



Poverty and Social Inclusion: Linking Local and National Structures

Seán Ó Riordáin

POVERTY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION: LINKING LOCAL AND NATIONAL STRUCTURES

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCC	Association of County and City Councils
AIT	Area Implementation Team
AMAI	Association of Municipal Authorities
C&E	Community and Enterprise
CCMA	County and City Managers Association
CDBs	County/City Development Boards
CEDOs	Community and Enterprise Development Officer
CLÁR	The CLÁR programme (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais), launched in October 2001, is a targeted investment programme in rural areas. CLÁR complements both the RAPID programme for disadvantaged urban areas and RAPID 11, the programme for provincial towns.
CPG	Corporate Policy Group
DoEHLG	Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
DoS	Director of Service
DSFA	Department of Social and Family Affairs
EI	Enterprise Ireland
EU	European Union
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
LAs	Local Authorities
LAPSIS	Local Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategies
LDSIP	Local Development Social Inclusion Programme
LPSAs	Local Public Service Agreements
LSPs	Local Strategic Partnerships
NAP/inclusion	National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion/ National Action Plan for Social Inclusion
NAPS	National Anti-Poverty Strategy
NDP	National Development Plan
LGAPLN	Local Government Anti-Poverty Learning Network
ODPM	Office of Deputy Prime Minister

OSI	Office for Social Inclusion
PIA	Poverty Impact Assessment
PMDS	Performance Management Development System
RAPID	Revitalising Areas by Planning Investment and Development. The RAPID Programme is a Government Initiative, which targets 45 of the most disadvantaged areas in the country.
RIA	Regulatory Impact Analysis
SIM	Social Inclusion Measures Groups
SIU	Social Inclusion Unit
SPC	Strategic Policy Committees
UK	United Kingdom

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was commissioned by the Combat Poverty Agency. Its purpose is to identify potential linkages between national and local levels in the context of the development and implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. It was commissioned to enable the Combat Poverty Agency to contribute to an on-going debate on the issue of incorporating social inclusion in the planning processes of both national and local government.

The study undertook a wide-ranging questionnaire, a workshop and one-to-one meetings in an effort to ascertain the level of integration of policy relating to poverty and social inclusion at national and local levels. It found that considerable effort has been invested in establishing a comprehensive institutional framework for integrating poverty and social inclusion into the broad policy arena at national level. The national partnership process has provided both the political and administrative impetus to address poverty and social inclusion within the strategic management initiatives of public sector reform. It has also provided a focus, through the social partners, for ensuring that the issue of poverty and social inclusion is presented within a clear policy framework at national level.

In effect there is now an institutional setting in organisational terms that is responsible for sustaining the principle that tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion are central to general policy formulation and implementation at national level.

In parallel with these efforts at national level, considerable effort has been put into the reform of local government. A focus has been brought to bear on public service co-ordination at local level through the setting up of the County/City Development Boards (CDBs) and, in relation to social inclusion, the establishment of the CDB Social Inclusion Co-ordinating Measures Group (SIM).

The study therefore found that many of the building blocks necessary to integrate the issue of poverty and social inclusion into both national and local levels are in place. However, it concluded that there is a need to create and reinforce important linkages between local and national levels. These linkages are essential to ensuring that national commitment in relation to poverty and social inclusion are translated into the local implementation framework.

A recent initiative by the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) to pilot Poverty Impact Assessment (PIA) will underpin the integration of poverty and social inclusion into broad policy development at national level. If applied across all departments quickly and in a manner complementary to the Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) process, it will enable a substantive up-skilling of personnel across the civil service in dealing with poverty and social inclusion generally.

Therefore the institutional framework that now exists should be the basis for developing more adequate flows of information on a horizontal basis across government departments and on a vertical basis throughout State agencies and local government. A realistic effort can be applied to ensuring a comprehensive understanding of poverty and social inclusion issues within the context of general policy development. However, there is a need to put a mechanism in place in each department that would relate the work of individual civil servants and their units with the PIA/RIA process. This would involve aligning NAP/inclusion through departmental business plans with the performance management development system (PMDS) to ensure that a genuine effort is made to support the integration of each departmental policy arena with poverty and social inclusion policy. Indeed this should also apply to other horizontal policy applications such as spatial planning, rural development, equality and the environment.

Ireland's national framework on poverty and social inclusion generally complements the institutional arrangements of other European countries. In some instances it has influenced, and has been influenced by, the establishment of those arrangements, most notably in the United Kingdom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The strategic priorities set out in NAP/inclusion need a defined structure at national level to which local government, among other local bodies, can contribute. The defined structure should seek to translate the individual responsibilities of each department in regard to NAP/inclusion into the particular mandates of the department through its corporate plans. These in turn should be translated into State agency obligations and detailed within these agencies for translation at local level.

- NAP/inclusion needs to be appropriately incorporated into the plans/strategies and policies of each government department, State agency, local authority and CDB. It should be achieved by the preparation of definite guidelines on policy translation from the national to the local for each department, agency, local authority and CDB. This would provide a clear mandate to those responsible for policy implementation, to embed social inclusion and poverty perspectives into their business planning and service delivery at each level of government.
- The current pilot Local Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy (LAPIS) process, being undertaken with the support of Combat Poverty Agency, could provide for the establishment of Poverty Impact Assessment (PIA) for local policy initiatives, in particular local planning. Alternatively, the OSI, in conjunction with a local planning authority and the Combat Poverty Agency, could complete a pilot PIA of a local area plan/county development plan, to provide a demonstration model for planning authorities generally.
- Corporate considerations in regard to poverty and social inclusion in the business plans of each department need to be translated into local departmental processes. This should be done through clear head office guidance to each local office and representative on CDBs.
- Each agency represented on the CDB should act to ensure the translation of national business plans of government departments and State agencies into local business planning and delivery.

- Each agency represented on the CDB should provide the means to communicate the results of local delivery of NAP/inclusion back to the national framework, particularly where innovative actions are proving to be a success or indeed where the opposite is the case. This can be done through the CDB evaluation processes, and should be based upon national criteria prepared by the OSI and the Combat Poverty Agency.
- Members of CDBs representing government departments and State agencies should have a clear mandate regarding their work within the CDB. They should also report back in regard to their responsibilities as set out in each county/city development strategy and any local social inclusion strategy.
- A National Implementation Group should be established, with a clear role for monitoring NAP/inclusion at local level. Membership of this Group should include representatives of relevant government departments and State agencies as well as representation from the City and County Managers Association. Sub-groups of the Implementation Group could be expanded to include other relevant bodies.
- CDBs should be supported and resourced by relevant government departments and State agencies, particularly in relation to drawing up and overseeing the implementation of a local anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy. This strategy must be complementary to NAP/inclusion. Potential models for such a strategy are those currently under preparation with the support of Combat Poverty in Laois and Wicklow.

Implementation of the above, over the coming years, will ensure that the issue of poverty and social inclusion is well positioned within local government, relevant local agencies and local offices of national agencies and departments. In addition, there is a need to open up communication between the local sectors and the national policy-making arena and to provide an opportunity for the local voice, in particular that of local government, to be heard at national level. The study, therefore, recommends that the following specific actions be applied over the coming year:

At National Level

- 1** The OSI should prepare a series of national objectives relating to NAP/inclusion for consideration at corporate level by each government department and agency. These should be integrated into the business plans of such bodies.
- 2** Each department and State agency should be required to implement NAP/inclusion through its business plans and action plans where applicable. All departments and agencies should be required to issue an annual report to the Senior Officials Group for Social Inclusion in regard to implementation.
- 3** Facilitation by the OSI of the exchange of good practice should be put in place through the Social Inclusion Consultative Group and by the issue of an annual national monitoring report that would detail yearly progress.
- 4** The OSI should take a role in ensuring that those charged with completing the PIA/RIA process at national level are sufficiently briefed regarding the integration of social issues into the RIA process.
- 5** Local authorities should be informed of the existence of www.socialinclusion.ie as a resource tool for local government.
- 6** The County and City Managers Association (CCMA), the Association of County and City Councils (ACCC) and the Association of Municipal Authorities (AMAI) should be invited to sit on the Social Inclusion Consultative Group.
- 7** Guidelines on the integration of NAP/inclusion into the local policy framework should be prepared by the OSI in consultation with relevant government departments and the Combat Poverty Agency for application at local level through the adoption of a local anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy.
- 8** National performance criteria, derived from NAP/inclusion criteria, should be prepared for application into business plans of government departments, State agencies and local authorities.

- 9** The new National Development Plan (NDP) should underpin commitment to tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion through identifying CDBs as the local coordinating bodies charged with the overall monitoring of local delivery. In this context, support must be provided to CDBs by relevant government departments and agencies together with the OSI and the Combat Poverty Agency.
- 10** A National Implementation Group should be established with a clear role for monitoring NAP/inclusion at local level via the local CDBs. This Group should be representative of the relevant government departments, State agencies and County and City Managers Association, and be chaired by the OSI.
- 11** The Combat Poverty Agency should act as a technical assistance unit in regard to the dissemination of experience and provision of training in the preparation of local anti-poverty and social inclusion strategies and poverty impact assessment. It should act as a reservoir/research facility for both national and local levels.

At Local Level

- 12** A local anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy (LAPSIS), based on relevant guidance from the OSI, in consultation with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the County and City Managers Association and the Combat Poverty Agency, should be prepared as appropriate in each city/county. It should be provided with adequate resources and support from national level. Pilot strategies are currently underway with the support of Combat Poverty in Laois and Wicklow. These could provide demonstration models for other cities and counties.
- 13** On completion of the above process countrywide, a national distillation of the strategies could be prepared and presented to the National Implementation Group suggested above and the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion for incorporation into the national policy process.
- 14** Guidelines on the implementation of Poverty Impact Assessment should be issued by the OSI and be piloted in a number of planning authorities in regard to both local area plans and county development plans.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives

This study was undertaken by Environmental Resources Management Ireland Limited (ERM Ireland). It was commissioned by the Combat Poverty Agency. Its purpose is to identify potential linkages between national and local levels in the context of the implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. The study was commissioned to enable Combat Poverty to contribute to an on-going debate on the issue of incorporating social inclusion in the planning processes of both national and local government. Its strategic objectives require the examination of a number of separate but related issues:

- (a) Provide a set of recommendations with respect to the following:
- Vertical flows of information and decision-making between national and local levels
 - Horizontal flows of information and decision-making at national and local levels
 - What is required to strengthen integrated delivery of services for people experiencing poverty at a local level, and options for mechanisms/ resources to support integrated development.
- (b) Identify mechanisms to:
- Strengthen the articulation of local policy issues into the national arena
 - Feed the lessons from the implementation of emerging Local Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategies (LAPSIS) into the relevant policy fora at national level
 - Facilitate local implementation of key elements of national targets.

1.2 Approach

A four-phase approach was applied in this study:

- Phase 1: Project inception and analysis of the issues to be considered
- Phase 2: Evaluation of existing applications and consultation with key stakeholders at national and local levels
- Phase 3: Development of recommendations
- Phase 4: Reporting.

The above was undertaken through the completion of a literature review of the subject area and the engagement of key stakeholders in the form of a steering committee. In addition, a questionnaire was issued to all local authorities (see Appendix), and a workshop of participants drawn from the stakeholder constituency was organised to ensure a good understanding of the issues.

The following chapters provide: an evaluation of existing approaches to local and national linkages regarding the implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (Ch 2), an evaluation of international experience (Ch 3), ways of achieving policy integration (Ch 4), factors that counteract greater policy integration (Ch 5), and a number of recommendations (Chs 6 and 7).

2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE NATIONAL ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

2.1 Introduction

In line with the on-going reform of public management in the State, considerable effort has been invested in establishing a comprehensive institutional framework for integrating poverty and social inclusion into the broad policy arena at national level. The social partnership framework has provided the political and administrative impetus to address poverty and social inclusion within the strategic management initiatives of public sector reform. It has also provided a focus, through the social partners, for ensuring that poverty and social inclusion is presented within a clear policy framework at national level.

Social partnership has therefore been critical to the creation of the institutional mechanisms that underpin the State's approach to dealing with social disadvantage as well as local, rural and community development generally. The adoption of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy has been of particular significance in this area. The strategy has provided the direction needed to define what is meant by poverty and the process towards its elimination in the State. A central feature of the implementation of the strategy has been the highly developed institutional framework that has been put in place at national level, in particular, and more recent efforts to replicate this at local/regional levels.

