



Evaluation of the Having Your Say Programme

Final Report

Eustace Patterson Limited

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Combat Poverty's Strategic Plan 2005-2007, Working for a Poverty-Free Ireland, had three over-arching objectives: distribution of income and jobs, access to quality services and local and regional responses to poverty. The Having Your Say ('HYS') programme was set up as a supporting action to the strategic plan and its three objectives. It followed on from the Practice to Policy Initiative, which provided support to community organisations to demonstrate approaches that support people in poverty to participate in policy work relating to the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS).

The HYS programme incorporated a community development approach in its design and delivery. Its purpose was to promote the right of people living in poverty and organisations representing them to be involved in policy decision-making processes and to support them in achieving this. It also aimed to work with policy-makers to support effective participation. Finally, it planned to integrate the anti-poverty practice of community and voluntary organisations further into the policy advice role of Combat Poverty.

1.2 Terms of Reference for the Evaluation

The aim was to evaluate the HYS programme over the period of the current strategic plan, 2005 to 2007, covering both formative and summative elements as set out below.

Formative Elements of the Evaluation

- Describe and analyse the ongoing process and outputs of the programme
- Examine and interpret the outcomes that occur as the programme unfolds
- Assess the ongoing effectiveness and efficiency of the programme

- Inform and contribute to the ongoing planning and development of the programme
- Support self-evaluation processes by programme participants, where relevant
- Produce six monthly interim reports.

Summative Elements of the Evaluation

- Establish baseline data on key actions to measure performance
- Assess the achievement of the programme aims and objectives
- Assess the impact of the programme
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of the programme
- Capture the main learning from the programme
- Identify opportunities and make recommendations on sustainability
- Make other recommendations that arise from the work of the programme
- Produce a final evaluation report and summary report.

1.3 Research Methodology

The evaluation had both formative and summative elements. The evaluators attended and reported into the Advisory Group meetings and produced bi-annual interim reports commenting on the progress of the work programme.

The research activities carried out over the lifetime of HYS included:

- Review of national and international literature
- Attendance and input to Advisory Group meetings
- Consultations with Advisory Group members – one to one, telephone, e-mail and focus groups
- Consultations with external stakeholders, e.g. statutory agencies, government departments, community and voluntary organisations
- Consultations with the HYS programme team, Combat Poverty management team and chairperson
- Review of HYS research and resource materials.
- Tracking of projects and development of case studies.

- Development of a model of participation at different levels.
- Benchmarking of practice within Combat Poverty
- Gathering participant feedback from conferences, pre budget events, policy skills workshops and the leadership training course
- Gathering feedback on HYS publications and web based materials.

1.4 Road Map to the Report

This introduction is followed by a chapter outlining the main findings of the evaluation and pointers for the way forward. Chapter 3 explores the literature on participation and Irish participatory policy structures. Chapter 4 outlines the programme's structure. Chapters 5 through 9 examine its core activities. Chapter 10 sets out a model of good practice for participation. Chapter 11 summarises feedback from internal stakeholders. Chapter 12 provides the views of external stakeholders.

Over the course of the programme, formative evaluations were carried out. This involved gathering and reporting on participant feedback, the views of key stakeholders including the Advisory Board, tracking the progress of projects, and documenting changes in Combat Poverty practice. Interim reports were produced at four junctures in which the results of each exercise were reported on in detail. Each report was discussed with the Programme Team and shaped the development of Programme. The appendices at the end of this report summarise the key findings from each of these formative exercises.

Appendix A provides a list of Advisory Group members. Appendix B gives participant feedback on HYS conferences. Appendix C provides feedback on the Pre-Budget Events. Appendix D provides feedback from users of Combat Poverty publications including HYS resource materials. Appendix E provides feedback and learning from participants on HYS training initiatives. Appendix F documents the benchmarking of practice within Combat Poverty and the changes in this that occurred over the lifetime of HYS. Appendix G tracks the progress and learning about participation from the projects funded under HYS.

Finally, Appendix H provides feedback from different stakeholder groups consulted during the evaluation process.

Chapter 2

Key Findings & Way Forward

2.1 Introduction

Based on the research findings this chapter draws conclusions and highlights the main learning from HYS. The HYS Programme was a significant undertaking on a number of fronts including attitudes to, understanding of and belief in participation. The concept of participation is both complex and nebulous and there is considerable diversity in terms of the expectations and passion that it can evoke. There are those who believe in participation, see it as a right and have high expectations of its value. For others the concept is vague, perceived as difficult to implement and they need to be convinced of its usefulness.

2.2 Achievement of Programme Objectives

The Programme had four objectives:

- Objective One - To promote awareness and knowledge amongst anti-poverty groups, public officials and elected representatives of the right of people in poverty and their representatives to be actively involved in policy decision-making processes
- Objective Two - To initiate and support work that enables people experiencing poverty, their representatives or organisations that support them to engage in the policy system
- Objective Three - To work with policy-makers to support effective participation of excluded groups in policy-making
- Objective Four - To strengthen the integration of anti-poverty practice by community and voluntary organisations into the policy advice role of Combat Poverty.

The overall achievements in relation to each of these objectives were as follows:

Objective One: There was significant investment of time and resources in promoting awareness and knowledge of the right of people in poverty and their representatives to be involved in the policy decision-making process. There is greater awareness amongst stakeholders as a result of HYS and with knowledge, attitudes and then behaviour begins to change. This can be a slow process and there may be a lag in time before the full impact is manifested.

Objective Two: Much of the work of HYS centred on capacity building to support engagement in the policy system. The learning from HYS indicates that it is possible to engage with individuals experiencing poverty, however this does not always seem practical and a change of mindset is necessary. It is imperative to ensure that representation of people experiencing poverty is fair and inclusive. To this end, HYS invested in capacity building with community groups and voluntary organisations to have a clearer understanding of the policy-making system and to maximise their representation of their constituents.

Objective Three: This proved to be the most challenging of the four objectives set for the programme. Inroads were made in working with the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Family Support Agency and Comhairle/Citizen's Information Board. The main achievements in relation to objective three were raised awareness of participation, identification of avenues to address training needs in the statutory sector and government departments and foundations laid for future work post programme. It is likely that there will be a time lag before the full impact of work under this objective will be evident.

Objective Four: HYS built on the work completed under the Practice to Policy Initiative, which drew the learning from the local level to inform policy development. HYS highlighted that there is a need for a mechanism to collate local learning from the ongoing work of the huge range of community

groups, projects and actions and to collate this into concise and practical lessons to inform policy development.

2.3 Impact & Learning

2.3.1 Engagement with Stakeholders

Through its various actions and events, HYS reached a large audience, most notably the community and voluntary sector. The Advisory Group structure facilitated engagement with a wide range of stakeholders – academic, community and voluntary, statutory, government departments – both north and south.

Penetration of the intended target audiences varied. For example, attendance by special interest groups at events was good, while attendance by Partnerships, CDPs and FRCs was more variable.

HYS engaged with the statutory sector and government departments at a national level through the Advisory Group and certain specific actions. A number of local authorities did take part in the conferences, as did representatives of key departments and agencies that HYS targeted. There was successful engagement with the Family Support Agency, Comhairle/Citizen's Information Board and the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs and these represent important champions for future work.

2.3.2 Attitudinal Change

There was significant divergence in attitudes to participation from the outset of the programme. This divergence ranged from very positive and with high expectations to more resistant and doubting attitudes. It was evident very early on that a body of work was necessary to bring about more positive attitudes to participation. Changing attitudes requires time, strategic thinking and innovative approaches. The primary learning for any future programme on participation activity is to focus on a few specific policies, structures (national or local) and projects/activities and demonstrate participation in

practice. The rationale is to show how participation can be positive and effective.

2.3.3 Innovation

HYS has been innovative in its use of a published three-year work plan, the Advisory Group structure, and the use of drama and new techniques for participation in programme activities (e.g. OPERA, Open Space Technology, etc). HYS worked at being innovative and showed that there is scope for further innovation. For example, there is scope to reach wider audiences and shift mindsets by piloting different media including e-participation.

2.3.4 Use of Evaluation

There was a firm commitment to evaluation on the part of the programme team. This showed in their engagement with the process and flexibility in responding to feedback and pointers arising over discussion of each of the interim reports. The programme team did not wait until the end of the programme but learnt as they went along, fine-tuning the programme in as much as was possible in response to feedback.

2.3.5 Outcomes

The main outcomes of HYS to date have been awareness raising around participation; meeting a need for information (especially practical 'how to') and discussion events; challenging and stimulating debate; role modelling of participation in action (e.g. Advisory Group members involvement in programme activities, the participative nature of events).

Feedback from participants attending events was positive and there has been strong demand for HYS resource materials.

2.3.6 Programme Design & Management

The learning from HYS shows that the Advisory Group structure is useful and worth considering for future programmes. Involvement of the Advisory Group as a formal structure is important from the very beginning, i.e. at the pre design phase. This early involvement maximises a more focused use of the

wisdom and experience of the group in the pre design and design phases. Ideally, smaller numbers (e.g. maximum of twelve) are more effective and such a structure is best constituted as a working group. Full attendance should be encouraged to ensure continuity and consistency.

Attempts to model participation in the Advisory Group struggled due to differing expectations and definitions of what participation involves. Some members felt intimidated by the format, others questioned its relevance to them and yet others felt under-utilised. Joint work was carried out with individual members, e.g. on publications, but there was less sense of the Advisory Group working as a whole to guide and advise HYS. Having a set published programme of work, while in theory good practice, may have contributed to a sense that the bulk of the programme was a fait accompli with relatively little room for on-going input and critique. Structures of this nature need careful management if they are to be successful, both for the programme and for the majority of members. The Advisory Group could have been used to 'reality check' the plan at regular intervals. This would have facilitated clarification around expectations and needs in order to avoid confusion or disappointment later.

HYS was a large programme with a corresponding small staff allocation. There was 1.5 staff assigned to it at any one time, although it did draw on the expertise available with the wider Combat Poverty staff team from time to time. The learning for future programmes is to ensure that there are strong and seamless links with the organisational strategy and integration and planning across actions and resources. The ideal is to take a strategic approach from the outset and to ensure that the programme aims and objectives fit within the overall framework of core activity. For complex concepts like participation it is imperative that Combat Poverty completes a proportion of the research internally as it is only by doing this that there is a 'corporate sense' of the full extent of the issues.

2.3.7 Participation

The learning from HYS shows that participation is a challenging concept. It evokes different meanings and expectations amongst different individuals and groups. There is no one common accepted definition of participation. Views on and attitudes to participation tend to be polarised and this presents significant challenges in terms of implementing a programme such as HYS. It is necessary to invest time in strategic thinking around the concept of participation and reality checking the perceived need and worth of participation in practice. HYS showed that there is a huge appetite for practical 'how to' support in certain quarters. In other quarters, there was doubt and resistance. The learning is that it is important to keep focused, to move strategically and to demonstrate practical and innovative examples of successful participation in action.

There was scope for HYS to link more firmly with and build on the successes of other participative programmes within Combat Poverty, e.g. health and local government. Combat Poverty can use what worked well in HYS to inform how it works into the future. For example, there is scope to use road-shows to promote concepts and to test the water, to bring programme messages to a wider audience, to find out what the new issues are, to provide a face for Combat Poverty in the community and build its profile beyond Dublin.

2.5 The Way Forward

The HYS programme made considerable head way over a relatively short space of time with relatively small resources. The evaluation points to a way forward that will ensure that the learning is built upon and that participation becomes an over arching theme for future strategies within Combat Poverty but also informs other related work outside the organisation, e.g. Active Citizenship, integration, etc. The following are the key steps post HYS:

- Embed the concept of participation into Combat Poverty's strategy
- Keep the concept of and commitment to participation overarching in all aspects of the work of Combat Poverty

- Combat Poverty needs to fine tune, test and then implement the Code of Practice and to role model participation itself. For example, the organisation, nature and format of future conferences and seminars must reflect the learning about participation over the HYS programme period. This includes looking at innovative ways to draw in new groups and communities
- Ensure the learning from HYS is not lost for future programme management in general but also specifics about participation could usefully feed into developments in other related policy areas, e.g. in relation to Active Citizenship and integration policy
- Continue to work with the statutory sector, taking it step by step with practical, innovative examples and build relationships with ‘champions’ for participation as an effective approach to policy and decision-making
- Demonstrate participation in practice and disseminate the results
- Challenge mindsets and think ‘outside the box’ in future ways of working, e.g. e-participation, new mediums, use of media.
- HYS points to a number of needs that Combat Poverty is well placed to satisfy. The appetite for and impact of the resource materials shows that there is ongoing need for good quality material to inform and/or enhance training and development programmes. The foundations were laid during HYS for development of materials and supports for the statutory sector and this is worth pursuing, albeit in a focused and innovative way. Again, the learning is to maintain the emphasis on the practical aspects of participation – ‘the how to’ and to develop an evidence base to demonstrate participation in practice. There are also opportunities to collate the learning and evidence from local projects to inform policy decision-making in a cohesive and concise manner.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the national and international context in which the Having Your Say programme developed. It looks at the concept of active citizenship and policy development regarding the inclusion of the voice of those experiencing poverty or those who are excluded from society, the political context in Ireland and defines participation.

