjunction with South West Mayo Development Company. Formal discussion followed with community groups, Bus Eireann, ADM, and the Department of Agribusiness, Extension and Rural Development, UCD.

A survey of the transport needs of the

community was carried out and, based on the findings, two routes were established taking mainly older people from outlying areas into Louisburgh every Friday morning when activities were already organised in the town by the Senior Citizens' Committee.

Two private minibus owner/drivers share the routes and are paid directly by Bus Eireann on the basis of the distance covered, not the number of passengers picked up. Free travel passes are accepted on the routes and a flat charge of £3 per return journey is applied to all other passengers. The service runs for 52 weeks in the year even though the Senior Citizens' activities are suspended over the summer months.

After two-and-a-half years this rural transport scheme is a continuing success, reducing considerably the isolation felt by the two dozen regular users of the service.

## FORUM RURAL TRANSPORT

FORUM have been liaising with Udaras na Gaeltachta, the Western Health Board, Cumas Teo. And local community groups around the establishment of a pilot community car scheme in Cashel, Recess and Carna areas of County Galway, funded jointly by Udaras and the Western Health Board. The scheme started in May but there are difficulties in recruiting drivers. It is proposed that the above group will make an application under the Rural Transport Initiative for transport projects for all of Connemara.

FORUM staff attended a Community Transport Seminar in Dublin in May which provided an overview of community transport initiatives in Ireland and the UK and also carried out training workshops on topics such as minibus safety, setting up community transport projects and vehicle sharing. The seminar was organised by the Community Transport Association of Ireland was set up this year.

*\*For further details contact: Bridie McMahon, Kiltimagh Community Development Project; Geraldine Mitchell, Louisburgh Community Project; Yvonne Kane, Assistant Director FORUM.*

*Thanks to all three and to Morgan Mee for contributing this article.*



# Out of the depths of the dept.

(The Diary of Horace McDermot, former faceless bureaucrat)

## Monday 5.35pm:

I can't believe the reaction I got when I unveiled my master plan. The memo on direct provision went down like a lead balloon in this department. In fact I got hauled over the coals for my lack of sensitivity and awareness of the needs of those less well off. Now I find out that Stevie, Ivy and the rest were only taking the micky out of me pretending to support my idea. Who says civil servants don't have a sense of humour?

## Tuesday 12.20pm:

My direct provision scheme doesn't fit the user-friendly services the Dept are developing. "Many a flower was born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the desert air" - so I'm off to do a course in Community Development and give expression to my radical nature and revolutionary thinking.

## Wednesday 2.30pm:

Started my course today. It's a big change from the department. First, nobody seems to shave except the odd

head, otherwise it's all hair and stubble everywhere (the guys on their faces and the girls on their legs). I must buy some Doc Martins and a pair of Birkenstock sandals. My father's corduroys with a fleece or wooly jumper will help me look the part. Half the group are caffeine junkies and with the other half it's mineral water and herbal teas. The look of disgust I got when I arrived in with a full fat coke and Big Mac at lunch.

## Thursday 12.45am:

I didn't realise I'd have to learn a new language when I took on this course but I'm already demonstrating my commitment to social inclusion by making sure no one is left out of the conversation in the pub after lectures. The course content will be no problem to me, I've already sussed out who fancies who by using my group dynamic and social analysis skills. My research and evaluation skills have helped me find out that one of the women, Carol Marks, is a bit of a communist, single and thinks Christy Moore is a sex symbol. Given the amount

I sweat when I chat up women I reckon the prospects are good.

## Friday 11.15am:

Got our first essay - "The person who inspired me to be a community development worker". Talked to Martin Luther Keane from Mayo and he said Nelson Mandela was the man or a guy called Shay O'Gara or something (he's on posters and T-shirts but doesn't look very Irish). I suppose the man that embodies what community development is all about for me has to be President George W. Bush.