2.2 Initiatives at National level

In effect there is now an institutional setting that is responsible for sustaining the principle that poverty and social inclusion are central to general policy formulation and implementation at national level. Additionally, the structures are in place to enable a high-level strategic view of the issues surrounding poverty and social exclusion and to provide the co-ordination of delivery of public services that is central to meeting the needs of communities exposed to social disadvantage. Of particular note are the following:

- **Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, Drugs and Rural Development**

This Committee is chaired by the Taoiseach and includes ministers from relevant departments.

- **Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion**

This Group comprises high-level civil servants from relevant departments and is chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach.

- **Social Inclusion Consultative Group**

This Group is co-chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach and the Office for Social Inclusion. It is viewed as an important vehicle for involving the social partners in the NAP/inclusion process. It comprises representatives of government departments, the social partners, community and voluntary sector and certain state agencies, e.g. the Combat Poverty Agency, the Equality Authority and the Economic and Social Research Institute. It does not, however, include representation from local government, FÁS or Pobal. The Group meets at least twice a year to offer advice and observations.

- **Office for Social Inclusion (OSI)**

The Office is headed by a Director within the Department of Social and Family Affairs. It was established in December 2002 with overall responsibility for developing, co-ordinating and driving the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAP/inclusion). This Plan incorporates the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and the social inclusion commitments contained in subsequent social partnership agreements. The Office co-ordinates the process across government departments, agencies, regional and local government, and implements key support functions. It has overall responsibility for the co-ordination of NAP/inclusion, its implementation, monitoring and evaluation of progress.

The Office is also responsible for advising on poverty impact assessment and providing information to central and local government and the wider public generally. It has responsibility for ensuring that all necessary data are available for monitoring, policy prioritisation, targeting and overall policy development. A key aspect of its work is the implementation of a communications strategy and a consultation process in relation to NAP/inclusion.

- **Social Inclusion Units**

These units have been established in key government departments to co-ordinate the department's contribution to NAP/inclusion and its implementation.

- **Departmental Social Inclusion Liaison Officers**

These officers were appointed in a number of government departments, following publication of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. The officers act as a first point of contact in relation to NAP/inclusion issues. However, their role has become increasingly diluted across several departments. This limitation was reviewed in 2005 by the OSI in consultation with the officers and a definition of the role has been agreed and accepted by the Management Group of Assistant Secretaries who oversee the work of NAPS generally.

- **Other Initiatives**

Other institutional arrangements relating to sectoral policy applications also have a clear poverty and social inclusion perspective, e.g. those relating to children, education generally and in part local government.

To ensure ongoing implementation of such a perspective, each of the above needs to be strengthened by the establishment of executive functions. In that regard it is worth considering the statements of strategy adopted by government departments. These statements suggest that they have been informed by NAP/inclusion in regard to their mandates. However, departmental business plans do not clarify that a clear requirement for a poverty and social perspective has been incorporated into service considerations and indeed into the individual performance criteria that are central to the delivery of the services.

Also of note is the parliamentary overview provided by the Houses of the Oireachtas where, among others, the Minister for Social and Family Affairs may be called upon to present regular progress reports on the implementation of the Strategy to the Joint Oireachtas Committees on Social and Family Affairs, and on European Affairs.

Apart from the immediate framework at central level there are a number of critically placed agencies such as the National Children's Office, the Equality Authority, Pobal, FÁS and the Combat Poverty Agency. Combat Poverty works closely with the national authorities in providing advice to government and central departments. More recently it has played a critical support role for local authorities across the State in developing awareness on poverty issues pertaining to local government. In this role, Combat Poverty works closely with the Office for Social Inclusion, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the Department of Health and Children and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

2.3 Initiatives at Local Level

In parallel with the reform of public management at national level, considerable effort has been put into the reform of local government and most recently the integration of local government and local, rural and community development through the establishment of the County/City Development Boards.

- **County Development Boards**

A central task of the Boards has been the preparation and implementation of ten-year strategies for the social, cultural and economic development of their counties/cities and for the co-ordinated delivery of poverty and social inclusion activities and of public development services at local level. The Boards have undertaken reviews of their strategies and have adopted these reviews, with a refocusing on prioritised local strategic actions, particularly those aimed at a more joined-up approach to local service delivery involving relevant agencies.

The Boards are supported through the local authority system and are serviced by a Director of Service and supporting staff. In addition, at national level the County and City Managers Association has established a working committee comprised of representatives of the Directors of Service. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government supports the Directors through networking arrangements and on-going liaison.

The CDBs are led by the local authorities and include the social partners, State agencies, local, rural and community development organisations and community and voluntary representatives. These representatives in turn contribute to the sub-committee structures of the Boards, most notably the Social Inclusion Measures (SIM) Co-ordinating Groups. In line with national policy, the SIMS were established to facilitate greater inter-organisational co-ordination between local and national bodies responsible for local service delivery.

- **Local Government Anti-Poverty Learning Network**

In addition to the CDBs, the local authorities generally are being encouraged to engage in a more pro-active approach to addressing local poverty and social inclusion issues. This is particularly relevant given their planning and housing functions where there is a clear need for consideration of poverty and social inclusion requirements. For example, planning policy is key to the sustainable development of local communities, as is housing policy in relation to individuals and family units affected by social disadvantage. As a part of this, the Combat Poverty Agency has supported the development of a Local Government Anti-Poverty Learning Network through its Local Government Work Programme.

Since 2006, the Network is being managed by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) under the guidance of a Local Authorities and Social Inclusion Steering Group (LASISG) comprising the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG), the Combat Poverty Agency, OSI, the Local Government Management Services Board (LGMSB), the IPA and more recently the County and City Managers Association (CCMA).

- **Social Inclusion Units**

Pilot Social Inclusion Units have been established in seven local authorities, with funding from the DoEHLG, to foster a strategic and cross-cutting approach to social inclusion (Dublin City Council had a unit prior to the establishment of the pilot units but also received funding under the pilot programme). These units were independently evaluated in late 2004. The outcome was largely positive. Following the evaluation, it was decided that from 2006 the units would be placed on a permanent footing and that the programme would be extended to other local authorities.

- **Local Anti-Poverty Strategies**

Most recently a number of local authorities have begun to prepare Local Anti-Poverty Strategies (LAPS) that complement the county strategies for social, cultural and economic development. Combat Poverty Agency is currently supporting two pilot LAPS in Wicklow and Laois. It is anticipated that one of the outcomes will be a worked model of LAPS which, following an evaluation, could provide a framework to other local authorities. A critical aspect of the implementation of such strategies will be the application of poverty impact assessment to, in particular, the physical planning policies of the local authorities. These, in the form of county and local area development plans, set the framework for all aspects of socio-economic development, environmental protection and community enhancement at the local level.

A similar approach is now underway in the health services. This is a joint initiative of the Department of Health and Children, the Institute for Public Health and the Health Boards Executive, with the assistance of the Combat Poverty Agency.

- **Other initiatives**

Other institutional changes are being developed at the moment in regard to the cohesion of local, rural and community development. Under the guidance of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (POBAIL), LEADER Groups and Area-Based Partnerships and Community Groups that are responsible for the delivery of the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme are moving towards having a single overall institutional setting within individual cities and counties. A key focus of these bodies will be the management of certain social inclusion support programmes under the next National Development Plan.

The local development agencies and groups are currently contributors to both the CDBs and their SIM structures. This will continue in the context of the new overseeing bodies. Pobal manages the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, the Peace (jointly with Combat Poverty) and the RAPID Programmes on behalf of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme on behalf of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Rural Transport Initiative on behalf of the Department of Transport. Pobal continues to play a national role in ensuring that such programmes meet the broad policy requirements of the relevant departments.

2.4 Challenges Facing the Institutional Framework

In view of the above, Ireland would seem to have a highly developed institutional setting through which application of the NAP/inclusion can be effected. However, there clearly remains a series of challenges to fully embed implementation within central policy processes and to move towards a clearer level of application at local level and between local and national levels. There is also the challenge of facilitating a local government contribution to the national policy process in regard to social inclusion and poverty.

In effect the policy process is positioned to take advantage of the development of a sophisticated partnership framework at both national and local levels. This is supported by a strategic management process that applies throughout the public sector, against the continuing likely positive economic environment of the new partnership programme. A key therefore is to move with the process of change by ensuring that there is a deepening of poverty and social inclusion consciousness within the political and administrative arrangements of the State, nationally and locally.

- **Horizontal Flows of Information**

At national level, the role of the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion is critical to ensuring that policy initiatives within each department are considered with regard to NAP/inclusion. It is important that the work of this group and that of the Social Inclusion Consultative Group be supported with the necessary tools to position the issue within the corporate planning processes of central government. Through this support, reporting to the Cabinet Committee can be substantively placed within a national political framework that is regarded by that level as a central feature of the role of government and of the national partnership process.

The recent initiative by the Office for Social Inclusion to pilot Poverty Impact Assessment (PIA) will contribute towards the integration of poverty and social inclusion issues into broad policy development at national level. If applied effectively across all departments, it will enable a substantive up-skilling of personnel within the civil service in relation to dealing with poverty and social inclusion issues.

This, in turn, can be facilitated through the on-going process of the Regulating Better Government Initiative which has clearly sought to incorporate poverty and social inclusion issues into the policy process generally through the use of Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA). While this process is only beginning to be an integral ingredient of the policy process at national level, the results from the initial round of pilot RIA suggests that it is possible to limit the degree of isolation of poverty and social inclusion policy, through the application of RIA and PIA.

However, this is dependent on NAP/inclusion being clearly highlighted within the corporate policy environment of each department, and underpinned by those departments having access to the level of information needed to make poverty and social inclusion analysis a worthwhile feature of the RIA process. This is where PIA will be critical because it provides the policy maker with an understanding of poverty issues and sets a framework that can facilitate integration of policy development with poverty matters.

Experience to date, however, would suggest that, in the absence of developed data, it is difficult to derive the full benefits from tools such as PIA. This can apply to both sectoral perspectives and to horizontal applications such as the environment and social disadvantage. On the positive side, at a national level the Office for Social Inclusion is addressing the issue of information deficit, while at the local level considerable investment is being made in filling data gaps.

Therefore the institutional framework that now exists should be the basis for developing more adequate flows of information on a horizontal basis. A realistic effort can be applied to ensuring a comprehensive understanding of poverty and social inclusion issues within the context of general policy development. However, there is a need to put a mechanism in place in each government department that would relate the work of individual civil servants and their units with the PIA/RIA process. This would involve aligning NAP/inclusion, through departmental business plans, with individual PMDS to ensure that a genuine effort is in place to support the integration of each departmental policy arena with poverty and social inclusion policy. Indeed this should also apply to other horizontal policy applications such as spatial planning, rural development, equality and the environment.

- **Vertical Flows of Information**

Given the significance of the management of information flows throughout the public service, the issue of the vertical flow of information will be dealt with in detail in the following Chapters. The stakeholder consultation and the literature review undertaken for this study revealed that this area presents the greatest challenge to incorporating poverty and social inclusion policy into central and local government and that the progress made in regard to horizontal information flow at national level is not replicated, save by a limited number of initiatives, between national and local levels.

3 INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

3.1 A ‘Social Europe’

Considerable work has taken place in regard to understanding the dynamics behind positioning poverty and social inclusion in the national and local policy framework across the European Union. This is in line with the concept of a ‘Social Europe’ and the political developments associated with the European Union.

In institutional terms, the approaches to poverty and social inclusion, particularly in Scandinavia, are influenced by devolution of government, the impact of regionalisation and the nature and extent of local government.