3.2 Active Citizenship

Chanan (1997)¹ took a very broad perspective on what constitutes active citizenship and identified a range of ways in which people can be active citizens. These included taking an 'active role in public affairs' or 'making a productive contribution to society' through formal democratic structures, the press, public debate, associations, political parties, trade unions, local clubs and societies, informal networks and mutual support between neighbours, friends and family. He also highlighted the important role that the community sector plays in promoting and facilitating participation, representation and activism.

Farrell (2005)² explored the concept of active citizenship and stated that in simple terms it is about 'taking part'. He contended that 'citizenship can be more than putting a cross in elections every few years, that individuals are capable of creating a better society through a direct and positive contribution to their communities'. He championed a community development approach to active citizenship and argued that such an approach needs to be funded while retaining independence. He highlighted the values that underpin the participation of people experiencing poverty, including dignity and respect, means, networking and shared agenda setting. He stressed that participation

¹ Chanan, G., 1997, 'Active Citizenship and Community Involvement: Getting to the Roots', European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions: Dublin.

² Farrell, F., 2005, 'Active Citizenship and the Policy Voices of People Experience Poverty', paper presented at the Having A Say Conference, Combat Poverty Agency: Dublin.

must start from solidarity and that it requires clear mechanisms, joint responsibility and mutual commitment.

The report³ on the proceedings of an international conference held in Dublin in 2000 on models of including excluded people identified the following reasons why people affected by poverty or social exclusion should be included in policy processes:

- It is a right
- Systems have failed with over 60 million people in Europe in poverty
- Not all politicians are in touch with how people experience poverty. Representative democracy is not sufficient – a more participatory approach that results in real change is required
- Involvement in policy-making allows people to feel part of humanity
- It will ensure that policies will be in tune with what is needed to combat poverty and exclusion.

A report at the same conference from the Dutch delegate highlighted a number of conclusions derived from a national seminar held in the Netherlands on 'Strategies to Combat Poverty and to Prevent Exclusion: The Involvement of Excluded People and Their Organisations' (June 2000) on the impact of organised involvement. These were:

- It keeps poverty and exclusion on the agendas of policy makers and civil servants
- It produces new approaches, measures and more tailor-made solutions
- It produces co-operation between different groups and between local, regional and national levels.

2000, 'Practice to Policy – Models for Involving Excluded People. Learning from Five EU Member State', Report on the proceedings of a one-day international seminar compiled by Bassett, M., Costello, L., European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions: Dublin.

Research carried out by Boucneau et al (1989-1992)⁴ for the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, which focused on areas of disadvantage in seven Member States, including Ireland, identified what prompted people to become active in some way at local level. This included:

- Motivation
- Opportunity
- Sense of commonality of the problem.

Factors identified that impeded active involvement included:

- Isolation
- Lack of connection to neighbours (the importance of connectedness has come up in a number of studies on citizenship and quality of life)⁵
- Lack of commitment to the area/locality.

Magowan (2000)⁶ also identified other barriers to involvement which included physical barriers (e.g. access to buildings), cultural or institutional barriers (e.g. means of communication, language used), motivational barriers (e.g. apathy), technical barriers (e.g. availability of knowledge, information or time) and economic barriers (e.g. travel costs, childcare).

3.3 International Context

Both within the EU and the UN there has been growing concern about the decline of active citizenship and a desire to address the issue of how to

Boucneau, P, et al⁴, 1989, 'Coping with Economic and Social Change at Neighbourhood Level', European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions: Dublin.

⁵ See for example, Michalski, J., 2001, 'Asking Citizens What Matters for Quality of Life in Canada', Canadian Policy Research Networks: Ottawa.

⁶ Magowan, J., 2000, 'Framework for Guidelines', in 'Practice to Policy – Models of Involving Excluded People', Combat Poverty: Dublin.

maximise citizen participation. Driving factors identified by Chanan⁷ (1997) include the growing polarisation of societies with widening gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged citizens; lack of solidarity between advantaged and disadvantaged groups in society; within the EU, the need to obtain widespread democratic support for European policy and legislation, and the role that greater self-help and community action can play in the context of limited State resources to provide all the services needed for a modern society.

The EU and individual Member States are showing increasing interest in engaging with communities and civil society organisations in programmes aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion. At the first European Social Policy Forum held in 1996, President Jacques Santer spoke of ‘mobilisation’, ‘common purpose’, ‘dialogue’, ‘grassroots involvement’ and ‘a more active participatory society’. There has also been recognition at EU level of the need for capacity building (both at individual organisation level and of networks) of community groups as a mechanism towards local participation in decision-making.

A recent publication, ‘Including the Excluded’⁸, provides a study of how community development can contribute to tackling social exclusion. It draws on the outcomes of a project funded by the Social Inclusion Programme of the EU and analyses the experiences of local communities, identifies and explains the key principles that need to underpin programmes and projects that use a community-based approach to tackling social exclusion and provides a summary of key action points that need to be considered by organisations and agencies.

The significance of civil society is recognised within European policy making. In the EU, the provisional version of the treaty establishing a European

⁷ Chanan, G., 1997, ‘Active Citizenship and Community Involvement: Getting to the Roots European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions: Dublin.

⁸ Henderson, P, 2006, ‘Including the Excluded – From Practice to Policy’ in European Community Development, Policy Press.

constitution included a commitment to the principle of participatory democracy: 'The Institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society' (EU, 2004, p.60). Alongside its commitment to building civil society, the European Commission is increasingly aware of the challenges this poses:

'If civil society is to be fully engaged in the development of policies at European and national levels this can only be truly successful if it is built on the solid base of a vibrant civil society at local level. The problem of course is that where there is extensive poverty and social exclusion, deep seated inequality or discrimination then civil society is likely to be weakened.' (Frazer, 2005⁹)

The OECD¹⁰ identified the development of social capital as an important component of modern society with benefits in terms of improved health and happiness, better education, a lower risk of criminal activity and higher civic participation. Social capital is affected, amongst other things, by government policies on education, environment, transport, family, crime, equality, health, voluntary sector and local government; national and local governance decision-making systems; the development of ICTs as both an isolating factor and a mechanism to bring people together.

A review of initiatives relevant to the Having Your Say Programme at European level carried out by Harvey (2005)¹¹ for the Combat Poverty Agency found that since 2001 four conferences supported by the European Commission have been held bringing together people living in poverty. The Open Method of Co-ordination within the EU and the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion require Member States to mobilise relevant actors and the EU Social Exclusion Programme provides scope to address participation.

⁹ Frazer, H., 2005. 'Setting the Scene Europe Wide: the Challenge of Poverty and Social Exclusion', Community Development Journal.

¹⁰ OECD, 2001, 'The Well-being of Nations. The Role of Human and Social Capital', OECD: Paris.

¹¹ Harvey, B., 2005, 'Scoping Paper for Combat Poverty Agency on Participation Initiatives in Europe', Combat Poverty Agency: Dublin.

However, while there has been a growing recognition by the governance system of the importance of wider participation and inclusion, there are few practical initiatives in place to address issues of participation or to include the voice of those in poverty or socially excluded groups in decision-making at local, national or European levels. Lack of clarity around what exactly constitutes participation is a contributory factor. The U.K. is one of only a few examples where programmes have been devised to support participation. Its Get Heard initiative was established to obtain the input of those living in poverty or on low incomes to the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2006. It uses group workshops and a toolkit has been developed to assist the participation process¹². The toolkit was itself developed through a consultation process with people experiencing poverty and the voluntary and community sector and is underpinned by a rights-based approach. The key line of questioning employed in the workshops focuses on what is working, what is not working and what could be done differently.

3.4 Role of the Community Sector

Chanan (1997) has argued that the community sector is of universal importance in ensuring active citizenship and participation and that it is relied on by public policy in unseen and unrecognised ways to enable society to function. The community sector is relied on by international bodies such as the UN, as well as European and national governments, to deliver projects and programmes.

The Irish Social Partnership process is a key mechanism by which the community sector builds relationships with policy makers at both local and national level. The Irish NAPSincl¹³ and the White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity¹⁴, both recognise the important role that the community sector and community development play in empowering disadvantaged individuals and engaging with individuals in their own development. The

¹² Social Policy Task Force and Department of Work and Pensions, 2004, 'Get Heard. National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2006: Participation Toolkit', Oxfam: London.

¹³ Government of Ireland, National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion, Government Publications Office: Dublin.

¹⁴ Government of Ireland, 2000, 'White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity', Government Publications Office: Dublin

Report of the Democracy Commission (2005)¹⁵ included recommendations on supporting and strengthening organisations of marginalised groups, developing stronger networks between them and developing stronger relationships between them and elected representatives.

Lee (2005)¹⁶ has suggested that while the community sector in Ireland has been important and it has had some influence, it is not powerful. Factors that can reduce the influence and power of the community sector include the small size of typical groups; lack of co-operation and co-ordination between groups; issues of representation and accountability between community groups and local people and between community groups and the 'formal' sector (e.g. local authorities, statutory agencies); lack of clarity over what constitutes participation and how it can be achieved.

Armstrong et al (1997)¹⁷ have argued that while the community sector can add value to public services and to local democracy, it has been in the shadows for so long that '...its emergence as an important factor in society is not readily grasped. Policy makers and general public alike need to understand more about how such groups work, their value and limitations, and how they could play a key role in meeting public and policy aspirations for a more participatory society'. They also highlighted the importance of structures within community organisations in terms of how representatives are selected, how they communicate with and are held accountable to the wider population, in terms of legitimacy and impact. However, Harvey (2005)¹⁸ concluded that working with the community sector alone is insufficient. Simultaneous work is also necessary with government to ensure that an empowered community sector is listened to.

¹⁵ Harris, C. et al, 2005, 'The Report of the Democracy Commission: Engaging Citizens: The Case for Democratic Renewal in Ireland', New Island Pres: Dublin.

¹⁶ Lee, A., 2005, 'Community Development and Working for Change', paper presented at the Having A Say Conference, Combat Poverty Agency: Dublin.

¹⁷ Armstrong, J., Chanan, G., 1997, 'Community Involvement in Urban Regeneration: Added Value and Changing Values', European Commission: Brussels, Community Foundation: London.

¹⁸ Harvey, B., 2005, 'Scoping Paper for Combat Poverty Agency on Participation Initiatives in Europe', Combat Poverty Agency: Dublin.

Chanan (1999)¹⁹ emphasised the importance of strategies to extend both what he termed 'horizontal' and 'vertical' participation. The former is extended by spreading the 'culture of active citizenship' in a locality through raising people's expectations and understanding of the kinds of activity open to them and providing support to enable participation to take place. Vertical participation recognises that there are different levels at which an individual can participate. These range from being a member or user of community or voluntary services, to taking a developmental role in a community/voluntary organisation, to helping groups to co-operate with each other and to form networks, to representing a network or forum. Any capacity building or development strategy must take into account these different levels.

Central to the conclusions of 'Including the Excluded' is the importance of strategically deciding to operate at several different levels when working to include the excluded through community development. A multilevel strategy provides the overarching principle behind the community development approach recommended.

3.5 E-Participation

eParticipation is part of e-democracy and refers to the use of information technology for wider participation in public sector decision making. The European eParticipation programme is one example of innovation in this regard. Its aim is to 'harness the benefits of ICT to improve legislation and decision-making processes' and is designed to encourage more participation in government. eParticipation is a new venture and time will tell as to how it develops in Ireland. There has been development in terms of Government services going on-line but some sociologists question whether this makes any difference to decision making – 'is it creating a citizen centric democracy or a consumer-centric democracy?'²⁰

¹⁹ Chanan, G., 1999, 'Local Community Involvement. A Handbook for Good Practice', European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions: Dublin.

²⁰ Honor Fagan of NUI Maynooth quoted in Irish Times - Innovation March 2008. Article by Haydn Shaughnessy.