### *I mean look at the key principles:*

**Consultation:** Before beginning any war, President Bush certainly went around and consulted with everyone before he went ahead and did what he wanted to do anyway and isn't that what it's all about? **Collective action:** Another strength he possesses is his ability to build alliances. With Tony Blair doing a bit of outreach he got everybody to pitch in on the campaign. Even countries like Ireland who have harboured terrorists are backing him.

**Anti-poverty focus:** I mean they don't come much poorer than Afghanistan and you can't be more anti-poverty than bombing the shite out of it.

**Act as a catalyst for social change:** G.W. has created one hell of a movement of people whose social circumstances have changed as a result of his anti-poverty initiative.

## Saturday 4.00pm:

I want to do well on the assignment so I'm making my notes over the weekend and the more I think about it the more George displays the essence of community development principles:

**Participative democracy:** His whole family is a model as they have nearly all participated in the democratic process and got elected. "Put a Bush in the Gap" must be the slogan they use to woo the Irish-American vote.

**Capacity Building:** The President has always promoted the building of America's nuclear and military capacity so you can't fault him there.

**Empowerment:** This is where you provide people with the "tools" to identify and combat the serious problems you face (all the better if it's a problem for them too). Then with some training and investment help them to literally take power. Eventually they become self sufficient and start to act on their own initiative.

There are obvious problems with this empowerment and I might write my thesis on it but for now I'll finish this off so I get it in before the deadline.

## VACANCIES: REPORTERS

Want to stay working in community development, but always fancied becoming a journalist?

REGIONAL REPORTERS ARE WANTED NOW FOR



"Changing Ireland" is written by and for community development workers, volunteers and those connected under the umbrella of the Community Development Support Programmes (CDSPs). Since "Changing Ireland" is a new magazine, some vacancies for Regional Reporter remain to be filled.

Currently, there are vacancies in the following regions: - Dublin (2); Eastern (1); Midlands (1); North-West (1).

The work is part-time, training is provided and there is a reasonable payment rate for stories. Applicants should work (salaried or volunteer) in projects funded or supported under the CDSPs. They should have a strong interest in community development issues, have some experience in writing or media-work and should have an eye for a story.

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 and will receive appropriate training (up to four days training per annum). The editor will also provide support and advice on an ongoing basis by electronic means. 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.

If the reporter is working for a project, they may be able to do their reporting work during project time and the project will be re-imbursed for the contribution. This is the ideal situation. In other cases, payment can be made directly by eChanging Ireland to the Reporter for their

# A crisis in finding volunteers?

## *International Year of the Volunteer*

*Volunteers are the cornerstone of the Community Development Support Programmes, without their participation the Programmes simply would not exist. On July 7, 2001 a one-day conference was held at NUI Galway, exploring key issues relating to voluntary work within the CDSPs and beyond.*



● **Caption**

**A**LTHOUGH Ireland has a long tradition of voluntary activity, many activists in the voluntary and community sectors say that it has never been harder to convince people to become involved in voluntary committees. It is difficult to find people willing to get involved in local voluntary services or in community projects tackling poverty and social exclusion.

This situation poses many questions. Given our reliance on community and voluntary organisations is this a crisis for all of us? Does it reflect our 'progress' or our disillusionment? Will it require new responses from government and the traditional social partners as well as from the voluntary sector? Is this talk of crisis justified since Ireland still has one of the highest rates of voluntary activity internationally?

According to the most up-to-date national data on volunteering (1997-1998):

- One third of the population is engaged in voluntary work
- Gender divide: 40% women compared to 28% men
- Amongst women volunteers, those with a third-level qualification were most likely of all women to volunteer.
- People living in towns are more likely to volunteer than those living in either urban or rural areas
- The most common reason for volunteering is 'belief in the cause'
- Rewards for volunteering cited by respondents indicate that for women 'satisfaction at doing good' was most important, while for men 'seeing results' was the primary reward.

The conference aimed to create an awareness of volunteer contributions to social development and heard directly from those involved in volunteering.