3.2 Joined-Up Government

Policy moves to address poverty and social inclusion are frequently a central feature of the move towards joined-up government. This is a characteristic of the public service reform process in the United Kingdom, collectively, and within the emerging institutions of Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland. In the UK, for example, the Report *Policy Action Team 17: Joining it up Locally, London* (Dept of Environment, Transport and the Regions, 2000) suggests the following:

... only a joined-up response will be effective in tackling the problems of deprived neighbourhoods. The need for this is particularly strong at the local level. It is at this level that many core public services do their operational planning, and at which many decisions about allocation of resources are made

This is not to say that local joint working will, on its own, solve the problems of deprived neighbourhoods – it clearly won't. It is a necessary, but not sufficient condition. There are other necessary conditions for change, on each of which the government is making important contributions. These conditions include:

- *Better core public services. Even the most effective joining-up will achieve little if the services that are being joined up are ineffective at their core tasks*
- *Strong national and local economies. Vibrant local and national economies bring many things to the neighbourhood that are much needed – jobs, services and opportunities for enterprise*
- *Improvements in wider areas. Neighbourhoods do not exist in isolation from their wider areas. The 'dynamics of change' – or city-wide improvements – matter. Neighbourhoods also need to be linked into the markets ... the culture and the services of their surrounding areas*
- *Governance and empowerment. Residents need to be given opportunities to be part of local decision-making, and to generate, run or influence solutions to their own problems.*

... at the regional level, government offices should take the lead in responding to LSPs [Local Strategic Partnerships, the UK version of the County/City Development Board] on behalf of ministers and departments, providing the stimulus to get them going where necessary ... central government, and in particular the failure of departments to act corporately, has been responsible over the years for many of the factors which make local joint working difficult.

3.3 Diagonal Coordination

The Dutch have adopted the principle of diagonal coordination. This primarily applies to spatial planning and realisation of complex and urgent strategic projects. However, it provides for coordination procedures that cut through existing statutory systems in order to ensure close cooperation between central departments, other State agencies, local and regional government and if appropriate the private sector. It is 'diagonal' in the sense that the various layers of government are involved in the preparation and implementation of the particular policy.

In Ireland, diagonal coordination remains a challenge that needs to be resolved. Local authorities continue to be on the periphery of non-DoEHLG policy development. The means therefore to better integrate local government into the application of NAP/inclusion rests in providing mechanisms for better dialogue with the Office for Social Inclusion. This dialogue would be further underpinned if the DoEHLG were to work with local government to integrate local PMDS processes with local business planning and NAP/inclusion.

Overall, however, it is worth noting that Ireland's national framework on poverty and social inclusion generally complements the institutional arrangements of other European countries. In some instances it has influenced, or has been influenced by, the establishment of those arrangements, most notably in the United Kingdom.

3.4 Implementation at Local and Regional Levels

As in Ireland, a critical aspect of the approach in the UK, in particular, has been that of the political process and senior public management. It is seen as essential that these would play a central role in implementation and review and that in doing so the consequences for local and regional systems of governance would be understood and factored into the policy framework. Of particular interest to this study is the approach to having systemic dialogue in place across government and between the different levels of government.

In broad policy terms at EU level the *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion* recommends that the member states of the Union should:

- Establish stronger links with economic and employment policy
- Strengthen implementation capacity
- Focus on key issues and set more ambitious targets
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of policies.

The report calls for the strengthening of implementation capacity that would include the following: developing administrative and institutional capacity, e.g. social protection systems, minimum guaranteed income schemes, social services and instruments for assessing gender mainstreaming; better co-ordination across different government branches and levels, i.e. national, regional, local; improving mechanisms for involving stakeholders.

This indicates that, notwithstanding the extent of progress across the Union, a key challenge remains to underpin the relationship between the various levels of governance in the member states. This is central to the outcome of the recent Dutch Presidency where the High Level EU Network 'Governance and the EU' suggests, albeit in regard to broad EU policy, that examples of good practice within member states in regard to the allocation of competencies and subsidiarity include 'Taking into account the implementation consequences for local or regional authorities during national determination of an EU policy position'; and in regard to practice itself the use of central/regional/local experts, and inter-departmental working groups, on the assessment of new policy and legislation.

3.5 Long-Term Responses to Poverty

Across the EU there is a sustained recognition that poverty cannot be addressed by short-term responses or indeed without a political and administrative commitment to making the issue of social inclusion a priority. This suggests a move from single response initiatives towards longer-term integrated delivery of public service across the local, regional and national authorities. Such thinking features in most of the NAP/inclusion statements of the EU25. For example, *Reaching Out: the role of central government at regional and local level* (Office of the Prime Minister, 2000) concludes that the UK needs:

- Better integration of central government initiatives
- Better ways of ensuring that government service delivery is fitted to local circumstances
- Better understanding of the local and regional issues in the design of national policy.

In response to the *Reaching Out* report, the UK government strengthened the role of government offices by giving them responsibilities for new programmes and policies and for having greater liaison at local level with local authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). In addition, its *White Paper on Local Government – Strong Local Leadership, Quality Public Services* (Office of Deputy Prime Minister, 2001) sets out the following policy perspective:

If LSPs are to succeed, all the relevant public sector partners as well as those in other sectors need to play their part. The government doubts whether a statutory duty will improve the participation of public bodies although we will keep this under review. Instead, it will use various other means to encourage engagement with LSPs, including:

- *Budgetary mechanisms to ensure that public bodies that wish to contribute financially to LSPs have the ability to do so*
- *Performance management instruments [public service agreements, business plans, service level agreements and management statements]*
- *Line management systems to provide staff with incentives to achieve partnership objectives, and support for staff development and capacity building in relation to partnership working*
- *Organisational incentives, e.g. through the wider distribution of Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) rewards*
- *Organisational restructuring to provide greater freedom of action to local agencies.*

The Report *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal, National Strategy Action Plan* (Cabinet Office, 2001) paved the way for the setting up of a Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) 'to spearhead change across and outside government, and make sure the government delivers on its commitments... It will report to the Minister for Local Government, Regeneration and the Regions, and a Cabinet-level committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. Neighbourhood renewal teams in the regions will oversee local renewal strategies, administer funding and join up government policy. Neighbourhood statistics will help to track progress in neighbourhoods and identify those at risk of decline ...'

The Report concluded that the reasons for weak services in poor neighbourhoods include:

- Too many special programmes and short-term initiatives rather than a comprehensive, sustained response through mainstream services
- Failure to focus on outcomes
- National targets that focused on averages and concealed wide variations
- Insufficient funding of main programmes
- Failure to give staff adequate training and support, financial rewards or recognition
- Failure to encourage innovation and spread 'what works'.

Responsibilities of the Unit were to include:

- Overseeing and supporting the central government contribution to the National Strategy
- Overseeing the development of local neighbourhood renewal strategies by local strategic partnerships
- Running the key central funding streams for the National Strategy
- Leading and mobilising key sectors
- Driving the skills and knowledge strand of the National Strategy
- Monitoring the success of the Strategy
- Commissioning an independent evaluation of implementation
- Advising ministers on developing the National Strategy.

3.6 Formalised Local/National Protocols

A further feature of poverty and social inclusion across a number of EU member states is the creation of formalised local/national arrangements or protocols. Within these protocols national policy is both considered and applied, and the roles of the local/regional bodies are agreed, with, in some instances, resource allocations being provided. In the UK the approach is to have local area agreements which address implementation of government policy at the local level. This is strengthened by a contract between the local authorities and the regionally based government offices, which themselves operate on an inter-departmental basis, covering 10 central departments.

These offices also report to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) within which department is the Social Exclusion Unit and the divisions responsible for local government, regional development and urban regeneration. This type of structure is reinforced by the local/national partnership, which consists of the Deputy Prime Minister, several senior ministers and representatives of the Local Government Association. This gives a political standing to the work of the office and that of the regional agencies, local strategic partnerships, and the local authorities and their implementation bodies.

Even allowing for the reform in the UK, the UK Audit Commission in its 2004 report *Local Government National Report, People, Places and Prosperity, Delivering government programmes at the local level* concluded:

Progress in improving economic, social and environmental well-being is most likely to be achieved where national and local priorities are fully aligned and where local partners achieve coherence in establishing their priorities and targets.

It goes on to suggest:

Delivery of central government's priorities suffers from a 'Humpty Dumpty' effect. Efforts to promote economic growth, social justice and environmental sustainability fracture when they hit the ground in departmental silos, just like Humpty when he fell off the wall. Local leaders play the role of all the King's horses and all the King's men, as they try to put the pieces back together again.

The report notes that successful areas are the ones where local leaders are able to improve well-being by:

- Developing coherent programmes of change that are based on local needs and opportunities
- Tapping into different funding streams without being driven by them
- Engaging with communities to ensure that interventions are responsive to local concerns
- Making the most of the skills and resources of all sectors to ensure that the area has the capacity to deliver its ambitions and priorities
- Capturing learning from previous activity and transferring it to new interventions
- Paying attention to the sustainability of interventions, ensuring mainstreaming in the longer term.

More radically it proposes that in England, 'A new local delivery framework could be developed with Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) as the basic unit of oversight for the delivery of both special initiatives and mainstream services'.

Two key elements are proposed that differ from the current system:

- A local area agreement, which would focus on the delivery of special initiatives and would set out clearly what outcomes communities should expect from this additional 'special funding'
- A re-focusing of the Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs) to ensure that they are concerned with mainstream service provision and that they specify the outcomes and standards that communities could expect from that provision.

3.7 Conclusion

In many respects the UK framework complements the poverty and social inclusion framework in place in Ireland. However, there is one crucial difference. Local government in Ireland is not directly represented on any of the institutional arrangements at the national level other than through the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government at the Cabinet Committee, even though increasingly local government is a critical government instrument in the delivery of poverty and social inclusion policy.

This reduces the capacity of local government and local, rural and community development to contribute directly to the Cabinet Committee. And it reduces the scope for local political and senior management input unless the ministers representing these areas have alternative means of bringing into the Cabinet structure the issues pertaining to poverty and social inclusion at the local level.

This suggests the need for having written protocols, as in other European countries, between these departments and local government/local, rural and community development sectors that would address the critical nature of poverty and social inclusion policy.

Similar type applications of contracts or protocols may be found within the institutional arrangements of other parts of the United Kingdom and other member states of the EU such as those in the Netherlands, Scandinavia and northern Europe generally.

Fundamentally, however, most of the member states continue to struggle with the integration of poverty and social inclusion through both national systems of public management and those at the local/regional level. Lessons can be learned for the Irish context. However, it is important to seek out approaches that complement rather than cause further disaggregation of poverty and social inclusion policy from the general policy field.

4 ACHIEVING INTEGRATED POLICY

4.1 Introduction

Questionnaire returns, workshop activities and face-to-face meetings undertaken for this study indicated, firstly, a perception of many initiatives coming from central level and, secondly, a general confusion as to where responsibility for social inclusion rests at local level. The latter is particularly important in relation to the application of NAP/inclusion to the local policy framework. Very real problems remain to be addressed.

The local perspective is that, notwithstanding the well-developed institutional framework that is in place at national level, there is a lack of co-ordination, and that implementation therefore takes place without regard for actual results. There seems to be a lack of clarity as to what results are required at local level and of what the policy, set out so clearly in NAP/inclusion, is trying to achieve in regard to local application.

The strategic priorities set out in NAP/inclusion need a defined structure at national level to which local government, along with other local bodies, can contribute. The defined structure, it is argued, should seek to translate the individual responsibilities of each department in regard to NAP/inclusion into the particular mandates of the department through its corporate plans.

Each department should then seek to translate these outputs into coherent actions to be applied throughout the department and its operational structures including State agencies and local delivery regimes such as local authorities and local, rural and community development agencies. In turn the delivery agencies should put in place performance measurement that reflects the national criteria and these should be firmly incorporated into the individual performance appraisals of senior management at each level of public management.

Coherence at central level therefore is critical to reflecting a joined-up approach and thinking at national level. This would provide a framework that can build upon the remarkable progress of recent years in public management across each level of government.

Given the already advanced institutional setting that is now in place, the Senior Officials Group and the OSI should take the lead in applying this approach. Those local agencies involved in local delivery should be facilitated to contribute to this process through the Social Inclusion Consultative Group already in place.

4.2 Requirements for Closer National/Local Links

In overall terms there is a need to accept, at local and national levels, that both have clear responsibilities to address poverty and social inclusion and implement NAP/inclusion. Both have a role to deliver. But they also have responsibility to help develop the policy in the first instance. In practical terms this means that local government should contribute to on-going policy development and central government should seek to put in place a communication process that will integrate the local experience with the national framework.