There are examples of participation in other countries, e.g. the New Zealand government recently asked the public to review an act through a Wiki (i.e. on line document that anyone can contribute to). Perhaps Ireland's most significant participation innovation to date has been the e-consultation on the Broadcasting Bill initiated by the Oireachtas during 2007. Although analysis of the contributions show that the majority of the 500 comments left on the consultative website came from a core group of 50 people from the middle class. The process raised some interesting questions about participation and the capacity and appropriateness to extend it to every bill. Realistically this might not be possible and may not be where the future of democracy lies given that we are accustomed to a representative form of government.

As one commentator put it:

'Perhaps e-participation can work just as well if it creates new channels for government accountability and US agencies are beginning to travel along that route. It may not be participation as we thought we knew it but perhaps it's the kind of innovation we will end up wanting should anyone think to ask'²¹.

3.6 Participation Structures in Ireland

There has been significant growth in the number of structures at both national and local level that afford opportunities for participation in relation to social inclusion, reflecting the partnership approach within policy development in Ireland. These structures include at national level the Social Inclusion Forum, which is linked to the National Anti-Poverty Strategy on Social Exclusion (NAPSincl); the Community & Voluntary Pillar of the national partnership process and social partnership structures such as the National Economic and Social Council and the National Economic and Social Forum.

At local level participative structures include County/City Development Boards, Drugs Task Forces, Violence Against Women Task Forces, County

²¹ Haydn Shaughnessy, The Irish Times - Innovation, March 2008.

Childcare Committees, local area based partnerships, Local Traveller Accommodation Committees, Strategic Policy Committees at local authority level and regeneration programmes such CLAR and RAPID.

Support is also provided by government for National Anti-Poverty Networks and programmes that support social inclusion, e.g. the Community Development Programme, Local Development Social Inclusion Programme.

The development of each NAPSincl includes invitations to make written submissions, consultation exercises and hosting of the annual Social Inclusion Forum. The White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity 2000 recognises the role played by the community and voluntary sector and ‘.. engagement by individuals in their own development, in that of their communities and of the wider society..’

The report of the Task Force on Active Citizenship (March 2007) presents Ten Guiding Principles for Active Citizenship. The first advocates that ‘Active Citizenship concerns everyone’ and the third that ‘Active Citizenship is based on the values of inclusion, equality and solidarity with those who are disadvantaged’. The Task Force made a series of recommendations including the setting up of an Active Citizenship Office to lead these recommendations. Recognising the significance and cross-Government nature of Active Citizenship, the Office should report to the Taoiseach to ensure continued prioritisation of the agenda (page 24).

3.7 Defining Participation

The international literature tends to view participation as part of a continuum from information provision right through to joint decision-making²². Some of the key words used to define it include ‘process’, ‘input’, ‘recognition’ and ‘influence’. Combat Poverty has defined participation as follows:

²² See for example Arnstein, A., 1969, ‘A Ladder of Citizen Participation’, *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35:4, July 1969. OECD, 2001, ‘Citizens as Partners: Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy Making’, OECD: Paris.

‘Participation recognises the contribution made by all the stakeholders in the decision-making process equally and it provides individuals and groups with the ability to influence the process and to have their views incorporated in the final outcomes’.²³

The White Paper on Voluntary Activity²⁴ defined participation as follows:

‘Participation can be defined as an exchange between citizens and government, between those who make policy and people affected by policy choices. Participation should lead to more successful outcomes. Its precise form is shaped by the problem at hand.’

The White Paper goes on to emphasise the importance of maintaining a balance between the democratic base of an elected government and the benefits derived from participation in terms of achieving a wide consensus.

Research carried out for HYS by Carmel Corrigan²⁵ on participation identified a number of challenges for both community groups and policy decision-makers. These included:

- The lack of a precise definition and understanding of participation
- The level at which it occurs (mainly consultation exercises)
- Tangible outcomes in terms of policy development and implementation (if these do not emerge then the whole process can lead to disillusionment)
- Difficulties in showing cause and effect.

The rationale²⁶ for participation includes:

²³ ‘Better Policies, Better Outcomes: Promoting Mainstreaming Social Inclusion’, Combat Poverty Agency, OSI, NESF, EARN Europe, ENSP, OFMDFM NI, Seguranca Social, Directorate for Health and Social Affairs Norway, Dublin 2006.

²⁴ Government of Ireland, 2000, ‘White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector’, Stationery Office: Dublin.

²⁵ Corrigan, C., 2008, ‘The Participation of Excluded Groups and their Representatives in Public Policy Structures and Decision-making’, Combat Poverty Agency: Dublin.

- Greater transparency, accountability, openness and clarity in government and the public sector
- Better informed and more rigorous decision-making
- Enhancement of policy-making and development of more balanced policy
- Development of more effective solutions to social and economic issues
- Development of a sense of belonging for citizens and greater levels of interpersonal trust.

As part of the HYS evaluation, projects supported under it identified key features of participation. These included the following:

- Being informed
- Being involved
- Attending and taking part
- Effecting change.
- Partnership
- Agenda setting
- Joint working
- Equalising power
- Being given access to relevant forums
- Having a route into decision-making
- Doing together.

Projects also spoke of participation as part of a continuum. For example, from access through to outcomes, from information provision through to consultation, from consultation to agenda setting and joint problem solving.

²⁶ See for example Department of An Taoiseach, 2006, 'Reaching Out: Guidelines on Consultation for Public Sector Bodies', Department of An Taoiseach: Dublin, National Economic & Social Forum, 2006, 'Evidence-Based Policy-Making', NESF: Dublin. Taskforce on Active Citizenship, 2007, 'Report of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship', Taskforce on Active Citizenship: Dublin.

However, many distinguished between ineffective and effective partnership. For the latter to occur, certain conditions must prevail. These included:

- People in poverty or their representative organisations having the information, knowledge, skills and energy (i.e. capacity) to participate
- Decision-makers being willing to engage in real partnership working
- All sides having the space and respect needed to articulate their viewpoints and engage in two-way dialogue in a challenging but constructive manner
- All sides being involved in agenda setting and agreeing what changes are required
- All sides working together to implement, manage and monitor change
- Having the willingness and formal mechanisms in place to achieve a shift in power.

3.8 Conclusion

The literature sets out a clear rationale for participation and highlights the challenges in implementing effective participation in policy decision-making. Different definitions and understandings of what it is about, from the perspective of both policy-makers and those trying to influence policy. While acknowledging the importance of the community and voluntary sector, commentators also highlight the challenges faced by the sector in terms of harnessing their power and influence on policy decision-making, particularly at national level.

Chapter 4

Programme Structure

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the HYS programme objectives, the rationale for HYS, its structure, management and expenditure.

4.2 Objectives

The overall aim of HYS was to strengthen the voices and practices of people and communities living in poverty in the development and implementation of anti-poverty policies and programmes.

The HYS programme had four objectives:

- To promote awareness and knowledge amongst anti-poverty groups, public officials and elected representatives of the right of people in poverty and their representatives to be actively involved in policy decision-making processes
- To initiate and support work that enables people experiencing poverty, their representatives or organisations that support them to engage in the policy system
- To work with policy-makers to support effective participation of excluded groups in policy-making
- To strengthen the integration of anti-poverty practice by community and voluntary organisations into the policy advice role of Combat Poverty.

4.3 Rationale

Combat Poverty's 2005-2007 strategic plan was guided by six principles, three of which covered partnership, participation and empowerment. The partnership principle called for proactive building of strong partnerships with

all levels – government, social partners, those experiencing and those working on poverty issues. The participation and empowerment principles were inter-linked and called for the involvement and empowerment of individuals and communities affected by poverty in order to effectively tackle poverty. The HYS programme also supports Combat Poverty's statutory function in relation to community development as a means of overcoming poverty.

Combat Poverty has a long-standing commitment to supporting initiatives to strengthen the voices of those experiencing poverty and organisations that support them. This is based on the premise that policies intended to tackle poverty are more likely to work if the people and communities they are designed for are involved in their planning and implementation.

Combat Poverty initiatives have included the predecessor to HYS, the Practice to Policy Initiative, which supported projects to demonstrate approaches that support people experiencing poverty to participate in NAPS policy work. Recent Combat Poverty initiatives have included the Building Healthy Communities programme, which supports community development approaches to addressing health issues, publication of resource materials such as Influencing Policy and hosting related training events and supporting the development and co-ordination of regional policy networking for anti-poverty groups in the Border region under PEACE II.

While there are many structures at both national and local level that provide opportunities for participation and many consultation exercises with regard to social inclusion issues, little has been done at national level to support and build the capacity of people experiencing poverty to participate in these structures in a meaningful way.

4.4 Design

Work on developing HYS commenced in March 2005. The programme team undertook a series of semi-structured consultations with a range of organisations around the country by means of a road show including

community groups, statutory agencies and government departments. Over 60 people took part in these consultation exercises and these appear to have generated considerable interest, excitement and expectation for the HYS programme. The programme team also consulted with relevant Combat Poverty staff teams. Key issues that emerged from the consultation process were lack of knowledge amongst community organisations of the policy-making system and the need for supports to understand, influence and participate in the policy-making process.

Previous work by Combat Poverty that fed into the design of HYS included the National Anti-Poverty Networks programme, the Practice to Policy Initiative, the Building Healthy Communities programme, the train the trainers programme on Influencing Policy (2004), the EU transnational project led by Combat Poverty that produced Guidelines for Effective Involvement (2000), the 2004 conference report Influencing Change in Border Counties, a report from the EU Peace & Reconciliation programme Good Practice in Community-based Peace Building (2005).

During the consultation process, the phrase 'having your say' was used frequently and thus was adopted as the programme name. A design house was commissioned to develop a logo, which depicts two jigsaw pieces putting people and institutions together. A number of Advisory Group members commented on the programme's name and logo to the evaluators indicating that the name was too nebulous and that neither it nor the logo accurately reflected the concept of participation and this was a serious design flaw. The programme staff also commented that in hindsight the name may have caused confusion as it implied direct activism with people in poverty rather than the more indirect approach used in the programme.

4.5 Action Plan

HYS was the first Combat Poverty programme to develop a three-year published action plan. A draft version of this plan was used to guide some of the consultation exercises alluded to above and for discussions held with the HYS Advisory Group. The draft three-year plan was formally presented to

the Advisory Group on October 25th 2005 and to the Combat Poverty Board for agreement and ratification on October 27th 2005.

Key actions within the plan included:

- Hosting an annual conference to examine participation issues.
- Hosting of an event to enhance the tax and social welfare policy capacity of anti-poverty organisations
- Publication and dissemination of resource materials.
- Commissioning of new research
- Provision of training to both the community and statutory sectors.
- Provision of policy support initiatives
- Development of a peer learning network
- Piloting of policy exchanges between civil servants and community and voluntary workers
- Developing and implementing a model Code of Practice on policy dialogue and participation for Combat Poverty
- Using the Combat Poverty web site as an interactive tool on policy development
- Establishing and supporting an Advisory Group for HYS
- Evaluating the HYS programme.

One key action was identified as a flagship for each of the four objectives. These included the conferences (objective 1 to promote awareness), a policy learning network (objective 2, supporting organisations to engage in the policy system), piloting policy exchanges between the community and public service sectors (objective 3, working with policy-makers) and developing a model code of practice (objective 4, strengthening the integration of community practice into Combat Poverty's advisory role). As the programme was rolled out, some of these key actions were delivered on (e.g. conferences, code of practice), others evolved into new actions (e.g. the learning network), while others did not happen (e.g. policy exchanges). Overall, the majority of

activities in the original plan were delivered and some are being finalised in 2008.

4.6 Advisory Group

The HYS programme called for the establishment of an Advisory Group to guide and support the work of the programme. Traditionally, Combat Poverty programmes have working group structures, which include Board members and external stakeholders with responsibility for advising on developing programmes.

The HYS Advisory Group was chaired by a member of the Combat Poverty Board and included the programme staff team, but the majority of its members were from external organisations. There were some changes to the composition of the Advisory Group over the life-time of the HYS programme. In general, it included representatives of the community and voluntary sector (initially national organisations, but subsequently local community groups were also brought in such as local FRCs and CDPs), statutory agencies and government departments (Pobal, Family Support Agency, Comhairle/Citizens Information Board and the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs, Office for Social Inclusion, DSFA {involvement in early meetings but subsequently disengaged from the Advisory Group}). Appendix A lists the membership of the Advisory Group over the programme's life-span.

