

Combat Poverty and Local Government

The role of local government in tackling poverty and social exclusion

Combat Poverty has been supporting local authorities to develop and build capacity to play a more strategic role in the prevention of poverty and social exclusion through the Local Government Programme since 1999.

Under the *National Development Plan 2007–2013*, the current social partnership agreement *Towards 2016*, and the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016*, the lead role which local government has in developing integrated local responses to national policy commitments is recognised and developed. These commitments include the extension of the local authority social inclusion unit programme, the rollout of poverty impact assessment to the local level and the strengthening of the Local Government Social Inclusion Steering Group (LGSISG), which supports the linkages between the national and the local level.

Local Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategies

As part of its work with local government, Combat Poverty has provided support to a number of local authorities to develop and implement Local Anti Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategies (LAPSIS). Through the LAPSIS process, Combat Poverty aims to facilitate local government to take the leadership role set down for it in national anti-poverty policy dating back to 2002 with regard to the delivery of national level social inclusion goals at local level.¹

Support for Local Authorities:

In 2003, three local authorities - Cork City Council, Westmeath County Council and Donegal County Council received dedicated support from Combat Poverty to develop a LAPSIS. Following on from these pilot initiatives, Combat Poverty produced a how-to guide *Developing a Local Anti Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy* in 2004.

LAPSIS are a key instrument for developing an integrated response to national anti-poverty policy objectives at local level. A study carried out by ERM for Combat Poverty in 2007 *Mapping Social Inclusion in Local Authorities* found that Combat Poverty's guidelines had facilitated the preparation of LAPSIS by a number of local authorities. Ten of the twenty nine responding authorities had a LAPSIS in place, with a further eight proposing their preparation. A further authority is known to have also prepared such a strategy. The study concluded that it could be expected that almost 60% of authorities would have a strategy by 2008.

Support for County Development Boards:

In 2006, two County Development Boards, Laois and Wicklow, were allocated resources by Combat Poverty to develop and implement a LAPSIS. Also, in 2006 Combat Poverty supported seven community groups to develop projects aimed at

¹ *Building an Inclusive Society* (2002)

building the capacity of anti-poverty interests to participate effectively in LAPSIS. These projects were completed in March and November 2007 respectively.

Feedback from information seminars and various evaluations of LAPSIS initiatives suggest that there is a need to build awareness of all stakeholders including anti-poverty interests in the LAPSIS. Moreover, there is a need to build the capacity of all stakeholders to contribute to and participate in the LAPSIS process.

In the context of these needs, Combat Poverty's workplan for 2008 includes:

- An update to the 2004 guide on *Developing a Local Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy*, including an update on the national policy framework and incorporating learning from the pilot initiatives. The updated guide will be published in November 2008.
- Working with Social Inclusion Measures (SIMs) Groups² and the new Local Authority Social Inclusion Units to raise awareness of the value of integrated responses to poverty and social inclusion and build capacity of all stakeholders to participate in a LAPSIS. Combat Poverty is currently working with 5 SIMs groups. Support with regard to the development and implementation of LAPSIS for the new social inclusion units is due to commence in September 2008.

Poverty Impact Assessment

Poverty impact assessment (PIA) is the process by which government departments, local authorities and state agencies assess policies and programmes at design, implementation and review stages in relation to the likely impact that they will have on poverty and on inequalities that are likely to lead to poverty.

Poverty impact assessment provides a valuable tool to identify clearly what connections there are between policies or actions proposed and the achievement of objectives in the NAPinclusion.

The Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) developed a set of guidelines for use by all government departments. These were adapted by Combat Poverty in collaboration with Dublin City Council. These guidelines are intended to be a practical tool to help council staff to carry out poverty impact assessment.

These guidelines are available to download from our [website](#).

Local authorities who require support in piloting these guidelines should contact the Combat Poverty Agency.

² Social Inclusion Measures Groups are a sub-committee of the County and City Development Boards (CDBs), which were set up to co-ordinate service delivery at local level upon a recommendation by the Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems. All of the players in social partnership on a national level are represented on the SIMs group at local level. These stakeholders include local state agencies, local development bodies and community and voluntary groups. The SIMs group's main role is overseeing and co-ordinating social inclusion activity among all organizations in the local authority area. It also monitors the progress of the social inclusion objectives and actions contained in the CDB Strategy and implementation plan.

Social Inclusion Units

Following on from a commitment in the previous social partnership agreement, social inclusion units were established on a pilot basis in seven local authorities for the period 2001-2005, including Dublin City Council, which had an existing unit prior to the pilot programme. These units were placed on a permanent footing in 2006 and the social inclusion programme was extended to a further 9 units under the current social partnership agreement *Towards 2016*.

Capacity Building

Combat Poverty is organising capacity building and networking seminars for social inclusion unit staff in collaboration with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG). Contact us for further information.

Evaluation

KW Research is undertaking a formative evaluation of this phase of the social inclusion programme for Combat Poverty and the DoEHLG. This evaluation will inform the training programme for the units. It will build on the evaluation of the first phase of the pilot programme, which was carried out by Fitzpatrick Associates. A steering group comprised of the DoEHLG, Combat Poverty and the Local Government Management Services Board (LGMSB) is supporting the progress of this evaluation.

Local Government Social Inclusion Steering Group

This group is chaired by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. It consists of representatives from the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI), Combat Poverty Agency, Institute of Public Administration (IPA), the Local Government Management Services Board (LGMSB) and the County/City Managers Association (CCMA). The LGSISG supports the development of linkages between national and local level, including through the Local Government Anti-Poverty Learning Network (LGAPLN). It underpins the implementation, monitoring and ongoing development of the Government's social inclusion agenda. It is a commitment under the National Development Plan 2007–2013 that the LGSISG will be developed further to support the linkages between the national and local level.

Publications

Combat Poverty has published a number of local government related titles. Visit the [publications catalogue](#) on our website to browse the full range of Combat Poverty publications, order publications online and download free and out of print material.

Contacts

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