Having such a role within a clearly defined performance environment that relates individual responsibilities to national policy would incentivise local government officials and elected members to play an active role in national policy development. At the national level the incentive would be based on central government officials having a more comprehensive understanding, through interaction with local government, of local priorities. Such interaction would provide civil servants with the means to interpret the implementation of national policy at the local level, the detail of which would involve the following:

- NAP/inclusion should be appropriately incorporated into the plans/strategies and policies of each government department, State agency, local authority and CDB. Clear guidelines should be developed on policy translation from the national to the local for each department, agency and local authority. This would provide a definite mandate to those responsible for policy implementation, to incorporate social inclusion and poverty perspectives into the business planning and service delivery processes at each level of government.

- The current pilot Local Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy (LAPSIS) process could provide for the establishment of Poverty Impact Assessment (PIA) for local policy initiatives, in particular local planning. Alternatively, the OSI, in conjunction with a local planning authority, could complete a pilot PIA of a local area plan to provide a demonstration model for planning authorities generally.
- Corporate considerations in regard to poverty and social inclusion in the business plans of each department need to be translated into local departmental processes. This should be done through clear head office guidance to each local office and representative on CDBs.
- Each agency represented on the CDB should act to ensure the translation of national business plans of government departments and State agencies into its local business planning and delivery.
- Each agency represented on the CDB should provide the means to communicate the results of local delivery of NAP/inclusion back to the national framework, particularly where innovative actions are proving to be a success or indeed where the opposite is the case. This can be done through the CDB evaluation processes, based upon national criteria prepared by the OSI and the Combat Poverty Agency.
- Members of CDBs representing government departments and State agencies should have a clear mandate regarding their role within the CDB. They should also report back in regard to their responsibilities as set out in each county/city development strategy and any local social inclusion strategy.
- A National Implementation Group should be established, with a clear role for monitoring NAP/inclusion at local level. Membership of this Group should include representatives of relevant government departments and State agencies as well as from the City and County Managers Association. Sub-groups of the Implementation Group could be expanded to include other relevant bodies.
- CDBs should be supported and resourced by relevant government departments and State agencies, particularly in relation to drawing up and overseeing the implementation of a local anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy. This strategy must be complementary to NAP/inclusion. It could be based upon the LAPSIS models currently being applied with Combat Poverty Agency support in Laois and Wicklow.

It is important therefore that, built into the structures at local level is an understanding, on the part of local senior personnel, of the policy context in which they operate and the expected outcomes of such policy. This in turn needs to feed into the national level in such a manner that the success of the local personnel in delivering the policy is seen as a key part of the national success of the department or State agency.

Underpinning the above is a move towards an outcome-based approach that facilitates, firstly, meeting the need to establish clear flows of information between national and local levels; and, secondly, involvement of all levels in policy development.

- **Communication Process**

Clear flows of information based on a mutually understood policy environment which itself is based on national expectations and meeting local need would seem to be the way forward in ensuring local integration with the national policy framework. Local-to-national links are vital for coherent policy development and implementation. Central to local-national integration is a sustained process of communication between the levels of governance.

This process could be facilitated by having in place a local area agreement framework based on the national policy arena. In the context of poverty and social inclusion this could mean having a local anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy in place which would be based upon NAP/inclusion and applied horizontally across local agencies under the guidance of the OSI. At a minimum it would mean having vertical exchanges between the local representatives on the CDB with their national or parent bodies who in turn would be informed by the NAP/inclusion applying at national level with the support of the OSI.

However, this is more than just a question of providing information. As with any advanced policy-making framework, the results of giving and taking information must be obvious to the contributors and there must be a transparency for those involved which reassures them that their contributions are being taken on board by the national policy process.

In essence national government needs to move beyond seeing more communication as more information, to a process that receives information and deliberates upon that within the context of its policy environment and, most importantly, reacts to the information-giving through transparent responses to those providing it. On the part of the local actors they must see to it that national expectations, as set out in the local area agreement framework or local anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy, will be delivered and reported on.

This needs to be further underpinned by a mutual commitment to working towards achieving the national policy outcomes as set out in NAP/inclusion. The opportunity to derive working models will arise following evaluation of the current pilot LAPSIS being undertaken with the support of Combat Poverty Agency.

- **Involvement of all Levels in Policy Development**

There remains, furthermore, an on-going challenge to those departments that do not have a developed local or regional presence to have due regard for local/regional sensibilities. Equally there is a challenge for local authorities and others to fully appreciate the policy framework within which such departments are expected to function. The CDB provides the means through which this could be addressed but only if the representatives of such departments are mandated to explain policy and to seek to return to the parent department concerns that may arise. Even in the context of a well-developed policy framework at national level this will remain a challenge.

Nonetheless, a systematic and consistent approach is necessary, focusing on defined themes set at national level and translated through existing structures. This needs to be enriched by experience from the local level and projected into the policy environment at national level.

An example of such a process can be found in RAPID and to a lesser degree, CLÁR. In RAPID there is a clear level of political leadership, supported by strong administrative support within government departments. This is translated into local leadership on the part of the local authorities and the local, rural and community development sector with the active co-ordination of the CDBs. The impact on the ground is substantial, reflecting a significant level of Agency buy-in alongside strong community participation.

More significant still is the role of the national RAPID co-ordination process where barriers to implementation can be addressed against very clear policy outcomes that have been set by Cabinet and applied by the minister. In instances where local or national expectations are not being met, this forum provides the means to challenge such barriers with active local input. The arena also provides for the facilitation of the exchange of good practice and helps underpin a 'competitive' environment to incentivise those involved at all levels to be seen to deliver substantive change on the ground.

4.3 Other challenges

While the lack of consistent connectivity between local and national levels is seen as the primary challenge for the delivery of an integrated policy framework at local and national levels, there are other issues that also throw up a challenge to the delivery of integrated policy. They include the following:

- Poverty and social inclusion can be very vague terms, and hence there is an on-going need to translate them into concrete objectives in all organisations at both national and local levels. This can be inserted into a local area agreement framework in the form of a local anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy or through application of PIA in local policy initiatives. The pilot LAPSIS currently underway should have this issue as a central consideration in determining the benefits of having LAPSIS in place.
- CDBs are not recognised as having a role at local level vis-à-vis a number of national and local policy areas and therefore are not always recognised from the centre. Integration with the national NAP/inclusion and the national dialogue associated with poverty and social inclusion would go some way towards addressing this perceived shortfall.
- Resource issues remain a challenge, given the limited mandates to change expenditure plans at local level. This could become less of an issue if the local authorities were to be facilitated to contribute to and inform the national policy framework

4.5 Addressing the National Level

The concept of establishing a central/local partnership at political/administrative level to complement the national partnership process has been put forward as one way of ensuring that vertical integration of policy can act as a parallel institutional setting. In many ways the building blocks are already in place, given the co-ordination role of the CDBs, the Regional Authorities and a combination of the Combat Poverty Agency, the OSI and the Local Government Anti-Poverty Learning Network. This, supported by the national guidelines on corporate planning for the local government and development sectors, should put the process on a firm footing.

However, direct alignment of the local policy environment with the national policy process is still fragile. A mechanism is required to enable the current institutional setting at national level to coordinate input from the local level. Engagement across government departments, through the Cabinet Committee and the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion, should therefore be underpinned by a direct contribution from the local to the national, and critically from the national to the local. This could be in the form of structured dialogue between the national political process, the local political process and the administrative and managerial processes across an inter-sectoral framework rather than through a single departmental structure.

The consultation undertaken for this study identified a number of issues in regard to the implementation of NAP/inclusion which are complementary to current thinking in other European countries and at EU level:

- The Social Inclusion Consultative Group should be a forum for enabling CDBs, local-level agencies, and in particular local authorities to have a structured input to the national level.
- The mechanisms needed for the local co-ordination of input already rests with the CDBs. These would be applied if the institutional frameworks suggested above were fully operational.
- There should be a focus on getting a shared agreement on outcomes translated into concrete efforts at local level. This could be in the form of a local anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy (as currently piloted in Laois and Wicklow and supported by Combat Poverty), or alternatively incorporated into local planning policy in the county development plans.

- This focus needs to be based on dialogue, accepting of shared outcomes, and supported by a flexibility among national bodies regarding locally agreed priorities to be funded at local level.

From a national perspective the CDB process can provide a local listening structure that enables the establishment of local priorities, a joined-up approach to service delivery, evaluation and monitoring for national policy implementation.

4.6 Addressing the Local Level

A criticism of the CDBs is that members of the Boards do not seem to share a common view on their role. In some cases, departmental and State agency representatives are unclear as to their role as Board members, including their role in acting as the local listening post for their parent organisation. Equally, they have not been given sufficient clarity in regard to their role as departmental or State agency representatives at local level.

In many instances there is no designated person within the department and agency headquarters with whom such individuals can liaise in regard to their mandate on Boards and SIM groups. This sometimes undermines the capacity of the local structures to genuinely agree shared priorities in regard to poverty and social inclusion, notwithstanding a highly developed national policy framework. It suggests a need to have at least one contact point for such Board members with their own and other relevant departments and agencies, even though this would be viewed locally as still too restrictive, in the absence of clear national guidance on the issue to the departments and agencies concerned.

Beyond this challenge is the on-going one of ensuring that local co-ordination through the Boards makes substantive provision for the community and voluntary sector and the other social partners. This needs to be genuinely reflected in the revised priorities of the Boards and the work programmes associated with these local declarations of strategic intent on the part of local government, local, rural and community development and the State sector.

A number of practical examples of such co-ordination present themselves as worthy of consideration in seeking integration at the local level, particularly the use of local service level agreements. These are used to good effect in a number of counties and reflect a pragmatic approach to addressing local initiatives. Their use also reflects the increasing tendency across the European Union towards the use of protocols or public service agreements to achieve joined-up approaches to poverty and social inclusion and the provision of services that meet a national policy expectation but within a local context.

Capacity building at local level also remains an on-going challenge, particularly in the absence of an understanding of national expectations and the means to translate these within local corporate planning and business delivery mechanisms. In overall terms therefore the following needs to be addressed:

- An agreed process should be put in place that is firmly based on a national policy context. The use of local anti-poverty and social inclusion strategies would seem to provide an opportunity to address this but only if they in turn become a part of, and are seen as complementary to, the national policy process.
- Protocols need to be agreed either in the form of local service level agreements or local public service agreements between local and national levels. These should include national standards that must be adhered to in order to meet national policy expectation in public service delivery.
- A PIA/RIA methodology needs to be applied at all levels to ensure that poverty and social inclusion and environmental concerns, based on national policy characteristics, are fully integrated into local policy applications.

4.7 NAP/inclusion

While considerable progress has been made across all government departments, State agencies, local government and local, rural and community development sectors, in regard to the on-going implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, there remains the continuing challenge of its being genuinely incorporated into actual business planning at the various levels of government. It is suggested that NAP/inclusion be translated into the business plans of the differing levels of government, not just the immediate and more obvious sectors such as housing, social disadvantage supports and training/employment restructuring.

This suggests a need for greater integration between NAP/inclusion and the National Development Plan (NDP). NAP/inclusion input into the new NDP must focus on the sectors of policy development that do not fall immediately into an obvious poverty and social inclusion policy environment. These include but should not be limited to areas such as transport, education, rural development, industrial development and regional/spatial policy. It is noted in this regard that following a government decision of 16 December 2005, poverty and social inclusion schemes will be included in the new NDP. Significantly, there is a commitment to provide for a horizontal chapter on the promotion of poverty and social inclusion which will detail impact in areas such as housing, childcare, education and human resources.

5 OBSTACLES TO GREATER POLICY INTEGRATION

In general the following features outline the challenges to developing a model of policy integration that will underpin horizontal policies such as poverty and social inclusion, regional or spatial development and sustainable development in Ireland. A failure to recognise the inherent connectivity between these will result in continuing disadvantage and will reduce the impact of targeted responses. This would seem to be the key lesson coming out of experiences associated with CLÁR and RAPID and other local poverty and social inclusion initiatives.

- Local authorities, area-based partnerships and other public service delivery bodies do not see themselves as involved in national policy formulation. Therefore they sometimes put interpretations on national policy expectations which may be in direct contrast to the national agenda on poverty and social inclusion. The result is an inadequate incorporation of the national policy framework into both State agencies and local/regional authorities. This, in some cases, can result in a local interpretation of the policy that, from the national perspective, may be inappropriate.
- In Ireland, as in many other European countries, specialist professions such as planners, engineers and others now play a greater role in developing and implementing policy. This can result in policies that are interpreted as not just conflicting with locally perceived need but are exclusionary from a political perspective.
- Contrasts in local and national policy priorities can increasingly cause disruption to national and local policy application. This factor is increasingly

seen as an influence in spatial terms where local planning authorities, for example, do not incorporate critical elements of national policies such as the National Spatial Strategy or the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. In part this reflects a lack of awareness and understanding, resulting from being at a remove from nationally determined programmes.