The Advisory Group met two to three times a year to discuss the programme's work plan and to discuss participation issues. Members of the Group also fed into the evaluation process by taking part in one-to-one consultations and focus group exercises.

Individual members of the Advisory Group took part in joint initiatives with HYS. For example, joint publications (e.g. NICVA, Comhairle/Citizens Information Board), review of research reports and publications (e.g. OPEN, Pobal) and involvement in research steering groups (e.g. FSA, DCRAGA, ATD Fourth World). In addition, some members attended HYS events such as the conferences and pre-budget events.

Feedback from members of the Advisory Group on it as a structure indicate the following positive aspects:

- Members felt that everyone was treated as equals
- Members appreciated that the programme team made great efforts to ensure that new members were brought up to speed and to provide support to existing members when requested
- Members felt that they had opportunities to express their viewpoints and that these were listened to and taken on board
- Members from the community and voluntary sector said that the Advisory Group gave them opportunities to meet and network with other organisations and personnel that they would not otherwise have come in contact with, e.g. academics, leaders of national representative bodies, personnel in statutory agencies and government departments.

Learning from the Advisory Group as a structure included:

- Some members felt that the work plan was presented as a fait accompli and suggested that earlier involvement by all members in programme design is the ideal
- While members were included in HYS activities, either as participants at events or as co-publishers, reviewers of resource materials or members of research steering committees, some felt frustrated that better use had not been made of their knowledge and experience to shape the programme
- Members felt that better use could have been made of community examples of participation to show case good practice at major events such as the conference
- Attendance at Advisory Group meetings varied considerably with time commitment an issue for some members. More thought should have gone in to the use of technology (e.g. video

conferencing) or more creative ways to get member input (e.g. getting input from the people they represented by video/DVD).

4.7 Programme Management

The programme was located within the Projects Section of Combat Poverty's structure. It was conceived as a supporting action to the Agency's 2005-2007 Strategic Plan. It had 1.5 staff dedicated to it at any one point in time. The programme team produced a detailed work plan and reported on progress to the Advisory Group as well as to internal Combat Poverty management structures.

4.8 Expenditure

Table 4.1 gives a breakdown of actual expenditure for the period up to March 2008. Research and evaluation accounted for nearly 40% of expenditure and resource materials accounted for a further 26%. The remaining expenditure was split between grants (15%), events including conferences (12%), training (7%) and servicing the Advisory Group (1%). Annual expenditure amounted to €204,531 in 2005, €243,535 in 2006 and €231,912 in 2007.

Table 4.1: HYS Expenditure Breakdown Euro

Research	182,789
Resource Materials	177,110
Grants	103,296
Conferences and events	80,041
Evaluation	77,415
Training	44,713
Advisory Group	7,623
Sundries	6,991
Total	679,978

Some follow-up HYS activities will be finalised in 2008 and planned expenditure amounts to around €84k and includes:

- Work with EAPN to support the participation of people in poverty in annual EU Roundtable
- Exploration of the feasibility of FETAC accreditation for Economics and Poverty Manual
- Hosting of three community and voluntary workshops (Dublin and 2 regional) on influencing the Budget
- Finalising a policy discussion document on community development education
- Publishing online the 2008 Directory of Community Development Courses
- Piloting and evaluating poverty and community development training with the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs
- Promoting to the public service the Finding Your Way Around the Community & Voluntary Sector publication
- Finalising the policy paper on participation
- Finalising research on hard to reach groups
- Supporting Integrating Ireland's promotional work on Integrating Policy into Work Planning
- Maintaining involvement with CAN/FSA community development training initiative
- Commissioning three new 'how to' online titles on influencing policy.
- Finalising the Code of Practice
- Supporting INOU and NWCI to promote the Understanding Economics and Poverty manual.

4.9 Conclusion

HYS was a supporting action within the 2005-2007 Strategic Plan and contributed towards Combat Poverty's statutory remit to support community development as a means of addressing poverty. Its design built on previous work of Combat Poverty and input from a broad range of stakeholders. It had

a strong structure in terms of a published three-year work plan, formal Advisory Group and use of formative evaluation. It was adequately resourced financially but presented some challenges from a human resource perspective given the volume of work undertaken.

Chapter 5 Conferences

5.1 Introduction

Conferences were an important tool used by the HYS programme to raise awareness about participation and issues relevant to it. Three national annual conferences were held. This chapter examines the penetration of these events and feedback obtained from participants.

5.2 Description

Three annual conferences were held. The topics of each were:

- 2005: Strengthening the Policy Voices and Practices of People in Poverty
- 2006: Community Voices: Poverty and Policy
- 2007: Participation in Policy: Making it Work.

Each conference followed the format of an opening address, a speaker and workshops on a range of topics related to the conference title. Conferences were used to introduce and disseminate HYS resource materials and research. Each conference was well attended, with the majority of participants coming from community and voluntary organisations.

Table 5.1: Conference Attendance²⁷

	2005	2006	2007
Total Number of Participants	157	243	190
Number of Organisations Represented	107	166	121
Breakdown of Organisations:			

²⁷ Includes Combat Poverty staff and Board members and the evaluators

• Partnerships	5	17	8
• Community Development	3	13	8
• Projects	1	19	11
• Family Resource Centres	69	71	53
• Other C&V Organisations			
•	7	15	9
• Local Authorities	13	15	12
• Other Statutory Bodies	2	3	1
• Elected Representatives			
•	5	4	6
• Third Level Institutes	2	6	7
• Consultants	0	3	6
• Other			

5.3 Feedback

Each conference sought feedback from participants as part of the evaluation process. Appendix B provides detailed evaluation reports on each conference.

Feedback from the 2005 conference indicated that the most useful aspects of the conference were the workshops, particularly those with a 'how to' focus and those which facilitated discussion and participation, and the opportunity to network with and learn from others. Delegates felt that, in the main, the conference was a good beginning to promoting the concept of participation. However, a number expressed disappointment that people directly experiencing poverty were not involved and there were few policy-makers in attendance.

Feedback from the 2006 conference suggested that the most useful aspects were yet again the workshops, the opportunity to discuss and debate issues, resource materials provided at the conference and the talk by the U.K. speaker on the British experience. Delegates indicated that they would have

liked more time to delve more deeply into issues discussed in the workshops. They also felt that the conference needed to go beyond 'preaching to the converted'. The evaluator attended four of the afternoon workshops and the numbers attending each appeared to have some bearing on the level of discussion and debate taking place. The better attended workshops were more animated, participative and discursive.

The message from the 2007 conference was simple: the practical 'how to' emphasis of the conference was valued. The workshops and sessions with innovative approaches and inclusive techniques received positive commentary. Participants had very little time for those sessions that did not honour the principles of effective participation by allowing time and space for feedback, debate and discussion. There was a sense that it would have been wise and in the spirit of 'participation' for the Minister to have remained for discussion.

The 'dear Santa' exercise (see Appendix B for more detail) proved worthwhile in that it generated important, honest and above all practical input on the part of those who wrote their letters. The feedback reinforces the recurring message of HYS, i.e. the need to define what participation is, to clarify the purpose, the why, the practicalities and the actual steps in the process. The results bring a 'reality check' to the whole area of participation. They highlight the questions that still need to be answered (i.e. what and why) and the work that is still outstanding in terms of gaining the commitment of all stakeholders (particularly the statutory sector), developing guidelines and standards and a model of good practice if participation is to move forward in any significant way.

Feedback from consultants used by HYS who took part in conferences was that HYS needed to think more strategically about the purpose of each of its conferences rather than repeating the same formula. Key questions include - who are the audience, what theme will each cover, what is the conference to achieve, what is the best format?

5.4 Outcomes & Learning

Nearly 600 people attended the three conferences. Community based organisations accounted for the majority of organisations represented at the conferences – 72% in 2005 and 2006 and 66% in 2007. Within this sector specific organisations targeted by HYS were the Partnerships, CDPs and FRCs. The 2006 conference, in particular, was successful in attracting these organisations with Partnerships representing 10% of attending organisations, FRCs 8% and CDPs 11%.

Statutory organisations accounted for between 17% and 18% of organisations represented at the conferences. Local authorities were well represented as were statutory bodies and departments that HYS worked with such as OSI, Pobal, FSA and DCRAGA. Elected representatives were not well represented at the conferences.

The timing of the conferences (late autumn) may have been a factor influencing attendance by some sectors as this is a very busy time of the year for many organisations. Some participants commented on the lack of attendance by people experiencing poverty and pointed out that the locations (Croke Park and Dublin Castle) might be off-putting. Where people experiencing poverty did attend, the sense was that their experience was not as positive as it could have been. More thought could have gone into how they were welcomed and included to ensure that the experience proved comfortable, worthwhile and memorable.

5.5 Conclusion

A recurring theme from the feedback of conference participants was the value placed on practical 'how to' workshops, new innovative and creative methods of engaging with others, opportunities to network, discuss and learn from others. As a core activity, the conferences reached a large audience and had a firm impact on the community and voluntary sector. The learning is to widen the appeal of such events and to draw in other sectors.

Chapter 6

Pre-Budget Events

6.1 Introduction

As part of its capacity building strategy, HYS initiated an annual Pre-Budget Event to which organisations dealing with poverty were invited to hear and discuss with speakers issues relevant to the Budget and the budgetary process.

6.2 Description

The event took the form of speakers and question and answer sessions. Speakers included policy analysts from community and voluntary organisations, civil servants from key departments such as Finance, academics, independent researchers and social partners such as IBEC and ICTU.

The first Pre-Budget Event was held in September 2006. A key learning from the event was that it took place too close to the Budget and participants suggested that a seminar earlier in the budgetary cycle would be more useful. This was taken on board in the design and delivery of the second event, which took place early in July 2007. The event also used publications produced by the HYS programme to support workshops.

These events were intended to be small, intimate affairs but demand grew by word of mouth from 2006 to 2007.

Table 5.2: Pre-Budget Attendance²⁸

2006	2007
25	37

²⁸ Excludes speakers, Combat Poverty staff and evaluators.

6.3 Feedback

As part of the evaluation process, participants were invited to provide feedback. Appendix C provides detailed evaluation reports on each Pre-Budget event.

Feedback from the first event was very positive. Participants found the speakers and discussion interesting and informative but would have liked more time to discuss the issues raised. Expectations were very specific and centred around gaining practical information and understanding of the Budget process. As a result, the experience of other organisations who were trying to influence the Budget was highly valued.

Following the feedback from the first event, the 2007 event was held earlier in the year and used a mix of speakers and discussion workshops. Feedback was also very positive for similar reasons to those of 2006 – quality speakers, informative, good discussion and networking opportunities. Participants indicated that they had a better understanding of the budgetary process as a result of the event. However, despite the change in format to accommodate more discussion time, participants still felt that there was insufficient time to discuss issues in depth.

6.4 Outcomes & Learning

Sixty-two people from 53 organisations attended the two Pre-Budget Events (excluding Combat Poverty staff, speakers and evaluators). The first event attracted representatives from a wide range of groups including those supporting Travellers, people with disabilities, people who are homeless, immigrants and the unemployed as well as networks such as a women's network, rural network and poverty network.

The second event was targeted at specific groups such as the CDPs, FRCs, Partnerships, groups supported under BHC and LAPS²⁹ and special interest groups such as people who are homeless, people with disabilities, etc. Attendance by special interest groups was again good. There was also good attendance from BHC supported groups and CDPs. The attendance by FRCs was low and none by Partnerships. Attendance was adversely affected by time, availability of potential participants, limited staff resources in some organisations, location and timing of the events.

HYS learnt that the timing of these types of events is very important. The first event was held too late in the budgetary cycle to enable participants to apply the learning in a meaningful way. As a result the second event was held much earlier in the budgetary cycle and one of the speakers went through the Budget cycle in detail, information that was much valued by participants. The work will continue in 2008 with two regional events planned for early summer.

The subject matter is very technical and the HYS programme achieved the correct balance in terms of content and speakers who can impart technical information in an understandable and informative manner. However, there appears to be considerable demand for more opportunities to have open discussion forums on particular aspects of the budgetary process. More thought also needs to go in to the promotion of these events to particular target audiences, e.g. FRCs.

6.5 Conclusion

The Pre-Budget Events provided a valuable opportunity for those wanting to influence budgetary policy to engage with policy-makers in an open, constructive and informative manner. The HYS programme team took the feedback from participants on board in the design of subsequent events and this contributed to high levels of satisfaction and growing attendance figures.

²⁹ Both of these are Combat Poverty programmes. BHC is Building Healthy Communities. LAPS is the Local Anti-Poverty Strategy element of Combat Poverty's local government programme.