The conference highlighted such issues as:

- The role of volunteerism in the promotion of social and community development to combat social exclusion and poverty.
- The meaning volunteering for individuals and organisations.
- A feminist analysis of volunteerism.
- The measures government can take to encourage volunteerism.
- The steps necessary to promote dynamic policies favouring voluntary action.

The conference was jointly organised by the Women's Studies Centre, NUI Galway, and West Training and Development. The keynote

speaker at the conference was Dr. Freda Donoghue, National College of Ireland. Dr. Donoghue's main research interests are in the voluntary and the community sectors.

Organisational perspectives were provided by speakers from Westside Community Development Resource Centre, Galway; Network of Rape Crises Centres of Ireland; Letterfrack Women's Working Group; Pléaraca Teo. Connemara; South West Clare Community Radio and Kiltimagh & District Community Development Support Project, Co. Mayo.

Conference organisers believe that International Year of the Volunteer (IYV) 2001 presents an opportunity to reflect and recognise the value of voluntary work in Ireland. It also provides an opportunity to take a broad

overview that acknowledges and consolidates the many positive developments that have taken place, as well as identifying gaps and areas which need further attention. The conference made the connection between social inclusion policy and practice and considered the implications for volunteerism in the future.

*A full report of the conference proceedings and conclusions is available from West Training and Development and Women's Studies Centre NUI, Galway.*

Please contact Morgan Mee at West Training and Development or Vivienne Batt, Women's Studies Centre, NUI Galway, for copies of the report.

## **CITYWIDE DRUGS CRISIS CAMPAIGN**

**- A Specialist Support Agency under the Community Development Support Programmes**

*A date for your diary*

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11th, 2001**

### **THE NEW DRUGS STRATEGY 2001-2008**

**Communities, Families and Drug Users  
- Our Role in the Implementation of the New Drugs Strategy**

A special conference will take place in

**DUBLIN CASTLE CONFERENCE CENTRE on TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11th**

*to agree our implementation plan for the new strategy.*

- The conference will draw together the work that has been going on during the past few months, through the Liberty Hall meeting, the Network Groups (eg Community Representatives Network, Community Drug Projects) and working groups of Citywide (eg Community Employment, Prisons, Education, Justice) working with other networks (eg Family Support Network, Uisce).
- A more detailed programme for the conference will be circulated to projects shortly.

**Please Make Note of the Date:- Tuesday, December 11th, 2001**

For more information phone Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign at 01-8365090 (Fax: 01-8364849).



# Goodbye to 3-year evaluations?

By Sharon Browne

A novel pilot project in the western region may yet bring an end to three-year evaluations and even annual reports as we know them. The nine projects in the area, along with West Training Support Agency and Nexus Research are developing a model of self-evaluation that includes a shared database on key issues and developments that can be used for networking, strategic planning and policy work.

Results from the on-going self-evaluation process are entered into a project database for the Western region, highlighting changes in project profiles, priority development themes, inputs, outputs and impacts.

Individualised project self-evaluation "reports" are produced in visual format (using Powerpoint and/or other means) with a view to communicating project information in an easily-understood way to local management committees, local communities, and to other regional and national bodies.

It is hoped that results from this work will assist in strategic development of the Community Development Support Programmes locally, regionally and nationally through:

- Ongoing recording of issues arising within communities to inform local, regional and national planning.
- Establishing project and Support Agency databases to facilitate networking.
- Providing comparable data that can contribute to profiling the work of the Community Development Support Programmes nationally and internationally.
- The need for a systematic approach to evaluation, monitoring and review was identified as part of the recent National Community Development Programme evaluation carried out by Nexus Research Co-Operative.

The western CDP's involved are: Kiltimagh & District, FORUM, Galway Travellers Support Group, Plearaca Teo, Louisburgh, Tuam, Parkside, Westside and Ballybane Mervue.