- Recent years have seen a very high level of investment in Ireland's capital base. The resulting activity has placed many demands on national government, local and regional authorities, and on the local, community and rural development sector. The institutional spectrum has expanded rapidly over the past decade but, equally, expectations on the part of government in regard to responding to local needs without a major overhaul of local resourcing has created considerable difficulty in, for example, meeting co-financing obligations.
- There is a perception that there are too many structures and programmes in operation, notwithstanding efforts to bring greater co-ordination through the CDBs. While the government's objective is to limit the establishment of new structures at the local level and indeed is seeking to move towards a single overall local, rural and community development institutional framework at county/city level (i.e. Area-based Partnerships/ LEADER), there still remains a perception at local level of the need to establish both formal and informal partnerships, to meet perceived gaps in national policy delivery.
- Often services are delivered through organisational structures that do not necessarily reflect current community need. This can occur in urban areas where due to population change the systems of public management cannot meet the changing needs of the target populations. The lack of adequate integration across organisations is then made more apparent in terms of the capacity to delimit the value of public expenditure when boundaries get in the way of public service delivery. Were there to be a genuine effort to seek alignment of the corporate policy of government departments and State agencies, there would be less of a need to do so at the regional and local level.
- Local resources must be allied to national resourcing. This is a key issue for a local sector which is already poorly positioned in its capacity to absorb

existing policy challenges and defined targeted resources. It becomes more of a challenge over time in that new national resourcing is often focused on capital expenditure, with restricted provision for on-going resource demands.

- ‘Silo’ thinking continues at all levels of public administration. This is exhibited in defensiveness and an unwillingness to allow for progress and change. The problem is not confined to Ireland. In fact it seems to be a manifestation of current public management structures in many economies. Nonetheless its impact can be such that even in instances where there is clear political integration, administrative or organisational cultures can block progress in the implementation of policy.

In overall terms therefore, community, local and rural development does not necessarily follow neatly mapped-out boundaries. Current institutional structures are, however, mainly based upon such boundaries. Integrative policy must address socially derived issues, regardless of institutional or organisational boundaries.

6 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Many of the building blocks to enable a more rigorous approach to poverty and social inclusion issues are already in place in Ireland. What is required now is the bringing together of those blocks into a coherent process that allows for the creation of complementarity between national commitment and local implementation.

In addition, local and national bodies must be accountable to each other in such a way that there is a clear understanding of each other's role in addressing poverty and social inclusion. This includes national agencies having a more clearly defined mandate in regard to the local/national interface and for a clear local dimension being put in place within all national and regional bodies.

A process is required that integrates the application of NAP/inclusion with local delivery. This should be facilitated by the OSI and a National Implementation Group representative of national and local bodies, which would provide the arena in which national expectations and local priorities could be addressed. It would involve ensuring that national personnel sitting on the SIM/CDBs are fully conversant with their own departmental mandates in regard to poverty and social inclusion and would have the responsibility to translate these into local action.

Equally the local authorities and other local agencies, through the CDBs, now have the means to think in strategic terms in regard to poverty and social inclusion. To do so requires their understanding of the national policy framework. This understanding can be provided for through the opening up of dialogue with the national process in the National Implementation Group. Thus complementarity between national expectation and local priority can be established.

The following strategic recommendations are therefore put forward for consideration:

6.1 A Coherent Framework

The creation of a coherent framework between local and national levels, and established within the strategic objectives of NAP/inclusion, is recommended as a first step towards establishing a dialogue between the local level and the national process. In this regard it is recommended that the Senior Officials Group, in consultation with the Social Inclusion Consultative Group, establish the strategic objectives on tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion for each government department. These should then be translated into corporate objectives and business plans by each department. In addition, the Strategic Objectives should be signed off by the Cabinet Committee in order to provide the necessary political approval to what will be seen as a fundamental shift forward in policy implementation terms.

6.2 Corporate Plan Priorities

At department level the on-going integration of NAP/inclusion objectives into the corporate strategies of each department should continue, particularly through the translation of these objectives into substantive delivery in the business plans of each department. These in turn should be further translated into corporate guidance for all public agencies reporting to parent departments. Individual management responsibilities should underpin these requirements through the development of appropriate performance indicators based on the policy outcomes set out in the Strategy. Annual performance appraisal through PMDS should provide for poverty and social inclusion based on these indicators.

6.3 Need to Examine Existing Structures

Existing structures remain central to deepening NAP/inclusion in policy terms throughout the public service and in particular at the local level. This means using existing structures such as the CDBs which would have a role to play in facilitating the translation of national policy commitments into local delivery. However, in doing so it is essential that, using the appraisal regime as set out above, members of the Boards have a clear understanding in regard to their mandate and capacity to deliver.

6.4 Focus on Results-Based Outcomes

NAP/inclusion has a series of clearly identified policy outcomes. What is missing is the interpretation of departmental business planning at local delivery level. This creates a dichotomy between national expectations and actual delivery. It is further undermined by targeted actions that are unrelated to the broad policy intent. Embedding agreed expectations that are signed off in terms of performance measurement and protocols across the national level and thereafter with the local delivery process should be a key feature of corporate/business planning.

At the local level this could be manifested in the form of Local Area Agreements, building on the positive experience of RAPID and Area-based Partnerships. Alternatively, Boards may consider the adoption of local social inclusion strategies to be appropriate. In such instances it is critical that these are seen as a complement to NAP/inclusion and within the framework of the National Development Plan.

6.5 Facilitation of the Exchange of Good Practice

A key challenge for the national level is to create for itself an understanding of the level of good practice now taking place at local level. An example of good practice is the level of flexibility in resourcing that can be found in several development-based funding regimes such as the Cohesion Fund of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Clár and RAPID. Equally significant is the creation of a flow of information and dialogue between local and national levels in regard to mainstreaming successful pilot actions that have a proven effectiveness in policy terms at the local level and within the strategic objectives of both NAP/inclusion and the NDP.

6.6 Engagement Across Government Departments

All government departments need to ensure the translation of national objectives into their corporate and business plans. They should set out for subsidiary agencies the specific requirements of engagement at local level. This could be further progressed through the application of performance appraisal for individual civil and public servants by the use of PMDS. Such engagement should reflect the local dimension of the relevant departments and State agencies in regard to the responsibilities of members of staff who represent them on CDBs. In addition, the means of co-ordinating the activities

of such members should be explicitly set out and the means of taking back local perspective into departmental or State agency business planning should be explicitly established

6.7 Agree Protocols

In regard to cross-cutting issues in NAP/inclusion, clear protocols need to be agreed among the Senior Officials Group, with the support of the OSI, and signed off by the Cabinet Committee. Such protocols would relate to the interpretation of NAP/inclusion application within the individual corporate plans of each department. These in turn should be the basis of communication with CDB member agencies in regard to local application. Thus, in addition to delivery at individual departmental level, there is a clear complementarity between the national framework generally and the local implementation regime as represented by the CDB. In this way representatives at local level will appreciate the internal demand within departments for application of the NAP/inclusion but also the clear political priority being given by the political and senior managerial framework.

6.8 Mechanisms to Provide for Listening

Central to the above is a series of mechanisms for listening to the local perspective. In part, such can be provided through the membership of the local authorities in the Social Inclusion Consultative Group. However, there is a need to provide for more structured dialogue between the Cabinet Committee and the Senior Officials Group with the local level. At least one such event should be arranged on a yearly basis involving the relevant minister(s) and senior officials with the CCMA, ACCC, AMAI, LGAPLN and Directors of Community and Enterprise. Alternatively, re-establishing an Inter-Departmental Group for the CDBs should be considered.

6.9 Drivers at Local and National Level

The experience of the National Task Force for the Integration of Local Government and Local Development in establishing the CDB process was very positive and represents, in European terms, best practice in policy development. Critically this group of senior civil servants, chaired by a minister, demonstrated just what can be achieved when a national framework is established and underpinned by both political and administrative commitment. A National Implementation Group, with a clear role for monitoring NAP/

inclusion at local level via the local CDBs, should be established. Membership of this Group should include representatives of relevant government departments and State agencies as well as representation from the City and County Managers Association. Sub-groups of the Implementation Group could be expanded to include other relevant bodies.

6.10 Regional Intermediaries

Unlike spatial planning and the roll out of the National Spatial Strategy there is no immediate need to establish a regional dimension to NAP/inclusion. What is required is a clear integration into local planning of conditions for addressing poverty and social inclusion issues beyond that of Part V of the 2000 Planning Act, in order to ensure the incorporation of these issues across all aspects of local government. There is evidence that this is already happening. National advice should be considered, in order to ensure application into all planning authority policy development.

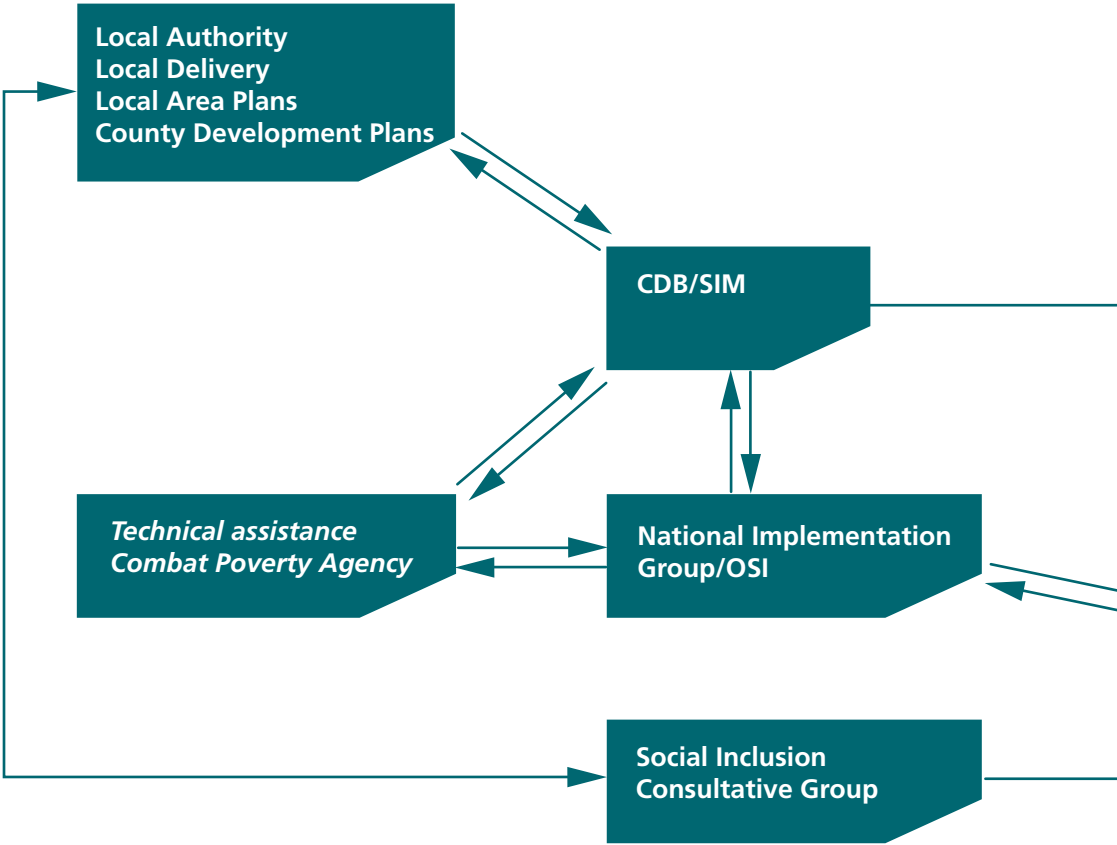
6.11 Designated Persons within Departments