Chapter 7

Publications & Web

7.1 Introduction

A high proportion of the HYS budget went on the production of publications. These included commissioned research and 'how to' guides and other resource materials. The HYS programme used the Combat Poverty web site to publish some of its resource materials on line. This chapter looks at the feedback and learning from the use of these materials.

7.2 Description

HYS had two major strands to its publications: commissioned research and resource materials. The former was used to address information gaps. The latter to meet demands identified as the programme progressed.

Commissioned research included:

- Having Your Say: Scoping Paper on European and Related Initiatives, 2005, by Brian Harvey
- Community Development and Public Policy, by Siobhan Lynam
- Community Development and Health, by Siobhan Lynam
- Community Development: Current Issues and Challenges, 2006, by Anna Lee
- Communities, Voices and Change: A Report on the Policy Work of CDPs, FRCs and Partnerships, 2006, by Siobhan Airey
- The Role of Community Development in Tackling Poverty in Ireland – A Literature Review, 2006, by Brian Motherway
- Assessing Student Learning Opportunities in Community Development in Ireland, 2006, by Pauline Conroy, Helen O'Leary and Marjorie Mayo. There were two versions produced – a summary version and the full report

- Community Development in Further Education in Ireland, 2006, by Dr. Pauline Conroy and Helen O'Leary
- Incorporating the Expertise of Anti-Poverty Community and Voluntary Organisations into the Policy Advisory Role of Combat Poverty. A Model Code of Practice, 2006, by Berney McMahon and Marie Quiery
- Gap Analysis – An Overview of Current Policy Activity within Community Development Programmes, 2006 by Siobhan Airey.
- The Combat Poverty Agency. In Service Education/Training in the Civil/Public Service. Poverty, Social Inclusion and Community Development, 2007, by Des Delaney
- The Participation of Excluded Groups and their Representatives in Public Policy Structures and Decision-Making, 2008, by Carmel Corrigan.

In addition, Ralaheen was commissioned towards the end of 2007 to carry out research into 'hard to reach' groups. This research examines who these groups are, who is supporting them to have their voices heard in decisions that affect them, what strategies and approaches are being used, what competencies are required, and what the barriers to participation are for them.

Discussion papers produced by the HYS programme team included:

- Examining the feasibility of a policy learning network – a developmental response to the policy learning needs of anti-poverty groups, 2006
- Strengthening awareness, understanding and capacity of the civil service on poverty, social inclusion and community development, 2007.

The HYS programme team is currently working on the development of a Combat Poverty Policy Statement on Participation.

Resource materials included:

- Understanding Economics & Poverty
- Finding Your Way Around the Budget
- Finding Your Way Around Local Government
- Finding Your Way Around the Community & Voluntary Sector
- Finding Your Way Around Poverty, Welfare and Family Policy
- Integrating Policy into Work Planning
- Community Development and Public Policy
- Working for Change: A Guide for Influencing Policy
- Working for Change (Part 2) Booklet
- Influencing Policy Training Pack
- Managing Better Series 10 which was published in three languages
- Directory of Community Development Courses 2006. Updated in 2007 and a 2008 version is currently in development.

A series of web only resource materials were also produced. These were:

- How to build relations with policy-makers
- How to do policy analysis
- How to identify your policy audience
- How to write a policy submission
- How to work with Joint Oireachtas Committees (JOC).

The presentations and papers given at the three HYS conferences were also made available on the web site.

In order to support national networking organisations to promote, disseminate and provide training around the HYS publication Understanding Economics & Poverty, two organisations were funded towards the end of 2007 by HYS to achieve this aim. These were the INOU and NWCI. These organisations plan to hold a number of dissemination and training events for their members in 2008. HYS also plans to work with the INOU and NWCI on getting FETAC

accreditation for the training pack associated with Understanding Economics & Poverty. In addition, Integrating Ireland were supported to promote Integrating Policy into Work Planning amongst French and Russian speaking communities in Ireland. This is the first occasion that Combat Poverty has produced a publication in foreign languages (French and Russian).

In its production of its submission to the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs on the future of the Community Development Programme, Combat Poverty drew on the work of the HYS programme to inform its arguments. It proposed the use of five principles in the design of the next CDP: empowerment, working collectively, participation and social justice and equality. It also proposed the development of national standards for community engagement.

7.3 Feedback

Feedback from users of HYS materials was generally positive. The most popular item was 'Finding Your Way Around Local Government'. Material was used for general information, training, research and reference. There is a high level of confidence in the materials produced by Combat Poverty because of their clarity, user friendliness, design, presentation, practical focus and price. The majority of respondents had already recommended HYS publications to others.

Based on their experience of having worked with HYS on the production of research or resource materials, consultants suggested that materials need to be proofed in the field to ensure they are usable by the intended audience and revised accordingly. They felt that more consideration needs to be given to the design and layout of published and web based resource materials in order to ensure prominence of key messages, reports are accessible and easy to navigate. Both time and budgets need to be adequate to enable proper proofing and design to happen. Careful consideration must be given to the intended purpose and audience for tools and guides. If, for example, community workers are just using them to inform themselves, then a journal

might be a better way to achieve this. The use of steering groups for major pieces of work would facilitate efficient review and feedback. Finally, they were strongly of the view that the Code of Practice needs follow-on activity in order for it to be implemented, e.g. training, Board induction.

Feedback in relation to the web site from both internal and external stakeholders included:

- The web site is a reliable source of information
- The quality of web-based material was generally considered to be good
- However, many stakeholders commented on the need to ensure that there was no e-exclusion and that materials are available in hard copy as well as being web based.

7.4 Outcomes & Learning

HYS publications were made available through the web site and also in hard copy. In addition, some of the documents were launched and disseminated at HYS events. Data on downloads from the web site are only available for the last quarter of 2007. Over 3,400 documents were disseminated and there has been considerable demand for the resource materials, particularly the ‘Finding Your Way Around’ series and the Influencing Policy Training Pack. Around 38% of disseminated copies were purchased, the rest were disseminated free of charge. Most of the demand so far has been for hard copies of reports and resource materials rather than web site downloads. Table 7.1 gives a breakdown of the number of publications disseminated up to the end of 2007.

Table 7.1: HYS Publications & Downloads³⁰

	2006-2007 Hard Copies ³¹	Q4 2007 Downloads	Total

³⁰ Excludes free dissemination at HYS events.

Finding Your Way Around Local Government	521	3	254
Finding Your Way Around Poverty, Welfare & Family Policy	280	1	281
Finding Your Way Around the Budget	367	1	368
Finding Your Way Around the Community & Voluntary Sector	380	2	382
Influencing Policy Training Pack	214	1	215
Integrating Policy into Work Planning. Managing Better Series 10 (English language version)	302	5	307
Working for Change Guide	432	9	441
Working for Change Booklet	31	9	40
Community Development & Public Policy	112	3	115
Assessing Student Opportunities (summary)	36	1	37
Assessing Student Opportunities (full report)	67	2	69
Community Development Current Issues & Challenges	333	9	342
Communities, Voices and Change	87	2	89
Role of Community Development Literature Review	119	1	120
Total	3,281	49	3,330

An analysis of web site hits for the period July to December 2007 inclusive reveals that the HYS index was viewed 523 times and HYS was used as a key word search 28 times or 14% of new site visits. The top downloads were the Directory of Community Development Courses (107 downloads), Community Development: Current Issues & Challenges (86 downloads) and HYS conference papers (34 downloads).

³¹ Includes complementary copies, e.g. those distributed at conferences, as well as purchased copies.

While feedback on publications and resource materials has generally been very positive, there is some important learning for the future. For example, while some people like to access materials via the web, others want to have a hard copy, so both methods of distribution are important. Material produced for the web needs to be as carefully designed as hard copy to account for colour problems in printing, ease of reading on screen, etc. While resource materials were praised for their practical focus and use of easy language, there was some feedback that greater use could have been made of other visual aids such as symbols, photos, pictures, etc.

The Code of Practice developed for Combat Poverty on integrating the work of the community and voluntary sector into its policy advice role was still being refined at the time of this report. It requires further work to turn it into a practical working document that staff value and use.

7.5 Conclusion

The resource materials were a success. There has been considerable demand for the HYS publications, particularly those with a practical 'how to' focus. This mirrors the value placed on this aspect of other HYS activities such as conference workshops and the Pre-Budget Events and promotion of resource materials at these events. Research papers also addressed information gaps. The programme has been strong in supplying information to the community and voluntary sector but considerably more work is required to understand and address the needs of the statutory sector with regard to participation in policy decision-making.

Chapter 8

Training & Learning Initiatives

8.1 Introduction

Training courses was one of the tools used by HYS to build capacity to work with and influence the policy system. Up to the end of 2007, all training was targeted at the community sector. HYS is currently designing a training programme for the statutory sector for piloting with the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs during 2008.

8.2 Description

8.2.1 Community Sector

There were three Policy Skills workshops for the community sector. A total of 38 people participated in the training. The topics covered were:

- Minority Communities (Castleblaney)
- Health (Sligo)
- Local government funded projects (Galway).

A session was also conducted by the trainers with one of the BHC project meetings.

A leadership training course was provided by Caroline McCamley in Dublin for leaders/facilitators of three network groups – EAPN, IRL and OPEN. Two training sessions were provided in April and May 2007. Fifteen people attended the first session and twelve attended the second.

Appendix D provides detailed feedback and commentary on these training events.

In addition to direct provision of training, HYS also sought to have social policy modules included within other organisation's training programmes. For

example, CAN agreed to use HYS materials in the policy module within its community development leadership training course. This course is supported by the Family Support Agency for roll-out to FRCs. This was a strategic decision by HYS to work with existing national learning initiatives. CAN also use HYS resource materials to deliver a training programme for Pobal that is accredited by NUI Maynooth.

8.2.2 Statutory Sector

Research commissioned by HYS carried out by Des Delaney in 2007 showed that there was relatively little formal training taking place within the civil/public service on social inclusion, community development and poverty. However, there was interest in these topics and HYS set about obtaining approval for the piloting of a training course for civil/public servants. The programme team met with the Office of Social Inclusion early in 2008 and with the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs. The Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs agreed to be the first to initiate this type of training. Work is underway to develop a training programme.

8.2.3 Policy Learning Network

Objective two of HYS aimed to support people and groups experiencing poverty to engage with the public policy system in Ireland. Over the course of HYS there was some teasing out of how to achieve this objective with work still in progress at the end of the programme.

This process began with consultation with a range of community/voluntary anti-poverty groups prior to HYS. The results of this showed that policy 'know how' was weak and that many groups felt that they needed more supports to engage with the policy system. The mechanism first mooted to achieve this was the development of a 'policy learning network' with the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, the Family Support Programme and the Community Development Programme as the target audience.

Following a series of round table discussions it was agreed to commission a piece of research to determine the nature and extent of policy work that was undertaken or being undertaken by a sample of the three programmes. This research was undertaken by Siobhan Airey (2006) and the report 'Communities, Voices and Change: A report on the policy work of the CDPs, FRCs and Partnerships' was published and the findings presented and discussed at the 2006 HYS conference. The report made a series of recommendations to the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Family Support Agency, Pobal and Combat Poverty.

Following the publication of the report, Combat Poverty convened a series of bi-lateral meetings with each of these organisations in order to tease out possible next steps. From this process it emerged that it would be more productive to build on existing national learning initiatives and incorporate HYS material into them rather than setting up a separate policy learning initiative. At the time of this evaluation CAN agreed to use HYS materials in the policy module within its community development leadership training course which is being supported by the Family Support Agency for roll-out to FRCs.

8.3 Feedback

The evaluators attended two policy skills workshops (Castleblaney and Sligo). The feedback from participants in Castleblaney included the need for more time to go through the material, to obtain information, to provide input and to have discussion. There was also the need for a more carefully planned set of learning modules and a much more practical focus on 'how to' influence policy development.

Feedback from Sligo indicated that respondents considered what they had learned as very useful in terms of its potential to help them influence the policy making process in their day-to-day work. The workshop helped them to realise that much of their day-to-day work is policy work. It also provided them with clarity on how to make a difference and to keep bearing in mind the big picture.

Feedback from participants at the policy skills workshops gathered by the trainers³² found that the most beneficial aspect of the training was the practical skills training, especially the 5 Step Model used. Participants valued the training pack provided to support learning and the opportunity to network with others. Features of the workshops that did not work well included the sector/theme based approach, with the exception of health. Reasons for this included the diverse nature of participants, low attendance and groups struggling to see the relevance of policy work to their everyday work. The health workshop worked well because it used a two-day format with a discussion session preceding the training. It had a uniform audience and was well attended.