"There's no place to hide in this model", says Breda Lymer of West Training Support Agency. "The information coming in is astounding. We have been meeting together for one day a month with Nexus. Over time the information is really building up. The strength of this is that it shows the successes as well as the gaps. I think we don't celebrate our successes to any great extent. Sometimes projects feel that evaluations show more about what is wrong with a project than the positives. In this model, self-evaluation is an on-going piece of work with ourselves, CDPs and their voluntary management committees.

"There is no point in doing an evaluation six months before workplan development. Training people to do their own self-evaluation work over a period of time is better. That way no one is coming in cold to a project. It also saves all the time that might be spent briefing an external evaluator.

"The software developed by Nexus for this model is user friendly and very applicable to the work of the projects. Standardisation of evaluation methodology makes it easier to share information and learning. Now we are at the stage where projects are using the information gathered to back and support funding applications.

"The future of this project depends on DSCFA funding. We need a resource person in



● **Brian Dillon (right) of Nexus Research chatting to Breda Ruane, Louisburgh CDP Co-ordinator, at a seminar in Westport, Co. Mayo. Nexus and projects in the West Region have piloted a self-evaluation model that could replace the 3-year evaluations.**

the region to maintain the system and integrate new projects (by next year there will be 30 CDSPs projects in the western region). This is an exciting and evolving model. I hope it will be used by all projects working under the CDSPs," said Ms. Lymer.

The project will be linked with other self-

evaluation pilot work being undertaken in the South East with Framework (on Support Agency Self-evaluation) and with the South East Regional Policy Committee (on appropriate self-evaluation procedures and mechanisms) and Community Action Network (CAN).

## Common Themes from Project Self-Evaluation

Many similarities were found between projects through Nexus Research's pilot project for the Community Development Support Programmes in the West Region. The aim was to get projects there to engage in a self-evaluation process and the following are among the (occasionally startling) findings:

- **Project maintenance** took up almost 44% of project time and effort during 2000. This figure has risen from just over 38% in 1999. Only 2 projects saw a reduction.
- **Project maintenance effort** was mostly concerned with work under the following headings: Committee, Policy, Staffing and other.
- There has been an **increase in the following areas of work:** Policy, Education, Arts, and Networking.
- There has been a **decrease in the following areas of work:** Information, Resources, and groups.
- Local Government and Health work are among the **new issues being dealt with.**
- **Changes in the target groups** being worked with are as follows: there has been an increase in work with minority groups, people with disabilities, young people and older people; There has been a decrease in work with lone parents, people who are unemployed, women, tenants and children.
- **The variety of resources offered through the CDPs** in the area is: the continued existence of groups due to the provision of meeting space; Increased autonomy for groups, evidenced by their ability to access funding; the training and development of trainers; increased access to employment.
- **The impact of information work** is described as: increased benefit uptake; increased awareness and uptake of services; increase in 'vocalisation' regarding rights and entitlements; groups are diversifying and addressing new development issues; groups are carrying out their own research and studies.
- **The impact of education and training** has been: paid employment; further education and training; community involvement.
- **The impact of awareness work** has been: a sense of inclusion; personal empowerment; more confident parenting; increased personal expectations.
- **The impact of groups** is seen through: the provision of services, such as childcare and transport, which enable people avail of other employment or training opportunities; the development of individual skills of members has led to employment and increased participation; the rate of establishment of groups is rising.
- **Policy Impacts:** production and delivery of policy submissions at national and regional level; publication of research influencing policy; networks of projects becoming more policy oriented.

**THANKS to David Slater & Brian Dillon of Nexus Research for their assistance in researching this story.**



# DEVOTED TO DUBLIN'S INNER CITY

## Seanie Lambe in profile

Seanie Lambe is co-ordinator of the one of the older community development projects in Dublin, the Inner City Renewal Group (ICRG) based in Amiens Street. His name is well-known in community development and indeed political circles – the project he belongs to is part of a successful inner-city network which has earned respect and gained crucial support from local politicians. The ICRG covers the once-notorious Monto area of Dublin. Known for its high levels of prostitution a century ago, more recently the community was ravaged by drugs. However, poverty and its causes have been the key issue from the beginning.