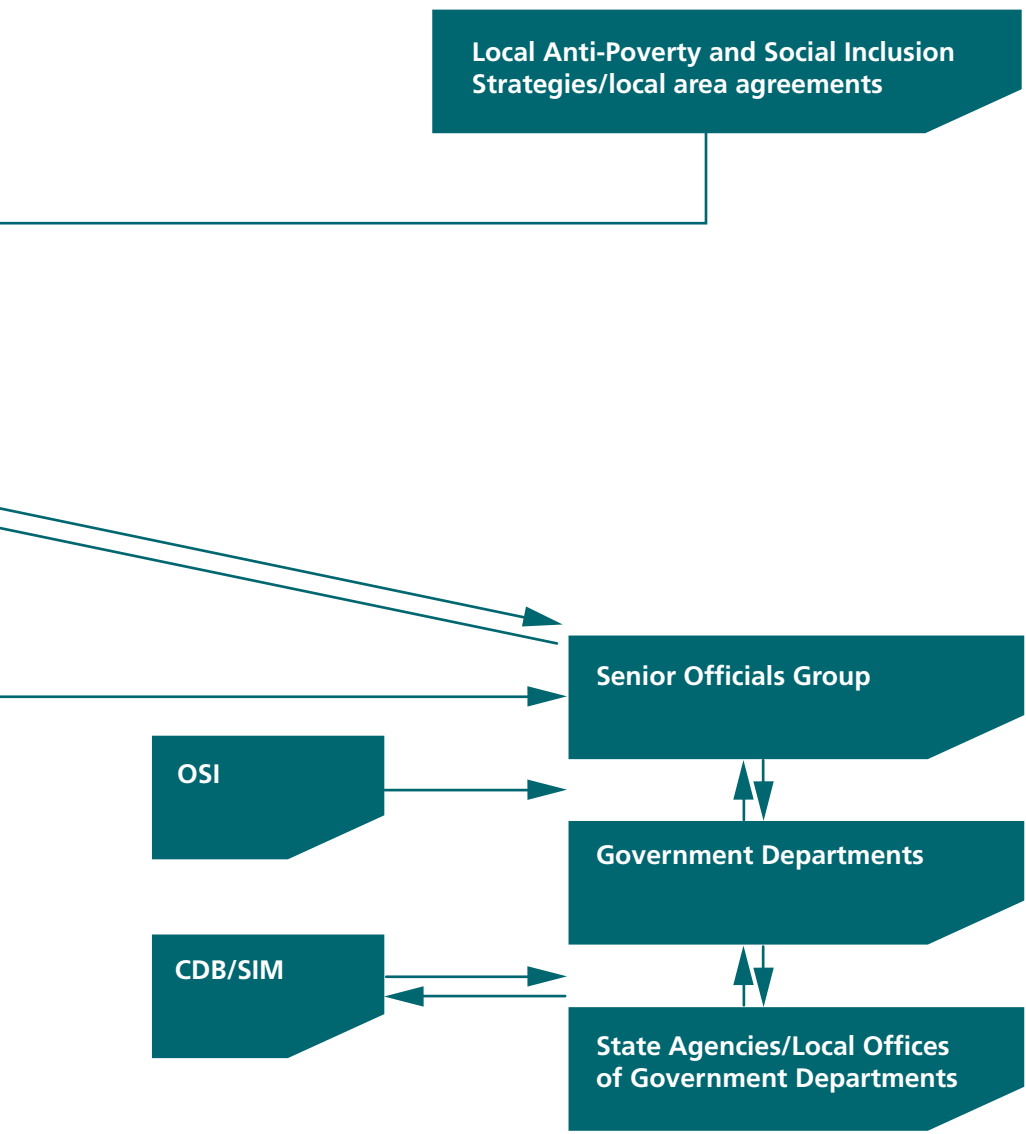
At the outset, NAP/inclusion was to be underpinned by a network of designated officers in each government department. This may no longer be the most ideal way of incorporating NAP/inclusion into departmental planning. What is required is recognition by those responsible for translating government policy into action, that NAP/inclusion policy forms part of this task. Such applies even in areas where the relationship between the policy area of the department and NAP/inclusion is tenuous. This can be addressed within the application of the PIA/RIA process. The OSI should take a role in ensuring that those involved in the RIA process are fully briefed regarding NAP/inclusion issues.

6.12 The Role of CDBs in Context

Despite considerable effort on the part of CDB members and Directors, the CDBs remain somewhat constrained in their role of overview and co-ordination of public services at local level. In contrast, their counterparts in other advanced European economies frequently have a significant role in regard to public policy effectiveness, a role that is set out within clear protocols agreed at national level. Essentially, the support of national bodies and relevant government departments in tandem with the co-operation of their agencies at local level is required if CDBs are to successfully deliver on their mission to achieve the integrated delivery of services.

IMPLEMENTATION MODEL





7 NEXT STEPS

Implementation of the Recommendations discussed in Chapter 6, over the coming years, will ensure that poverty and social inclusion issues are well positioned within local government, relevant local agencies and local offices of national agencies and departments. In addition, there is a need to open up communication between the local sectors and the national policy-making arena and to provide an opportunity for the local voice to be heard at national level. Therefore the following specific actions are recommended for application over the coming year:

At National Level

- 1** The OSI should prepare a series of national objectives relating to NAP/ inclusion for consideration at corporate level by each government department and agency. These should be integrated into the business plans of such bodies.
- 2** Each department and State agency should be required to implement NAP/ inclusion through its business plans and action plans where applicable. All departments and agencies should be required to issue an annual report to the Senior Officials Group for Social Inclusion in regard to implementation.
- 3** Facilitation by the OSI of the exchange of good practice should be put in place through the Social Inclusion Consultative Group and by the issue of an annual national monitoring report that would detail yearly progress.
- 4** The OSI should take a role in ensuring that those charged with completing the PIA/RIA process at national level are sufficiently briefed regarding the integration of social issues into the RIA process.

- 5** Local authorities should be informed of the existence of the OSI website www.socialinclusion.ie as a resource tool for local government.
- 6** The County and City Managers Association, the Association of County and City Councils and the Association of Municipal Authorities should be invited to sit on the Social Inclusion Consultative Group.
- 7** Guidelines on the integration of NAP/inclusion into the local policy framework should be prepared by the OSI in consultation with relevant government departments and Combat Poverty for application at local level through the adoption of a local social inclusion strategy.
- 8** National performance criteria, derived from NAP/inclusion criteria, should be prepared for application into business plans of government departments, national agencies and local authorities.
- 9** The new NDP should underpin commitment to tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion through identifying CDBs as the local coordinating bodies charged with the overall monitoring of local delivery. In this context, support must be provided to the CDBs by relevant government departments and agencies together with the OSI and the Combat Poverty Agency. Guidance should be provided by the OSI in consultation with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Combat Poverty.
- 10** A National Implementation Group should be established with a clear role for monitoring NAP/inclusion at local level via the local CDBs. This Group should be representative of the relevant government departments, State agencies and County and City Managers Association, and be chaired by the OSI. Sub-groups of the Implementation Group could be expanded to include other relevant bodies.
- 11** The Combat Poverty Agency should act as a technical assistance unit in regard to the dissemination of experience and provision of training in the preparation of social inclusion strategies and poverty impact assessment, and generally act as a reservoir/research facility for both national and local levels.

At Local Level

- 12** A local anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy (LAPSIS), based on relevant guidance from the OSI in consultation with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the County and City Managers Association and the Combat Poverty Agency, should be prepared as appropriate in each city/county. It should be provided with adequate resources and support from national level. Pilot strategies are currently underway with the support of Combat Poverty in Laois and Wicklow. These could provide demonstration models for other cities and counties.
- 13** On completion of the above process countrywide, a national distillation of the strategies could be prepared and presented to the National Implementation Group suggested above and the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion for incorporation into the national policy process.
- 14** Guidelines on the implementation of Poverty Impact Assessment should be issued by the OSI and be piloted in a number of planning authorities in regard to both local area plans and county development plans.

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APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRES

All thirty-four County/City Managers in the County/City Councils and the Director of Services of the City and County Development Boards were contacted for information in the form of a questionnaire sent on 24/01/06. Feedback was requested from them by 05/02/06 in order 'to identify potential linkages between the national and local level in the context of the development and implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy'.

The total number of respondents was twenty-two and the results from the comments received by the County Development Boards and County Councils/ City Councils are analysed below. These have been dealt with in the questionnaire format that was sent out and analysed individually by question below.

A COMMUNICATING NATIONAL POLICY INITIATIVES

1. *Please identify the principal national contact points for your Authority in regard to your role in addressing social inclusion at the local level*

The response to this question is shown in the table below where an agency is listed downward by number of times it occurs in the response.

Name of Group(s)	Number of Times Named
DoEHLG (Sections of)	22
Combat Poverty Agency (CPA)	15
DCR&GA (RAPID, Pobal)	16
Dept. Justice, Equality and Law Reform (DJELR)	9
Office for Social Inclusion	8
Dept. Social and Family Affairs and other County Development Board members, e.g. VEC	7
Department of Health and Children	2
VEC (DoE) – RAPID	2
Local Government Anti-Poverty Learning Network	3
National Disability Authority	4
National Voluntary Structures; e.g. Age Opportunity, disability representative groups	2
Equality Authority	2
National Monitoring Committee (RAPID)	2
Arts Council and Dept. Arts, Sports and Tourism	2
Department Education and Science	3
Task force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems (now defunct)	1
Dormant Accounts	2
Directors of Community and Enterprise: National Network	1
National Council on Ageing and Older People	1
National Children's Office	1
Aged – Regional Employment Pact	1
Comhairle na nÓg	1
CCMA Committee	1
Central Statistics Office	1
Consultation Process, e.g. NAP/inclusion.	1

As we can see from the table above the main contact points for most of the CDBs are the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG), the Combat Poverty Agency and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs; to a lesser extent, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department Social and Family Affairs and the Office for Social Inclusion. Communication and contact between these agencies would depend on the project that is being worked on at that time by the CDB.

It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive list. All members of the CDB and groups within the local authorities have a variety of contacts throughout various departments.

2. Could communication with the national level be improved?					
Number of Respondents	22	Yes	22	No	0

Recommendations include the following:

- There needs to be more inter-departmental communication, e.g. regarding Travellers, conflicting Legislation.
- There is no structured engagement of local authorities/CDBs with government departments, e.g. Finance, Health, Social and Family Affairs. Engagement would improve local implementation of policy and the development and review of policy.
- Communication at county level should be to the Community and Enterprise Departments of the County Council and then brought to the SIM working Group.
- There is a lack of information flow from the Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development which recommended the establishment of the SIMs Group. There is a lack of co-ordinated, clear direction at local level on addressing social inclusion. Therefore, the impact of reducing the commitment of agencies to the SIMs group must be considered.
- Streamline Social Inclusion Measures.
- Task force at national level should be reconvened. It would be beneficial to have a mechanism at national level similar to that of the National Monitoring Committee of RAPID. This has been very effective at enacting change at both local and national levels.

- Establish a national CDB co-ordinating body to coordinate social inclusion issues as they emerge at local level. Strengthen the Local Government Anti-Poverty Learning Network (flow of information and exchange of best practice).
- Community and Enterprise is under-resourced and communication from local authority is limited; there is a negative attitude in some government departments to the growing role of social inclusion concerns.
- There should be a direct link to the NAP/inclusion office from the County Development Board process.
- Progress reports regarding actions for specific target groups should be circulated (short and summarised).
- Some CDBs are being funded by Comhairle to examine mechanisms for reporting social policy issues as they are identified on the ground. This will identify obstacles to progressing local issues to national level and how systems can be improved to address these issues.
- Communication with DoEHLG is good. However, communication across policy areas is not very effective. Likewise for linking some policy areas with the social inclusion themes, e.g. planning and housing. Communication with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is currently intermittent and could be strengthened to the benefit of both perspectives. Communication with some government departments and agencies such as Pobal remain difficult and need to be promoted. There is limited prior engagement or contribution from the local level in national policy. Therefore ineffective policy and lack of integration is experienced. There is a disconnection in policy between and within agencies, at national, regional and local level. A more successful delivery of NAP/inclusion and related policies depends on a more effective link with the work of local authorities.
- Include more departments in cohesion and integration process at local level. Agencies such as FÁS, HSE, VEC, Department of Social and Family Affairs, IDA, Enterprise Ireland, etc. should be required to present their annual action plans to the CDB for endorsement. This directive needs to come from national parent departments who have a strategic framework nationally to ensure that the integration of services at a local level are adequate. Resources and trained personnel are needed to ensure that this is done effectively.