Participants on the leaders training reported benefits in accordance with their individual needs and situations. All have taken the elements that are useful to them in their work. These include greater understanding of the policy influencing system and processes, greater motivation to 'get stuck in' and take action, more confidence that the system is penetrable and that with certain

³² Triskele Training & Development, 2006, 'Creating A Voice – Policy Skills Workshops'.

tools and tactics voluntary and community organisations can participate effectively. It is likely that over time there will be some spin off resulting from these benefits within each organisation.

8.4 Outcomes & Learning

Thirty-eight attended the policy skills workshops and twelve attended the training for facilitators/leaders of network organisations.

Learning from the policy skills workshops shows there is a need for policy skills training and development. However, there needs to be better planning, design and development to ensure that any such training is effective in meeting specific learning objectives. Selection of future participants and accommodating their learning needs is also important as is building in practical, 'real life' examples of policy submissions and tracking their path (positively and negatively) through the system. More active involvement of the statutory sector in the design and delivery of any future training would also serve to bring to life the practical side of the learning.

Learning from the leaders training shows that while there is greater awareness and some skill enhancement reported at an individual level there is a sense that the opportunity to strengthen the collective power of the network organisations that took part in the training may have been missed. There is little tangible evidence (as yet) of any impact on the policy influencing skills and capacity of the network organisations.

The results raise some questions about the power of the networks and their role in supporting and drawing together their organisations to maximise their collective power. More thought, time and precision could have been devoted to the planning and design of the training, clearer articulation of purpose and to the selection of participants to attend to ensure that expressed needs of the network organisations could be met. A thorough briefing of participants prior to any future similar type training would also be worthwhile.

8.5 Conclusion

Feedback on training events was positive and participants valued the experience. It will take some time before the full impact of the training and learning initiatives becomes evident in terms of practical application of the learning on policy influencing. This reflects a generally accepted time lag in the assimilation and application of learning. There was also useful learning about design and implementation of training initiatives particularly around expectations, objectives, targeting, selection of participants and involving key stakeholders.

Chapter 9

Policy Related Activity

9.1 Introduction

The original plan for HYS called for funding of organisations/projects to support them in role modelling participation in policy decision-making. Some of this work was carried out in 2005 but amendments to the HYS budget meant that planned support for the period 2006 to 2008 did not go ahead. HYS also intended to carry out work with 'hard to reach' groups. This work only commenced towards the end of 2007 and is currently on-going.

9.2 Description

9.2.1 PPI

Prior to the development of HYS, a programme called the Practice to Policy Initiative was operated in 2004 whereby organisations were funded to support participation in the NAPSincl consultation process. For administrative purposes, the HYS team took over this initiative and brought it to a conclusion in 2005. In the first year of HYS there was also an open call for funding for projects that engaged with people or vulnerable groups living in poverty to support them in three policy areas:

- Identification of anti-poverty priorities for the national agreement that was due to commence discussions in the autumn of 2005
- National and local policy-making and implementation structures relating to NAPS
- NAPSincl, which was coming up for review in 2005.

Ten projects were supported as follows:

- Ballymun Jobs Centre: facilitating members of the Acorn Support Group (mental health disability) to explore their experience in

relation to employment, training, education and health services and formulating a submission to NAPincl and the National Agreement

- Community Platform: co-ordinating and prioritising the key objectives of the members of Community Platform through a series of regional and national seminars to ensure inclusion of a clear anti-poverty focus in the National Agreement
- Disability Legal Resource: working with disability groups to assess the main obstacles that prevent people with disabilities accessing education, health and employment and feeding the results into NAPincl and the National Agreement
- European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN): carrying out focus groups and regional seminars to reflect the views of a cross section of people experiencing poverty and feeding the results into the Social Inclusion Forum and NAPincl
- Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed (INOUE): conducting focus groups and seminars to explore barriers to employment in areas of high unemployment and developing policies and strategies to tackle existing barriers and channelling the findings into the National Agreement
- OPEN (project 1): holding a series of regional seminars designed to increase the capacity of lone parents to engage in the Social Inclusion Forum and NAPincl
- OPEN (project 2): lobbying for a commitment to a universal bank account in the National Agreement as a means to achieving greater financial inclusion of vulnerable groups
- National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCII): building the capacity of NWCII affiliates to promote change through developing a training programme, a series of regional seminars and a number of capacity building tools and channelling the learning into NAPincl and the National Agreement
- National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI): developing a number of consultative groups to engage with young people from disadvantaged communities to address poverty related issues and

channelling the findings into the development of NYCI positions in preparation for the National Agreement

- Wicklow Trade Union Centre for the Unemployed: documenting the experience of poverty and coping mechanisms of those with no social welfare payments and influencing policy in relation to access to payments and channelling the findings into the NESF, Community & Voluntary Pillar and ICTU.

As part of the evaluation process for HYS, eight of these projects and eight PPI projects were tracked over a two-year period to examine progress and learning of relevance to HYS. Section 9.3 summarises the key learning arising from this tracking exercise. Appendix G presents some cameo cases from the projects.

9.2.2 Hard to Reach

One of the HYS aims was to engage with 'hard to reach' groups such as the homeless, drug users, ethnic minorities, etc. To this end, towards the end of 2007 it set up a Hard to Reach Advisory Group to progress work in this area. Two members of the HYS Advisory Group, Pat Bennett of the FSA and Stuart Williams of ATD Fourth World, are represented on this group. The group has met twice and is overseeing the research commissioned by HYS to examine hard to reach groups.

9.3 Outcomes & Learning from HYS/PPI Projects

Learning from all of the funded projects is presented below.

9.3.1 Engaging with People in Poverty

The projects supported were quite diverse and there was a broad range of learning from their experience of trying to influence practice or policy. Box 9.1 sets out the key learning that emerged from encouraging people experiencing poverty to participate.

Box 9.1: Key Learning – Engaging with People in Poverty

- Devising strategies to reach people experiencing poverty and to encourage them to participate. For example by using local networks and word of mouth, by working collaboratively with other organisations in an area, by getting people who are already participating to outreach to others, by using creative methodologies such as art or drama to attract people
- Supporting people to participate. Challenges that they face can include social considerations, e.g. discomfort with being in a group situation, unwillingness to or fear of expressing their viewpoint, poor communication skills, language barriers, poor literacy and chaotic life circumstances as well as financial considerations, e.g. childcare, transport. Mechanisms need to be devised to help them overcome these challenges. These can include financial support, building flexibility into consultation or participative processes, providing reassurances about confidentiality, using competent facilitators who have empathy, working through translators, creating a safe space for people to express their views, using creative forms of expression other than the written word, having events near people's homes
- Creating understanding about the processes and structures in which people are supposed to have an input into. For example by using clear and simple language to explain structures, briefing participants on what to expect from a process, setting ground rules and realistic objectives, explaining that change takes persistence, energy and time, providing relevant and timely training.

9.3.2 Engaging with Decision Makers

While the primary context was the NAPIncl and Social Partnership processes, many of the projects supported under the initiative also engaged with local structures such as local authorities or local social welfare offices. Learning from the range of interactions is set out in Box 9.2.

Box 9.2: Key Learning – Engaging with Decision Makers

- Targeting decision-makers. Projects targeted civil servants that they already knew or had worked with to help them establish new links or to work directly with on a particular issue or to champion their cause. Successful projects put thought into how they could use a meeting or event to promote the recommendations arising from their work or using this work to influence named policy-makers. Where groups were outside the formal social partnership structures, alternative access routes to decision-makers had to be found. For example, by having direct contact with officials in relevant departments, by inviting key officials to seminars, by using other national representative organisations to advance issues for people experiencing poverty
- Developing clear messages. Projects found it was more effective to have a small number of key messages well articulated rather than large wish lists. Some projects reinforced their messages by having information seminars to which key officials were invited. Successful projects carefully targeted who they wanted to get their message across to
- Facilitating constructive interaction between decision-makers and people experiencing poverty. Some projects supported people experiencing poverty to engage directly with decision-makers, e.g. by attending the Social Inclusion Forum. Others facilitated local meetings. Yet others invited local politicians to attend training sessions to share their insights and experience with people experiencing poverty. Success factors included providing opportunities for decision-makers to listen to stories of real life situations and building the capacity of people experiencing poverty to attend events, to make connections between their own experience and the policy system, and to articulate their views in a constructive manner. Feedback from decision-makers to participants was also considered an important success factor if participants are to feel that their views are valued and they are listened to.

9.2.3 The Challenges

The challenges faced by each project varied but a number of common themes emerged. These are set out in Box 9.3.

Box 9.3: Main Challenges

- Reaching out to those most distant from the policy-making system. In some cases where people are not members of representative organisations or they are not connected to existing social services, innovative methods and resources are required to reach to them
- Insufficient transparency in the policy-making system. This makes it difficult to identify who best to interact with in order to effect change. 'Feedback from policy makers is considered important but rare. Building in effective feedback would greatly enhance the participation process and reduce any disillusionment for those concerned
- Unrealistic expectations of change in the policy system. Change takes time but people want to see immediate resolutions to factors impacting their lives, e.g. housing. Representative organisations and NGOs who promote the rights of people in poverty need to have greater realism in terms of what can be achieved in a given timeframe and to communicate this to people experiencing poverty
- Resourcing to support people to participate, to build capacity, to disseminate information is a major challenge for many small community and voluntary organisations. Organisations that address issues that are currently 'hot topics', e.g. immigrant issues, can become seriously overstretched trying to meet demands for consultation and input to policy.
- Meaningful participation. A major challenge is how to ensure that participation by people experiencing poverty is relevant and purposeful and goes beyond mere 'lip service'.

9.2.4 The Outcomes

Most of the projects engaged in dialogue with specific target groups (e.g. lone parents, migrant workers, unemployed people, homeless people, drug-users, immigrants, Travellers, etc.). The purpose was to feed the input of these target groups into the development of policy papers and submissions made to a range of national structures such as the Social Inclusion Forum, the NAPS and NAPincl consultations and the new Social Partnership agreement. Some projects targeted specific sections of local or national agencies or departments to effect change in either policy or practice, e.g., the Homeless Agency, the Work Permits Unit in the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment, or the housing and community and enterprise sections of certain local authorities.

Outputs included the production and dissemination of policy papers and submissions and resource materials, regional and national seminars that involved both people experiencing poverty and policy/decision-makers and media briefings.

Box 9.4 sets out the main outcomes achieved by the projects.

Box 9.4: Main Outcomes

- Collaborative working with other C&V organisations to draw out the specific and critical common issues, to develop proposals, to draft wording on key recommendations and to avoid duplication
- Dialogue and collaborative working with agencies or government departments at local and national level or with local authorities to access participants and to change policy or practice
- Continuity in engagement with people in poverty who took part in the PPI projects. For example, by inviting them to follow-on seminars, workshops, conferences, consultation focus groups and attendance at the Social Inclusion Forum

- The development of strategies to outreach to hard to reach groups in society and to facilitate and encourage their participation
- Capacity building within representative organisations (e.g. analysis, gathering evidence, making a case) and the integration of the findings from the PPI projects into the policy work of the organisations
- Better understanding of policy structures such as NAPS, NAPincl and the Social Inclusion Forum by both the organisations and the target groups involved in the PPI projects who engaged with these structures
- Development and delivery of training programmes and training resource materials
- There was evidence of a 'ripple effect' occurring. What were often quite small projects provided organisations with an effective 'hook' or evidence base to open doors and discuss findings with key decision-makers and influencers in a wide sphere of social partners and government agencies and departments.

9.3 Conclusion

The tracking of the funded projects proved a very useful exercise and provided valuable insight into the practicalities and challenges involved in engaging with the policy system in a participative way. There was evidence that after the funding had ended there was an on-going ripple effect occurring in the projects arising from the learning that they had gained and contacts made with decision-makers.

Chapter 10

Participation - A Model Of Good Practice

10.1 Introduction

The previous chapter shows the richness and diversity of the ten projects supported under the Practice to Policy Initiative and tracked during the HYS. Alongside this diversity, there are common elements of good practice drawn from these projects.

At the start of the evaluation process for HYS, Eustace Patterson developed a model of good practice participation based on the literature review. Tracking the PPI projects over a two-year period provided an opportunity to test and refine this model. This model presented in this chapter is a product of the HYS programme refined through the evaluation process. It is a useful tool to facilitate discussion and clarification of what good practice participation means in a practical sense and encourage realisation that participation is best viewed from a number of perspectives.