“Our mission is that local people should get tangible benefits from the regeneration of the local economy,” said Mr. Lambe, “They say a rising tide lifts all boats, but it certainly doesn't if your boat has holes.”

Almost of Mr. Lambe's work is concentrated on policy work, both locally and regarding the disadvantaged in general in society and he believes the effort is worthwhile, “The higher up the ladder we can interact the more successful our efforts can be.”

Mr Lambe is convinced that community development work can be the catalyst for positive change.

“There is no doubt that this place would have been levelled only for us (and politicians working with us),” he commented.

As to his previous involvement in a controversial and confrontational approach to discourage drug-pushers from living in the area, he quoted an old phrase, “You can't make omelettes without breaking eggs!”

The ideal make-up of a voluntary management committee, in Mr. Lambe's view, would include people “with experience of accounts and administration and also company law.” He believes that developing leadership is possible locally when you build on the fact that local people are employed in local development.

Knowing how to talk the talk is important. “You must learn the language of the funder,” said Mr. Lambe, “and remove the mystique which surrounds community development work.” His advice to new CDPs would be “to count into your planning that you got to be able to fulfil the bureaucratic duties.”

As for his attitude to bureaucracy, when it gets in the way, “It's best to laugh at it.”

“The beauty of CDPs is that the money provided is not function-specific (except that 62% of the funds must go on salaries),” he pointed out.

“There's no way that Community Development can provide equality for everyone, but the problems would be a lot worse if we were not here. For me, appropriate education is the key to tackling poverty,” noted Mr. Lambe.

## Working with families is tough

Leo Scales, co-ordinator of School St. Family Resource Centre, Dublin, commenting on the type of work FRCs do: The experience is mostly negative. You don't go home saying Yippee as if you sold 15 cars in one day. You meet women who are getting beat up by their husbands, parents whose children are being abused. It's hard work

## P.O.S.H.

Port Outbound, Starboard Home was always requested by rich people sailing from Europe to the U.S. when Atlantic luxury liners were in their heyday. The idea was that these affluent travellers got cabins which faced the sun both on the way over and back. Hence, the origins of the word we know today as posh.

## Oh, the drudgery!

“There's drudgery in social change, and glory for the few  
And if you don't tell me what not to say,  
I won't tell you what not to do.” - Billy Brag

## Do you want to be part of Changing Ireland?

An Editorial Team has been established to steer 'Changing Ireland' through the issues and challenges lying ahead. The Team should ideally include members whose experience reflects the make-up of the Community Development Support Programmes. At present, those on the team have combined experience in CDPs, a Support Agency, the DSCFA, the wider media world and Regional Reporting for 'Changing Ireland'.

More members are wanted – ideally people working in the north, midlands or west who have experience of Core-Funded Group work, Family Resource Centre work or otherwise. They should either work as a staff-member or as a voluntary management committee member of a project in the CDSPs and should have the backing of their project in becoming a member of the Editorial Team.

The Team meet once before each quarterly issue to review contents and provide direction for the following issue. The Team will also meet a couple of times annually to discuss the newsletter's future development. Expenses for participation as a member of the Editorial Team will be paid and your contribution will be highly appreciated.

The work is important as the newsletter seeks to represent the interests of people working in projects nationwide. The newsletter is seen as a networking tool and should also assist in boosting the profile of the CDSPs and our work to combat poverty and social exclusion.

### Interested?

Contact the Editor for further details.

Address: Changing Ireland,  
Unit 3, Sarsfield Business Centre,  
Moyross, Limerick.  
Tel: 061-458011.  
Fax: 061-325300.