Summary

The responses showed that respondents think more could be done for improved communication. The main issues raised related to the flow of information. Currently there are no clearly defined lines of communication and therefore feedback from the national to local level is stifled. The SIM working group's role could be improved to coordinate the national and local feedback and coordination role.

3. Are you satisfied with the manner in which your local responses in policy terms to social inclusion are factored into national policy?

Respondents	22	Yes	3	No	18	Partly	1
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Comments from No responses

- A national co-ordinating group for CDBs similar to RAPID could address deficiency.
- There is urgent need for communication at national level of the local-level priorities that are set out in the CDB strategies and review documents.
- The SIM working group could be better utilised by connecting it to perhaps a central integrated group (organised two-way flow of information.)
- The role of the CDB in endorsement process suffers from lack of clear policy at national level.
- A mechanism is needed to facilitate views of local organisations seeking to identify gaps/overlaps in service delivery.
- Responses can be improved by seeking meaningful input, rather than input at short notice, or in circumstances where the policy position is already substantially developed; by acknowledging the receipt of policy submissions and advising on how they may or may not have been able to be reflected in national outcomes (feedback); by providing overall guidance and by creating opportunities for an ongoing policy discourse between local and national level. A review of 'pilot' Local Authority Social Inclusion Units has demonstrated their effectiveness. This resource should be extended to all local authorities.
- Social inclusion needs to be factored into each department, not just those who directly interact with vulnerable client groups.

Comments from Yes responses

Number of returns stated that the RAPID programme was a good model to follow, particularly the way the National Monitoring Group submitted policy papers to government departments.

Comments from mixed view

Knowledge of social inclusion must be deepened at local level – further resources and support are needed.

4. Do you believe all Board members are contributing effectively to national agencies' planning processes on behalf of the Board and its priorities in social inclusion?

Respondents	22	Yes	3	No	18	Mixed	1
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How could they be encouraged to contribute effectively?

Comments from No responses

- There should be more 'horizontal' communication between agencies at national level.
- There should be consultation with local level partners in national planning for social inclusion and ensuring that local partners actively participate.
- People should be able to see if local issues have impacted on national policy. There is need for a formal framework to address social inclusion.
- If the DSFA fulfilled this function, an annual reporting structure could be established to focus on the social inclusion aspects of each matter considered by the County Council.
- Social Inclusion Unit should inform Council.
- The national agencies should actively seek input from their CDB members on issues addressing social inclusion.
- The task force needs to be reconstituted, CDBs should have more authority, more resources are required to support SIM groups – needs one fulltime worker.
- The control that CDBs have should be reinforced by all government departments in an ongoing manner.
- There should be a designated Social Inclusion Officer in all agencies, with linkages to each other locally and nationally.
- A mechanism is needed for CDBs to flag up issues of concern. For example, Quarterly reports could be submitted at senior level and then issues could be identified and presented to the Ministerial group for action and follow up.
- Board members should be given a stronger mandate by their own organisations. There should be a requirement to bring their agency's action plans for endorsement to the CDB.
- Cooperation with CDBs should be encouraged across all national and regional agencies, not just in the corporate plans of some national agencies. Annual reports should have sections which describe and measure the organisation's contribution to the work of the CDB. Member agencies of the CDB should identify resources within budgetary provisions to support the CDB. There should be an assessment of the overall performance, effectiveness and contribution of the CDB process and the local integration of services that the CDB supports through respective city and county strategies.

- More support and resources are required from parent departments to make an effective contribution to national policy-making. Social inclusion is viewed too sectorally and as the remit of certain agencies.

Comments from YES responses

- The national agencies' planning process should actively seek input from their CDB members on issues such as addressing social inclusion.
- Top-down approach at present makes it difficult for them to contribute effectively. They are asked to conform to national thinking rather than vice-versa.
- There is a need for the strengthening of the SIM working groups at city/county level for co-ordination and integration of services and policy.
- There could be a stronger mandate at national level for the work of the CDB.

Comments from Mixed View response

- The extent to which local staff can influence policy/decisions made by national agencies is mixed. If the national agencies show willingness to consider feedback from CDBs and/or staff in local offices, this may improve matters.

Summary

All responses indicate that there is not enough being done at present. This appears to be the result of having no mechanism for communicating effectively from local to national, or vice-versa. Participation and awareness also needs to be increased across all government departments and not just those that deal directly with social inclusion issues.

5. To what extent are national policy initiatives communicated to you for consideration within the corporate planning of the local authority?

- The social inclusion aspects of all existing national policies were considered and included in the corporate plan and in operational plans of the county council.
- National policy initiatives are received by the local authority, then discussed by management team, party leader meetings, corporate policy group. Or they are brought to the relevant SPC and then council is briefed where appropriate.
- Varies with policy area and departments.
- They are communicated by means of directives of policy. They are generally obtained through mainstream media and government publications and locally initiated studies.

- Corporate planning process reflects the national policy.
- It is communicated well when the manager leads corporate planning. The need to prioritise social inclusion should be repeated by the DoEHLG for a number of years as change is slow. Also specific feedback on performances should be provided by the DoEHLG.
- Opportunities are there for all departments but mostly, and firstly, Community and Enterprise would be aware of social inclusion measures.
- Submissions are sought from time to time on specific issues. Community and Enterprise would be asked for opinion and response.
- There is limited communication of these matters.
- They receive less consideration than other mainstream services.
- National policy initiatives are fed through by circulars generally, and in some limited cases through organised regional meetings.
- They are communicated mainly through the corporate planning process within the local authority and relevant circulars for comment.
- All policies received are communicated to Dept Head's level and then referred to the relevant section. Each SPC is up and functioning and members discuss/approve policy initiatives at such meetings.
- Communication is inadequate. Consideration of relevant national policy issues is dependent on staff at local level investigating and detecting, in advance, the changes, developments and consequences of national policy deliberations.
- Communication is through circulars to the manager and the Directors of Service and come down through the system via Directors of Service. Details are generally informed to the elected members at county council meetings.

Summary

The feedback here is mixed. Some have a designated process for considering national policy within their organisations, others feel that it comes to them by media, or that there needs to be specific staff to study policies and the consequences for the work of the organisation. Corporate plans will reflect national policy, but communication can vary from policy area and department.

6. *How, in your opinion, could such initiatives be better communicated to both elected members and the management of the local authority?*

- The PMDS programme has a role to play in this. There should be an introduction after local elections regarding background and objectives to all members.
- Improve reporting by agencies at CDB level, with appropriate consideration by CPG and Council.
- There should be information briefings prior to policy implementation.
- Significant initiatives may be more comprehensively understood if disseminated at workshops or seminars.
- A more dynamic CCMA committee is needed.
- There should be improved regional networking by directors of Community and Enterprise. Continuation of LGAPLN. Structured work with elected members through their representative organisations.
- Through management meetings; elected members through their own network.
- Through regional information sessions – rather than looking for individual submissions from each local authority. There are common issues for all local authorities.
- Increased dissemination of information to all levels and grades within the local authority may be necessary. This may be a local issue that can be managed internally.
- Circulars could be issued from all national agencies and government departments with a social inclusion remit. The government departments and agencies could link into the LGAPLN and the network's seminars, newsletters, etc could be used to communicate specific initiatives from national to local level.
- Utilise the C&E as a conduit in the local authority to inform and highlight issues to both management and elected members.
- Needs initial buy-in from the CCMA and the Association of County and City Councils before dissemination down to individual local authorities.
- Prior consultation is needed with the local authorities to provide for informed national policy, which in turn would lead to a smoother implementation of national policy at local level.
- The initiatives should be placed on the management team agenda and discussed at relevant strategic policy committees, particularly when the initiatives are being formulated.

- Communication can best occur through utilising the mechanism that is already in place through joint functional sub-committees and their links with various government departments. Departments can more effectively channel policy initiatives and disclosure to local government, both to its executive structures and at DoS level, and to elected members at SPC level.
- National policy would require better briefing to local authority officials and members. This should be done at regional level.
- A News Bulletin on social inclusion policy could be sent to all elected members, LA management and members of the CDB.

7. Are you aware of the activities being carried out by the other members in regard to their national mandates?

<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>Always</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>No response</i>
22	0	19	1	1	1

8. How could communication between the members be improved, particularly in relation to cross-cutting social inclusion objectives?

- Through meetings at national level.
- Through meetings dedicated to social inclusion and awareness campaigns to key stakeholders in addressing social inclusion.
- Improve information sharing structures and practice link to new CDB co-ordinating group.
- Formalise the role of the C&E in relation to social inclusion. Study the effectiveness of the Social Inclusion Units in the local authorities that have them. Promote the development of mandatory Local Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategies for each CDB. Create a national reporting structure to the co-ordinating unit in the DSFA through the CDB.
- SIM working group could be used more effectively for communicating and for training and leadership from national departments. It is the best mechanism for sharing information.
- SIMs initial mandate was to ‘co-ordinate’ the delivery of social inclusion measures. It is the best mechanism for sharing information.
- Promote the development of mandatory Local Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategies for each participating agent on the CDB. Create and resource a national reporting structure to the coordinating unit in the DSFA through the CDB.

- Through a constant agenda item on social inclusion issues.
- Through the Board's sub-structures, particularly the social sub-committee and SIM working groups.
- Better co-operation at national level by continued communication from national to local. New county structures should be brought under the umbrella of the CDB which endorses programmes and gives direction based on an inter- agency dialogue and thinking.
- Build on linkages between local authority and CDBs and create a specific agenda of the SIM committee.
- Through their parent departments and by reactivating the Inter-Departmental Task Force.
- The SIM group is the closest model locally to how this can be best achieved. The problem can be that the members are under the remit of different national departments/organisations. The parent departments organise initiatives for their local agencies. In some cases more joint events are organised. But due to time and other commitments it is difficult to get all members to attend. It goes back to lack of a coherent effort nationally to emphasise the integral importance of joint-working.
- For the elected members, there could be greater discussion on social inclusion objectives at corporate policy group meetings in particular and also at council meetings. Cross-cutting social inclusion objectives should be the responsibility of all SPCs. For the other members on the CDB, the Board and its sub-groups are best placed to deal with an inter- agency approach to social inclusion.
- Through an inter- agency approach to social inclusion.
- By clear, consistent directives from national agencies at the 'centre' to engage with CDB-related activities. By clear, persistent commitments from local agencies to encourage staff to engage with colleagues within other agencies, around learning and integration. By developing a series of regular meetings/ policy fora, between national agencies and CDBs and member agency staffs. By refocusing on the more effective work of SIM working group.
- Sub-committees of the Board could be established with a mandate to report back to the Board on a quarterly basis.
- Through central collation of policy and directives relating to social inclusion and distribution to the LA and CDB.

Summary

In general there seems to be a call for a more defined role of SIM groups in the areas of co-ordination and integration of policies. The RAPID programme seemed to have good local and national structures in its objectives, implementation and associated outcomes.

B YOUR ORGANISATION, WORKPLACE

1. *What do your colleagues within your organisation know about the issues of social inclusion and national policies, particularly the National Anti-Poverty Strategy?*

- In larger councils little is known, even though various booklets on social inclusion have been distributed.
- In smaller councils it is easier for information to be circulated. Discussions in some cases take place at management team meetings on a fortnightly basis, which keeps it on the agenda and monitors progress. Social Inclusion Units can embed the issue throughout the organisation.
- Aware of the document through various publications, particularly from the C&E dept. Various aspects of the document are highlighted in annual staff calendars and other internet training initiatives.
- Some departments might know, e.g. Housing. But generally weak.
- Social inclusion issues relating directly to local government, e.g. housing, RAPID, access, affordability of services, etc are to the fore, and also initiatives taken by the CDB. Awareness of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy would not be very high.
- The level of awareness is uneven and often limited to what we are required to do under a given act as opposed to an integrated cross-departmental approach to developing an anti-poverty strategy.
- The Anti-Poverty Working Group acts as a resource to each section in this area. Councillors' training manual and course run by IPA contained social inclusion material. Website section on social inclusion is about to go on the County Council Intranet. Principles of social inclusion are embedded in the corporate plan, the arts plan 2005-2009 and the work plan of the Community Forum.
- The Social Inclusion Strategy 2006-2009 is intended to give local meaning to high-level objectives contained in NAP/inclusion.
- Some departments are aware, but there is now a strong focus in the corporate plan, so others should be aware. Also disability awareness training is made available to all staff.
- Staff knowledge has improved but could still be increased.