The following sections summarise the key components of good practice participation at three different levels:

- The level of the individual
- The level of the representative group or organisation and
- The level of the policy/decision-maker

The focus of the HYS programme was on participation in policy making not community participation. In this context it is worth revisiting the definition of participation used by Combat Poverty:

‘Participation recognises the contribution made by all the stakeholders in the decision-making process equally and it provides individuals and groups with the

ability to influence the process and to have their views incorporated in the final outcomes'.³³

The Model looks at participation in policy making from two perspectives. The first shows what is needed to participate successfully, e.g. capacity. The second shows the different actions that are involved in participation, e.g. engagement.

10.2 Level One - The Individual

At the individual level, a person needs to be motivated to participate and to both contribute their opinions and to listen and hear those of others. In order to do this they need a certain level of confidence, they need information, certain knowledge and skills, and they need to be able to give and receive constructive feedback.

Individuals can participate at a number of different levels. They can articulate their needs, they can network, they can seek to be represented, either on their own behalf or on behalf of others, they can mobilise opinion or activities, they can provide leadership, they can help and support others, they can develop their own skills by availing of supports or training.

³³ 'Better Policies, Better Outcomes: Promoting Mainstreaming Social Inclusion', Combat Poverty Agency, OSI, NESF, EARN Europe, ENSP, OFMDFM NI, Seguranca Social, Directorate for Health and Social Affairs Norway, Dublin 2006.

Box 10.1: A Model of Good Practice Participation

Level One - The Individual

Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being motivated• Having confidence• Having an interest in being heard• Having an interest in hearing the voice of others• Acquiring information• Developing knowledge and skills:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- interpersonal- organisational- negotiating- communication- being aware of the issues- understanding how the decision-making system works- understanding the language (jargon)- learning to work with others and to work together- understanding the local community 'infrastructure'• Seeking and providing constructive feedback
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Articulating needs• Networking• Seeking representation (on own behalf or on behalf of others)• Mobilising opinion and/or activities• Helping and supporting others• Upskilling by availing of training and/or supports• Understanding the viewpoint of others• Becoming a leader

10.3 Level Two - The Representative Group/Organisation

At an organisational level, there are a number of core elements of good practice participation. These include acknowledging the right of people in poverty to participate in decision-making and recognising that these rights bring responsibilities. Determination and resilience is necessary to engage with policy structures. There are also a set of competencies and resources necessary to engage with people experiencing poverty and the policy system. Organisations must develop and nurture a participatory culture within the group/organisation, i.e. the group/organisation itself models good practice in participatory decision-making.

Engagement involves working with people in poverty and interacting with the policy/decision-making system. It includes promoting the right of people to be involved in decisions that affect their lives and the importance and relevance of the local area as a key setting for the implementation of policy. Internal structures and processes may require strengthening to facilitate and model a participatory approach. People in poverty need to be facilitated and empowered to become involved and the views and issues they raise must be valued.

The issues raised by people must be underpinned by evidence and there should be a clear vision of changes in policy or practice required and proposing practical solutions. This vision needs to be communicated clearly, particularly when messages are aimed at different target audiences. The communication strategy can involve getting issues onto relevant agendas, proposing or setting agendas, briefing local, regional or national representatives, effective lobbying at local, regional or national levels and networking and collaboration with others to strengthen the case and develop critical mass.

Strategies can include negotiating for positive change at local, regional or national level and building positive working relationships with political representatives and decision-makers at local, regional or national levels. Constructive feedback must be sought and provided in order to learn from and build on the experience of engaging with people experiencing poverty or social exclusion and with decision/ policy-makers.

**Box 10.2: A Model of Good Practice Participation
Level Two - The Representative Group/Organisation**

Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging the right of people experiencing poverty or social exclusion to participate in decision-making and recognising that rights also confer responsibilities • Having the determination to engage with policy structures • Acquiring knowledge, skills and resources to engage with the policy-making system and with people experiencing poverty or social exclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - analytical capability - understanding local, regional and national governance structures and processes - understanding how policy is made - being aware of the current political and policy making environment, pressure points, timing and the inter-connectedness of policies - recognising and understanding power dynamics - strategic capability and planning - creativity in reaching and engaging with people in poverty - resources to support and maximise the participation of people in poverty • Developing a participatory culture • Understanding the viewpoint of others • Seeking and providing constructive feedback
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Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting the right of people experiencing poverty or social exclusion to be involved in decision-making • Negotiating the level of participation and terms of engagement • Strengthening internal structures and procedures to model participation • Facilitating and empowering people experiencing poverty or social exclusion to be involved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – outreach – effective mobilisation – minimising and explaining jargon – providing supports to overcome barriers to participation – establishing ground rules – developing accessible and user-friendly structures and procedures – ensuring minority viewpoints are heard – obtaining buy-in/ownership – setting clear outcomes for participation – establishing and renewing a mandate to represent people experiencing poverty or social exclusion • Valuing and taking into account the issues raised by people experiencing poverty or social exclusion • Recognising and promoting the importance of the local area as a key setting for the implementation of policy • Gathering evidence to underpin the issues raised by people in poverty • Developing a clear vision of changes in policy or practice required and proposing practical solutions • Having clarity in communication, particularly messages aimed at different target audiences • Getting issues onto relevant agendas
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Engagement continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing local, regional or national representatives • Effective lobbying at local, regional or national levels • Negotiating for positive change at local, regional or national level • Networking and collaborating with others to strengthen the case and develop critical mass. • Building positive working relationships with political representatives and decision-makers at local, regional or national levels • Seeking and providing constructive feedback • Learning from and building on previous experience of engaging with people experiencing poverty or social exclusion and with decision/ policy-makers.
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10.4 Level Three - The Policy/Decision-Makers

For participation to succeed policy-makers must recognise the usefulness of participation, be willing to engage in dialogue and value the right of people in poverty to participate. Capacity must include planning for participation and ideally should employ participatory approaches. It should support and facilitate staff to engage in a participatory manner. The level at which participation will take place should be clearly articulated and communicated to those taking part, e.g. is this about information provision or gathering, consultation, agenda setting, input to decision-making, joint working on solutions, etc? Feedback mechanisms should be devised and the process for feedback communicated to relevant stakeholders.

Strategies to support participation can include supporting people in poverty or representative bodies to engage with the policy/decision-making structure. There must be linkage, networking and collaboration with representative bodies to facilitate access to and contact with people experiencing poverty, to gather evidence, to agree agendas, agree priorities and to work on solutions. Co-ordination between representative bodies should be supported in order to build critical mass and avoid duplication. Working partnerships and negotiation are the essence of good practice participation in order to develop relevant and effective solutions. Finally, at whatever

level participation takes level, constructive two-way feedback loops must be in place. Good practice means that lessons learned from the participation process inform the construction of future participation mechanisms.

**Box 10.3: A Model of Good Practice Participation
Level Three - The Policy/Decision-Makers**

Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a willingness to engage in dialogue • Acknowledging and valuing the right of people experiencing poverty or social exclusion to participate in decision-making • Planning for participation • Developing bottom-up approaches • Supporting and facilitating staff to engage in a participatory manner • Communicating to participants the nature of participation for a particular event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - information sharing - consultation - agenda setting - input to decision making - joint working on solutions • Developing feedback mechanisms
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing necessary supports to overcome barriers to involvement by people experiencing poverty or social exclusion or organisations working with them • Developing linkages, networking and collaboration with representative groups to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - access individuals experiencing poverty/social exclusion - gather evidence - agree agendas

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - agree priorities - work jointly on solutions • Supporting and simulating greater co-ordination between representative organisations • Developing working partnerships to increase understanding in both directions and to develop appropriate solutions • Engaging in negotiation to effect positive change at local, regional or national level • Seeking and providing constructive feedback • Learning from and building on previous experience of engaging with people experiencing poverty or social exclusion and with decision/ policy-makers.
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10.5 Conclusion

The Model of Good Practice Participation highlights the importance of commitment to engage in participative approaches to policy decision-making and a value placed on this activity by the stakeholders involved. Participants need to be adequately resourced to effectively engage with participative approaches in terms of information, specific skills, understanding of how the policy system works, linking and working with others and learning from and building on experience.

Chapter 11

Internal Stakeholders

11.1 Introduction

The evaluators consulted with members of Combat Poverty staff during the evaluation process. This included interviews with section heads and the chairperson of Combat Poverty after HYS had been running for nine months, a final consultation exercise with the HYS team and with Combat Poverty Management Team in 2008. Members of the Advisory Group were consulted with face to face, by telephone, e-mail and in focus groups. A benchmarking exercise was carried out whereby all staff, management, Board members and Advisory Group members were invited to rate Combat Poverty against a number of good practice participation criteria. This benchmarking exercise was carried out in 2006 and again at the end of 2007. This chapter summarises the feedback from internal stakeholders and the main learning for HYS.

11.2 Feedback

11.2.1 Combat Poverty and Programme Managers

Feedback from internal consultations carried out in 2006 indicated that while awareness about HYS was high, understanding of the specific work programme by those not directly involved was quite low, despite the publication of a work plan and internal consultation process.

HYS was considered as an important plank to the overall strategic plan and had the potential for strong links to other programmes, notably health and local government. Many felt that these links were not being maximised. HYS was viewed as being somewhat peripheral to the core work of Combat Poverty and needed to be better integrated into the work of the organisation.

The Management Team within Combat Poverty agreed the HYS programme in 2005 but over the programme's lifetime there were changes in both the overall Combat Poverty Management Team and the section management responsible for HYS. As a result, some managers felt that they had not been consulted on HYS (even though

an internal consultation process had been conducted by the HYS team before the design of HYS) or been involved in decision-making regarding its design or development. However, the consultation process carried out with the community and statutory sector was noted and considered to be in tune with good practice.

All of those interviewed had a sense that the programme was making good progress, particularly with regard to the production of resource materials, awareness raising events, and work with the community sector, the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs and the Family Support Agency. However, they felt that work with the Office of Social Inclusion and other departments required further development. The Advisory Group structure was considered strategic and it provided links into other national networks and programmes such as CDPs, FRCs and the LDSIP.

Discussions and semi-structured interviews with the programme team and the Combat Poverty Management Team in 2008 indicated that HYS had positive features but there were also a number of challenges.

Positive features identified included the consultation process engaged in to ascertain the need for HYS followed by the design of HYS in response to these identified needs and the development of a set of aims, objectives and actions, clearly linked to identified needs. The use of formative evaluation helped to inform the development of the programme. The evaluators attended all of the Advisory Group meetings and engaged with its members and the programme team on a regular basis to inform programme development.

A number of pieces of research commissioned under HYS addressed major information gaps and provided an opportunity for analysis and reflection. For example, training provision on social inclusion and poverty issues in the statutory sector, the establishment of a baseline on the nature of policy engagement within the community and voluntary sector, the role of community development in addressing poverty, the issues and challenges faced in community development today.

The high level of demand for resource materials and events demonstrated that HYS was meeting a need and there was a demand for its outputs. As HYS evolved it

became obvious from participant feedback what the real needs were the 'how to' do policy work and finding you way around the policy system and HYS responded. However, there was scope for more innovation in the mechanisms used to reach target audiences. There was also scope to promote some of its material more specifically to the statutory sector (e.g. some of the 'Finding Your Way Around' series aimed at the community sector also has relevance to the statutory sector).

Challenges identified by internal stakeholders included some resistance from some quarters of the community and voluntary sector to the concept of HYS. This did colour the views of some, both internally and externally, about the need for the programme. Expectations of the programme were high from the outset in some quarters and in hindsight these should have been managed more carefully. There was a view that the programme did not communicate a firm message of the limitations of its reach into the local community sector.

There was also a view that there was resistance from some quarters of the statutory sector to the need for such a programme and to the value of participation (as opposed to consultation). The timeframe of the programme did not provide enough scope to tease out this resistance and to work to build alliances. In addition, key players invited to take part in the Advisory Group such as the Department of An Taoiseach and the Office of Social Inclusion were missing from the process. The research into training provision and needs within the statutory sector was conducted by an external researcher. In hindsight, it might have been more beneficial if the programme team had a direct involvement in this research to gain a more precise understanding of the system and as a means of 'opening doors' within the sector.

During the life of the programme there were changes in staff and the internal structure of Combat Poverty. Continuity is necessary for cross cutting programmes of this nature and therefore it is not surprising that there was some confusion at times and different levels of understanding/ commitment to HYS. While management and staff were consulted with, the programme team recognises that more extensive on-going internal consultation and 'sales' process would have enhanced commitment to HYS from the outset.