**CHANGING IRELAND**

# Minister talks on new Family Support Agency

## The South East Mens Network

**C**ONTROVERSY erupted when, before summer, Dermot Ahern, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, sprang a surprise on projects in the Community Development Support Programmes. Without having consulted stakeholders, he announced that the Government intended setting up a new statutory agency, the Family Support Agency. The new body is designed to administer the Family Resource Centre Programme and means that it will no longer be part of the CDSPs.

There has been strong reaction from projects, networks, support agencies and indeed politicians were successfully lobbied to question the bill as it passed through the Dail.

The Minister, under some pressure to clarify his intentions, finally spoke at length about the new agency at the launch, in October, of the Family Resource Centres National Forum. The following excerpts come from the written copy of the speech he delivered.

"The Family Support Agency Bill, at present before the Dail, will bring together the main programmes and pro-family services introduced by the Government in recent years. It aims to provide a comprehensive and coherent approach to the future development and delivery of essential supports to families, to promote continuity and stability in family life, and to foster a supportive community for families at local level - key objectives of the Government.

"The Family Support Agency legislation provides an enabling framework within which the Government have decided that the Family and Community Resource Centre programme can be further developed.

"The Family Support Agency will have 3 core responsibilities:

- To provide family mediation,
- To support, promote and develop the provision of marriage and relationship counselling and other family supports and
- To support, promote and develop the Family and Community Services Resource Centres programme.

"These responsibilities will be carried out in consultation with key stakeholders such as yourselves, the counselling services and the Family Mediation Service. The structure of the Family Support Agency as provided for in the legislation will enable an open, inclusive and participative approach to the development of the Family Supports Agency's functions in family support.

"A Board will oversee the Agency and it will have a Chief Executive whose job it will be to develop and foster the three distinct areas of the Agency's business as well as developing the Agency's other functions. Coherence across all these activities will be ensured by the Board whose members include people who have experience and expertise in the fields related to the Agency's responsibilities. It is my view that experience and expertise in the work of Family and Community Resource Centres will be an important resource to the Board in carrying out its support functions for the programme. I have received the representations from the Family and Community Resource Centre Forum and its members and I will consider carefully the points that you have made and also those raised in discussions with officials of my Department.

"Staff interests will be represented on the Board. In all there will be 12 members of the Board including the

Chairperson. The challenge will be to ensure that the views of all interests, including families themselves, are harnessed in a focused and balanced approach to promoting the well being of families and their local communities.

"I look forward to the Family Resource Centre Forum shaping the debate at Agency Board level on the future of the Family Resource Centres and raising the profile of the Family Resource Centre work to a wider audience.

"All of these issues, clarification of the Government's proposals, the promotion and development of the centre's ways of working and the identification of the administrative and practical issues to be addressed to ensure a smooth transfer of the programmes to the new Agency are the focus of ongoing constructive discussions and reassurances between officials of my Department and the Family Resource Centre Forum. I am keeping in close touch with all these developments and I am pleased that they are all progressing so well.

"The Regional Support Agencies have worked well in the development of the Family and Community Resource Centres in their early years of development. There is a continued role for them with the new Agency and I would like to see them take up opportunities to draw on the resources of the new Agency in developing their support work in the future. I am hopeful that they will be in a position to meet with officials from my Department in the coming weeks.

"The Family Support Agency will provide a comprehensive and coherent response for families in need of these support services and for families generally. It will be a dedicated Agency, a resource for all those involved in the promotion of

# *FRC Forum wants representation on new agency board*

While welcoming the new Family Support Agency, the Family Resource Centre National Forum (FRCNF) wants adequate representation on the Agency's statutory board. This point was pressed home to the Minister by Bernie Broderick when she addressed the gathering at the official launch of the FRCNF.

Ms. Broderick, a member of the Forum and co-ordinator of Duagh Family Resource Centre, County Kerry, began by highlighting progress over the years:

"Family Resource Centres are a relatively new concept in Ireland. But, after a few short years, we have 70 Centres in various stages of development throughout the country. This is a nation-wide spread of Centres, working to the highest professional standards, in cities, towns and villages all over Ireland. And now grouped together in the Family Resource Centre Forum.