Links between HYS and the Combat Poverty Strategic Plan were underdeveloped in its first year as it was not located within a specific programme or strategic actions. The links were strengthened in its second year. However, there could have been more cross-fertilisation of ideas and sharing of events between HYS and other Combat Poverty participatory programmes and HYS could have used other programmes, e.g. BHC, to test out its tools.

HYS was an ambitious programme for a three-year timeframe (in reality it was implemented in just over two years by the time it actually got started). Overall, given the size of the programme, 1.5 staff was a relatively small resource particularly with the emphasis on the production of resource materials. As a result, there was over reliance on out-sourcing and at times it placed a considerable strain on other internal resources.

Changes in the membership of the Advisory Group resulted in some loss of continuity and time having to be devoted to bringing new members up to speed. The loss of a prominent Board member as the chair towards the end of HYS resulted in the unsatisfactory situation whereby the programme team was effectively chairing the Advisory Group meetings.

11.2.2 Advisory Group

Feedback on HYS from the Advisory Group varied across members. The programme was viewed as having raised awareness about participation as a principle but its practice, boundaries and context remain confused and some community and statutory organisations are still disconnected from the benefits of true participation.

It was acknowledged that HYS has prompted discussion in many structures over what exactly participation is. It has prompted people in the community sector think and reflect on how they can promote participation. There is a question over whether or not this filtered down to people experiencing poverty. HYS did not result in more use of participatory approaches, particularly by the statutory sector. There was a view that HYS should have worked on demonstrating the value of participation.

There is a sense that while policy makers may acknowledge the importance of participation they do not act upon it in practice. While they do engage in many consultation exercises and these are an important part of developing or changing policy, they are not the only means and should not be confused with real participation. Members felt that HYS, while successful in 'preaching to the converted', does not appear to have been successful in getting this message across or changing mind-sets in the policy-making system.

Some confusion was evident over the interpretation of the third HYS objective with some members of the view that HYS should have engaged directly with people experiencing poverty (although this was never the intention of the programme). Some members felt that the use of terminology about reaching people in poverty in the programme objectives was unwise as it implies that Combat Poverty has a role as an advocate or intermediary.

Advisory Group members were of the view that the quality of HYS resource materials has been good. There has been demand, primarily from the community and voluntary sector for HYS resource materials and events. The three-year life span of the HYS programme proved inadequate to make sufficient inroads into the statutory sector in terms of whetting appetites and promoting the relevance of these materials and events to this sector. There is still a body of work outstanding post HYS to harness the commitment of the statutory sector.

The draft internal Code of Practice has great potential and needs to go through a number of stages so that this potential is fully realised. It is currently being refined and prepared for implementation within Combat Poverty. Following an evaluation of implementation it is anticipated that the code will be promoted as a model of good practice to other statutory bodies.

Overall, those Advisory Group members that took part in the feedback exercises believe that HYS has been 'somewhat' successful in meeting its objectives.

11.2.3 Participant Feedback

At various stages in the formative evaluation process, participants at HYS events were invited to provide feedback. The majority of attendees at these events were from the community and voluntary sector. Feedback was, in general, positive with participants appreciating the opportunities provided to meet and network with others, to learn from each other and to explore the practicalities of participation.

11.2.4 Benchmark Exercise

Members of Combat Poverty's Board and staff participated in a benchmarking exercise. The evaluators drew up a set of criteria to assess participation practice and policy influencing capacity within Combat Poverty. Participants rated the extent to which Combat Poverty met these criteria at two junctures: February 2006 (baseline) and September 2007. Response rates were small (less than 20 in each case) but they do reveal useful information about Combat Poverty's way of working and a baseline for revisiting over time. Appendix F provides detailed results and analysis from the benchmarking exercises. The next section summarises the main learning.

11.3 Outcomes & Learning

The results of the benchmarking exercise validate recurring themes of the ongoing evaluation of HYS and showed progress and areas for further development.

The areas where there has been improvement tend to be those where Combat Poverty has traditionally been successful. For example, analytical capability, briefing national representatives on poverty issues and understanding power dynamics in national decision-making, etc. Respondents believe there has been an improvement in getting participation rights onto national agendas and briefing national representatives on participation rights. This probably reflects the success of HYS conferences and resource materials as well as the make-up of the Advisory Group.

The results also point to areas very relevant to participation where there has been little improvement evident as yet, since the beginning of HYS. For example, participatory planning processes within Combat Poverty; promoting the right of people in poverty to participate; engaging in dialogue with people in poverty;

engaging in dialogue with the statutory sector; Combat Poverty having a strategy to tap into the national policy-making system

The learning from the feedback of management and staff is that programmes of this type need to build on and link into other parts of Combat Poverty's strategic plan and work. HYS provides important learning to facilitate the development of Combat Poverty's corporate wisdom and capacity. Currently, the organisation's detailed knowledge about the practicalities of participation resides in a limited number of staff. Reflection and discussion internally will serve to disseminate this further.

The publication of a three-year plan granted transparency, a structure to the work, and a road map to measure performance against and adjust the programme accordingly.

HYS linked into Combat Poverty's statutory function to support community development without directly engaging in this activity, e.g. HYS provided a considerable body of resource and research material and networking and learning opportunities. Because HYS only provided a small number of grants in the first year, a more strategic approach to working with organisations had to be developed. For example, HYS worked with national organisations (e.g. OPEN and the FSA); it facilitated other organisations to promote and disseminate HYS material (e.g. NWCI); it included other organisations in the design and implementation of specific pieces of work (e.g. a sub-group of the Advisory Group was set up for the 2007 conference); and it used other organisations as sounding boards and to provide input (e.g. the Department of Finance for Budget events and resource materials).

The Advisory Group structure aimed to model participation. There was a core group of 6-8 members involved right throughout the programme and they were highly committed to and engaged with the process. Given its advisory role and the programme's focus on participation, it would have been wise to constitute the Advisory Group at a very early stage to develop the programme design. The composition of the Advisory Group changed over time (apart from the core group) and thus presented continuity and consistency challenges. The programme team were conscious of this and put in place mechanisms to address this.

The resistance that the programme encountered, both externally and internally, points to a need to dedicate more time and strategic thinking to explaining the programme and the need for it from the outset and across all stakeholders. At times the use of external consultants meant that issues and concepts were not thoroughly processed and remained somewhat disjointed from the programme. While time availability was always a major factor for a small programme team focussed on delivering a series of actions, the learning is that it is wise to invest thought and 'hands on' engagement by the programme team into addressing strategic issues.

11.4 Conclusion

HYS successfully engaged with a wide audience of community and voluntary groups through its various events and resource materials. It is too early to state the full impact of the programme. The learning is that successful engagement with the statutory sector is more likely when programmes work with smaller, more specific operations and environments. A possible avenue would be to build on Combat Poverty's work on other successful programmes (e.g. local government work and building healthy communities) where the foundations are already in place. The learning is that it is vital to find mechanisms to engage positively with the statutory sector by building relationships, listening and responding to articulated needs.

Chapter 12

External Stakeholders

12.1 Introduction

At a number of junctures, the evaluators consulted with external stakeholders including community organisations and key policy makers in departments and statutory agencies that HYS was working with. This chapter summarises their feedback.

12.2 Feedback

12.2.1 Statutory Sector

Consultations with external stakeholders in government departments and statutory agencies suggest that while the concept of participation is accepted there is a lack of clarity as to how to achieve effective participation in practice. For some, having consultation exercises sufficiently fulfils the participation need, for others national structures such as Social Partnership and the Social Inclusion Forum are considered satisfactory, yet others feel it needs to be more fundamentally about people and their lives and how to link this into effective participation structures.

12.2.2 Community Sector

Discussions between the evaluators and members of the community and voluntary sector during various HYS events indicates that they valued the programme and what it was trying to achieve. The programme granted the community and voluntary sector opportunities to meet with like-minded people, to network and learn from each other and to provide a space to discuss the issues involved in participation.

The resource materials have been appreciated and are considered to be relevant, useful, user friendly and of high quality.

Some of those interviewed had extremely high, possibly unrealistic, expectations of what the programme would achieve. Thus, there has been some disappointment with actual progress. Others believe that HYS has been very effective at raising awareness and promoting the debate around participation.

A small number queried the need for capacity building in the community and voluntary sector, arguing that participatory approaches are fundamental to the sector's way of working and the programme should have focussed more on convincing the statutory sector of the need for and benefits of using a participatory approach.

12.2.3 HYS Consultants

Consultants used by HYS to develop training programmes, resource materials or to carry out research provided their feedback on HYS. Their feedback indicated that they believed that HYS was a very ambitious programme. They also believed that its potential impact is likely to be limited due to the relatively small resources. In their view HYS is a useful mechanism to challenge people on what they do in reality as opposed to what they say in lip service regarding participation. They felt that HYS ought to be a core plank of Combat Poverty's strategy for the future if it is to be effective. They highlighted the need for better integration of the various elements of the HYS programme. They felt that it is necessary to promote the HYS concept and brand, as opposed to its outputs.

They suggested that better use could have been made of the various consultants working on HYS by getting them to feed into the work of others working on the programme in order to maximise experience and knowledge.

There were a number of opportunities identified that HYS could build on. These include identifying gaps in provision and feedback to providers. For example, it was evident from the work of some consultants that third level modules on economic analysis are ineffective as workers are no more confident about doing analysis after third level courses than before. There are opportunities to develop networking and learning events for community workers outside of structured fora such as NAPS, SIF, CDBs, etc. – somewhere that they can talk openly about practice and examine challenging questions. Finally, there are opportunities to promote participation to civil servants through presentations to relevant networks, such as the Assistant Secretaries Network and the Performance Management and Development System co-ordinators' network.

Consultants felt that it is necessary to invest more strategic thinking on how to implement a programme like HYS. For example, it might have been more effective for HYS to identify the forty or so people nationally who are really interested in capacity building and up-skill them over a year-long course so that they can build capacity within their own groups or other groups in the community. Or HYS might have considered dealing with a small number of people on the ground in a strategic way and use them to champion good practice participation to others, e.g. use them as examples, use them to talk about what was involved, the strategies they used, how long it took, what worked, what didn't, etc.

For the future many of the consultants believe that a programme like HYS needs to be more focused. The view was that HYS was too broad, trying to be 'all things to all men', trying to cover too many audiences. One suggestion was that HYS should focus on a clear set of aims for one target audience at a time, e.g. building capacity within the community sector. When this has been achieved, the programme could then move on to the next aim, e.g. changing attitudes of policy makers, rather than trying to do it all at once. Another suggestion was that it should 'prove' implementation of participation by tracking progress in a specific context such as

working with some CDBs on participation in their organisation or working with a section of the HSE and tracking what works, what doesn't and the 'how to' of implementation. In other words, to develop a model in real time and test the theory in a real practice space and disseminate the lessons.

12.3 Outcomes & Learning

A number of the indicators developed for HYS included changes in attitudes and behaviours by key stakeholders as a result of the programme's work. HYS has worked effectively with and initiated change in three statutory bodies: Comhairle/ Citizens Information Board (policy education material); the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs (agreement to initiate civil servants' training on poverty, social inclusion and community development), and the Family Support Agency (use of HYS materials in training provision). However, a smaller number of stakeholders distanced themselves from HYS and there is more work to be done to capture their commitment.

Attitudes towards the programme have been very mixed. Some see its value and believe it has been a very important initiative. Others believe it has no value. Direct engagement and involvement with programme activities, particularly practical elements, tended to result in a more positive attitude towards it. A major challenge has been that the programme as a whole has operated at a conceptual level, with an emphasis on processes and capacity building. It will take more time to demonstrate participation in practice and show the potential benefits. Even within the community sector, understanding of the concept of participation is variable and often community workers do not make the connection between their everyday work and policy work. Many consider the latter to be an adjunct and not a core part of their activities.

12.4 Conclusion

The results show that there is still a body of work necessary to encourage full acceptance of participation and the need to build capacity within the statutory sector. The HYS programme, to an extent, bore the brunt of more general angst about Combat Poverty and its role and fit as an organisation. It is not surprising therefore that the considered need or otherwise for the HYS programme and participation as a concept tends to be polarised. Individual elements of the HYS programme were

valued, in the main, by the immediate audience or beneficiaries. However, at the higher levels of policy-making there is still a need to inform and promote the value of participation.

This suggests that for the future, the emphasis should be on developing a more focused, practical and innovative programme and build on the elements of HYS that worked well and achieved tangible results. The way forward is for Combat Poverty to role model participation both within its own structures and as a useful way of working.