Our Forum is vibrant and dynamic and is now a major component of the recently announced Family Support Agency. The recent Report on Lone Parents by the National Economic and Social Forum makes a number of critical recommendations to which we believe our Centres can contribute greatly. The development of the critical action plans by the RAPID Area Implementation Teams in the deprived areas of our major cities, critical plans



● **Nell Kelleher and Bernie Broderick, Duagh FRC, Co. Kerry, at the launch of the Family Resource Centres National Forum in Dublin.**

which will shape the development of these areas for the mid-term future, could not be one without our wholehearted involvement — and these plans must be completed by December. The whole concept of Social Capital, a concept being spoken about more and more in official circles, can be brought to reality in the less well off areas of our country, the areas in which we operate, through the active participation of our Centres.

Addressing the Minister, she said, "We interpret our inclusion in the Family Support Agency as an acknowledgement on your part of the importance of our work within our communities. We welcome this recognition. We also welcome your support for the range of family mediation and family counselling services to be included in the Agency. We are very pleased that we are in a process of consultation with your officials and we look forward to our continuing discussions on the issues of our ethos of Community Development and on representation on the Board of the Family Support Agency.

Our claim for representation is based on the following:

- We are the voice of a substantial number of marginalised and disadvantaged people
- We are the largest sector in the new Family Support Agency, with an organised Forum recognised by your Department
- We believe strongly in the principles of representative and participatory democracy
- Lack of representation will result in an undemocratic procedure without direct lines of communication to the people who's needs we are supposed to meet. "Minister, We hope that in further discussion with you and your Department we will be able to satisfactorily resolve this issue," concluded Ms. Broderick.

# **Dermot Ahern launches family centre's national forum**

**T**HE launch of the Family and Community Resource Centres National Forum took place in front of a packed hall in the Mansion House, Dublin, on October 24th. Dermot Ahern, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs officially launched the Forum.

Minister Ahern began by paying tribute to all involved "that so much has been accomplished in such a short space of time."

"Your work in building on local neighbourhood solidarity, promoting informal support networks and developing links with schools and services in your localities has proved highly successful in responding to the needs of families. Your efforts have come to the attention of public representatives throughout the country, including members of the Government, who are most supportive of your work at local level. ...All representatives welcome Government moves to strengthen the Family and Community Resource Centre Programme. The approach of the Centres in working with people and not just on their behalf has a proven track record. People in the community have an active voice in the running of their Centres. This ethos of working with communities in an empowering way, fostering self-development and self-reliance which informs the approach of many family resource centres in carrying out their work is important



● **Minister Dermot Ahern (centre) logging on to the website for the Family Resource Centres National Forum. To his left is Jean Garland of Ballyboden Family Resource Centre, Dublin.**

so that centres can act as a first step to community participation for the most vulnerable and marginalised families.

"The Family and Community Resource Centres are an essential component of the Government's 'Families First' approach in building neighbourhood solidarity and responding to families locally. ...In 1997, there were 10 centres. In the Action Programme for the Millennium the Government is committed

to the establishment of 100 centres. To date there are 75 centres either operational or approved for inclusion in the programme. There has been record investment by Government in family supports in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, increasing from £1.5m (€1.9m) in 1997 to £12m (€15.24m) this year.

"I congratulate the Family and Community Resources Centre Forum on its launch. Networks have an important role to play in the overall development of the voluntary sector. They provide support, training, information and other developmental services for their affiliated organisations. I am glad to see that these activities from an important part of your work. I see a key role for networks, such as the Family Resource Centre Forum, in the development of cohesion in this sector of family support, in establishing the need for planing in the pursuit of common interests and in giving expression to the voices of the voluntary and community groups in articulating the needs of families at a local level.

"I wish you every success on the path to becoming the dynamic and active national organisation, which is so needed today in supporting and promoting the well being of families and their local communities," Minister Ahern's speech concluded.





● **Jean Garland, Denise Price and Louise Murray in celebratory mood after the launch of the Family Resource Centres National Forum.**

## CAIT i Rosmuc

BHÍ an-ríméad ar Phléaráca Teo. i Rosmuc nuair a fógraíodh go raibh maoiniú faighte acu faoi CAIT. Chuir Pléaráca i gcomhar le VTOS Rosmuc isteachiarratas bunaithe ar thraenáil a chuir ar ghrúpaí pobail maidir le úsáid an e-phost agus an idir líon agus chun Cyber-Café a shocrú suas san Ionad Fiontair i Rosmuc.

Tá VTOS Rosmuc chun an traenáil a chur ar fáil agus beidh Pléaráca ag breathnú i ndiaidh an Cyber-café. Tá súil go mbeidh an dream óg sa bpobal ag baint leas as an Cyber Café ach tá sé dírithe ar ghrúpaí eile freisin ar nós mná tí, daoine dífhostaithe, feirmeoirí, seandaoine agus na cumainn spórt áitiúla. Sé an bunús atá le CAIT ná daoine nó grúpaí nach mbeadh go hiondúil ag baint leas as an teicneolaíocht nua a mhealladh chun cleachtadh a fháil air. £23,700 a fuair tionscadal Phléaráca/VTOS. Tá súil tús a chur leis an traenáil i Meán Fómhair agus an cybercafé a shocrú suas chomh maith. Amach anseo, tá sé i gceist maoiniú a aimsiú chun suíomh idirlíon de cheantar Rosmuc a shocrú suas.

## WEBSITE REVIEWS . . .

### [www.frcnf.com](http://www.frcnf.com)

**Readability \*\*\*\*\***

**Usefulness – great potential**

This new website, put together in time for the launch of the Family Resource Centre National Forum, is still under development, but it has great potential. It has already showed its usefulness - the speech delivered by Minister Dermot Ahern at the launch of the FRCNF in Dublin was published on its website the following day. The website features a map of Ireland with each Region highlighted and information and contact details on most Family Resource Centres nationwide accessible through the map.

### [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie)

**Readability \*\*\*\*\***

**Usefulness \*\*\*\*\***

This is the site of the Equality Authority. It outlines the 9 grounds on which discrimination is now unlawful in Ireland. Definitions are given of both direct and indirect discrimination. You can also look up the publications and services available from the Equality Authority. There is a well laid out step-by-step guide on what to do if you are being discriminated against. It is a useful starting point for anyone who thinks they might have a case under the Employment Equality Act 1998 or the Equal Status Act 2000. (This information should originally have appeared alongside the first issue article on discrimination against people practising Wicca, but was held over for pressure of space).

### [www.quitnet.com](http://www.quitnet.com)

**Readability \*\*\*\*\***

**Usefulness \*\***

This site was established by smokers, in association with Boston University, to help other smokers quit the awful habit. It offers quitting guidelines to help you plan your quit. The quitting calendar details the day-to-day steps to quitting smoking. The site boasts 950 members who had successfully quit and stayed off cigarettes.

### [www.embarassingproblems.com](http://www.embarassingproblems.com)

**Readability \*\*\*\*\***

**Usefulness \*\*\*\*\***

Meet straight talking Dr. Margaret who can give you good advice on any embarrassing problem you may have, but are afraid to even ask your doctor about! You can e-mail your embarrassing problem which will be answered and published (anonymously) on the "problem shared" page. Past problems range from: strange semen, to strange bodily noises, while Blushing Bob talks to Dr. Margaret about his sticking out ears.

On a more serious note, this is an award-winning site (thegoodwebguide.co.uk) and Dr. Margaret Stearn is qualified. She has a BA in physiology and psychology from Oxford University and St. Georges Hospital Medical School.