- Colleagues are very aware of the Local Government Anti-Poverty Learning Network, the Local Anti-Poverty Network and the Local Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy. Social inclusion is now a part of the corporate planning process and the PMDS.
- Varies from department to department. But there is increased awareness through staff training on social inclusion issues. There is a proposal to undertake a county 'Poverty Profile'.
- Varies from department to department. Colleagues are aware of pilot Social Inclusion Unit.
- Some awareness in C&E, Housing Department and library but difficult to measure. In some cases people think social inclusion does not apply to all departments and some do not have an understanding of social inclusion. More direction is needed from line management and DoEHLG across all sections.
- Need to acknowledge and reinforce the central role that local authorities play as a '... forum of democratic representation and ... civic leadership ...' for their respective communities. Equally for member agencies there is no clear indication that NAP/inclusion plays any role in their own organisation's priorities or operational considerations.
- There is incomplete appreciation of the implications of the NAP/inclusion and related national policies within local authorities. In many respects, this is driven by the established programmes and funding priorities across a range of national agencies and departments. These are not being sufficiently integrated, and are not responsive to the difficulties and challenges that arise at local implementation.
- Some staff are more aware of the subject than others. All sections were sent a copy of the Local Social Inclusion Strategy which was completed last year. When completing the PMDS process this year the implementation of this strategy will have implications in nearly all sections and will be included in work plans. More awareness exercises are required.
- Integrated into corporate plan and into annual operational plans.

Summary

Generally knowledge within departments depends on the level of involvement the other groups have with social inclusion issues. Apart from the focus in corporate plans, some training and awareness is provided in a number of CDBs and local authorities, but knowledge seems to be very thin on the ground.

2. *What do they know about your involvement/responsibilities?*

- Good awareness due to the small size of the organisation and there are many linkages between relevant sections on topical issues.
- The C&E dept would be recognised for promoting initiatives around social inclusion through the calendar, through training which has been organised and through involvement in different projects arising from the SIM group.
- They would be aware of the Directorates' involvement in social inclusion work and our role in leading cross-departmental work in this area.
- Community and Enterprise Unit has broad responsibility for the development of policy and procedures in relation to social inclusion in the local authority. It achieves this by negotiation and co-operation with all other units of the local authority.
- Information on social inclusion issues are addressed at management team and senior management group level as the need arises. A number of working groups also exist and focus on particular issues.
- All sections would know about C&E social inclusion issues.
- High level of awareness through CDB strategy and organisational initiatives through RAPID and Clár programme.
- Activities set out in corporate plan/operational plans and would be spread through training programmes. Staff are aware that it is within directorate policy with C&E and senior management.
- Some departments have knowledge through their involvement in SIM groups. Recent Review of Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development has helped further this knowledge. Training sessions on anti-poverty creates knowledge.
- Some knowledge varies from directorate to directorate, and individual links between personnel of C&E.
- Aware through the Local Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy of local actions. Not all staff would be aware of our increased involvement and responsibilities.
- Regular updates on SIM are included in the council's bi-monthly eBulletin.
- Limited awareness. Colleagues think it is responsibility of personnel in C&E.

Summary

The majority of responses showed that there is an awareness of the general policy issues but no responses stated that people would be aware of specific roles and responsibilities. In some CDBs knowledge can be limited to those areas that work with social inclusion measures.

3. Have you effective means of feeding back to your organisation and if yes what are they?

Respondents*	22	Yes	19	No	2
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* No comment from Westmeath

Comments from Yes response

- Through internal mechanism such as directors/management, team meetings, strategic policy committees and full council on occasion.
- Through management team meetings on a fortnightly basis, section staff meetings within directorate. eGovernment team meetings. Internal newsletter.
- Feedback is given through directorate team meetings and to management team meetings.
- Through the corporate plan and quarterly reports presented to the county council.
- Through in-house social inclusion committee and RAPID committee, and we can consult with staff to either share information or canvass opinions.
- Through management team, department meetings, SPC area committee meetings, CDB meetings, council meetings.
- Discussed by management team through Director of C&E. Any issues can also be brought up before the SPC.
- Through senior management meetings, council meetings, SPC, training courses, pilot projects and cross-boarder projects.
- Through meetings of Local Anti-Poverty Learning Network, annual reports, CDB newsletter, senior management meetings, Intranet.
- Through management team, corporate policy and SPC. Presentations to senior officers, groups but less often to elected representatives. Specific initiatives with a social inclusion focus, as they arise.
- Work programmes reflect feedback, management meetings, and CPG. But need to improve interaction at elected council level; review of process output is being fed back to SPCs as relevant. Regular updates at senior management team meetings, SIM meetings, presentations to elected members and CDB, SIM newsletter, review of operational plans and presentation to SPCs.
- Through management team meetings, staff meetings, Intranet, and corporate plan.
- Through internal publications and eNewsletters. Submissions to the DoS, team meetings and submissions to the management team.

Comments from the No Response

- Management team meetings are the main opportunity to discuss the work of the CDB and C&E unit. While management is committed, there are practical constraints which limit engagement by senior and operational staffs, including work overload, a lack of knowledge or understanding, and a lack of appreciation of need for integrated working. The PMDS process should help overcome some of these constraints.
- More work needs to be done in this area. A policy unit should be set up in the local authorities with the role of effectively feeding information vertically and horizontally, ensuring that all staff in the local authorities are aware of their obligations under the new national policy and are engaged on an ongoing basis in feeding into policy-making at both a local and national level.

Summary

Team meetings are the main method for feeding back information to the organisation. For the majority of the respondents this seems to be working. However, some feel that more work needs to be done in this area by, for example, setting up a policy unit with the role of effectively feeding information in both directions, so that all within the local authority are aware of their obligations. The unit would enable input into policy-making at both local and national levels.

4. Does your organisation provide you with enough resources to undertake your work with the Board?

<i>Respondents</i>	22	<i>Yes</i>	15	<i>No</i>	4	<i>No comment</i>	3
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Comments made

- Might create a better buy-in if there is a multi- agency approach to resources. But more staff would provide better service.
- Cannot answer because it varies from organisation to organisation.

5. *What types of support and resources do they offer?*

- Staff and financial resources to run office of C&E.
- Reasonable staff structure and budget allocated through the estimates as needed.
- Financial, staff and other professional expertise.
- Staff resources for Community & Enterprise and a small technical fund of approximately €10,000 p.a.
- Staff, money, facilities.
- Fifty per cent of time of CEDOs spent working on social inclusion issues with the CDB, the other fifty per cent for social inclusion and community development issues for the LA. Very effective support for the Community Forum, one staff member and a part-time administrator. Two appointments in the last two years of a Social Worker for Travellers and Homeless People and a Tenant Liaison Worker.
- Availability of staff and grants schemes.
- Information on social inclusion issues are addressed at management team and senior management group level as the need arises. A number of working groups exist in the local authority, focused on particular issues.
- C&E section, training, pilot project support.
- Staff and funding.
- Financial, staff, office accommodation, meeting rooms, ICT system. Staff and budget.
- Administrative support.
- Financial and specialist staff to support work of CDB. The local authorities contribute to policy and research.
- Staff and some financial support .

6. *What additional support might they offer?*

- Generally found that any support sought is provided.
- It would be helpful if supports from other CDB member agencies would become a requirement.
- Research resource.
- Ideally a community development worker to work with local communities in the development/coordination of social inclusion initiatives in our housing areas and in identified communities of disadvantage in the county. At least one other tenant liaison worker needed with community development skills.

- The PMDS programme offers an opportunity to embed social inclusion in performance management, objective setting and staff development.
- Introduction of Social Inclusion Units so as to embed the principles of social inclusion across the organisation, Funding necessary from DoEHLG in that regard.
- Extra funding and extra staff.
- Additional resources, funded from national level.
- Additional staff.
- Establish a Social Inclusion Unit.
- Staff training.
- Budget to undertake research and budget to drive/assist in pilot actions.
- Clearer delegation of responsibilities to respective Directors of Service with regard to achieving objectives under the CDB strategy and to contributing to the local authority's work with the CDB and member agencies.

7. Do you have the authority to act on behalf of your organisation?

Respondents	22*	Yes	21	No	0
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*One county did not answer this question.

8. Do you think the Board's activity is benefiting your organisation?

Respondents	22*	Yes	21	No	0
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*One county did not answer this question

- The Board's activity allows the organisation to take the lead in a significant number of areas within the community and to create the joined-up government that is now required at local level.
- It provides linkages to the other organisations in the city. As issues and concerns arise they can be discussed and addressed by the Board or brought to the relevant sub-committee.
- Social inclusion allows for closer working between the various agencies and different people within the local authority. Where joint training has also been facilitated, it provides a networking system and develops channels for joint problem solving.

- It provides greater integration between the local authority and the local and rural development sectors.
- It provides a mechanism for ensuring good communications with any other agency and/or groups which may affect or be affected by our policies, and it also provides opportunities to develop an integrated approach to social inclusion issues.
- The CDB has influenced thinking in terms of greater awareness of national policies and the need to develop synergies in our work. It has created awareness among member agencies on the needs of the county and the need to take an inter-agency approach if we are to be effective in tackling social exclusion. It has also created greater awareness and openness, knowledge and experience of one another's work and organisational strengths and weakness. However, there is a tension between the demands of the work of the Board and the need to develop social inclusion work in-house. Member agencies need to commit staff to the delivery of actions and not presume that the LA is the sole resource and delivery agent!
- The CDB flags new trends and allows members to share information both on a formal and informal basis.
- CDB activity brings the local authority closer to the operational activity of other agencies and facilitates integrated planning at local level. The principles of local governance are well served through CDB structures and sub-structures.
- Increasing role in local and community development also strongly emphasises our corporate plan objectives.
- Much progress has been made; the work is half done. The Boards need authority and money and they need it quickly.
- CDB benefits all organisations, developing the county. They lobby for the county, which benefits the work of the county council. Networking, co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration all make for positive open thinking for development.
- Provides new opportunities for local government to interact with local, rural and community development. Is bringing about a change in culture to engage in collaborative actions. Understanding the need for targeted and multi- agency responses to counter social exclusion.
- Improved relationship with other organisations is leading to improvements in sharing information and greater alignment in our plans/strategies. There is also evidence of improved joint working projects.

- Awareness, implementation of actions in CDB strategy, Best practice sharing, team working, inter- agency cooperation.
- Implementation of CDB strategy actions and networking and sharing of information.
- The CDB has emphasised the importance of developing and managing relationships with other organisations in their inter-agency work. Also has identified the need for a greater degree of strategic thinking around the character and nature of rapidly growing communities and developing the integration of service responses to meets those needs.
- The CDB has facilitated a process where openness and transparency is expected from its member organisations. There is a greater awareness of each member’s role, who their client groups are and their geographical spread etc. There is a greater openness to working together and fewer territorial issues. Less duplication and more identifiable projects which need a multi-agency approach.

9. Is the implementation of NAP/inclusion a factor in preparing the:			
	Yes	No	No response/Partly
(a) Organisational Plans	19	2	1
(b) Budget	18	3	1 (Partly Considered)

10. In the context of NAP/inclusion in preparing organisational plans and budgets, do you cross-reference these to the CDB strategy?

- Yes (x 6).
- There is a cross-reference from the corporate plan to the operational plans (x 2).
- The CDB strategy is linked to the corporate plan. Operational plans generally become realised through the budget process. It is envisaged that this will be strengthened within the next planning timeline.
- In a broad context we cross-reference, as we are familiar with the purpose and role of NAP/inclusion.
- Community & Enterprise elements of the organisational plan only.
- All organisational plans and budgets are cross-referenced to the CDB strategy and to the review document.
- CDB strategy was cross-referenced with NAP/inclusion objectives during the preparation of the strategy in 2002. Specific CDB actions are factored into operational plans and budgets each year following determination of priorities for each year by the Board.

- Yes, all plans take account of the CDB strategy.
- Yes, but some individual plans don't. Message needs to come down from national level.
- Yes. Operational plans and budget are cross-referenced.
- Not as policy issues in implementation.
- With difficulty. There is a clear commitment in key documents and processes (corporate plan, county development plan, PMDS) to support the CDB and to co-operate with its work. What is lacking is the detailed analysis from within sections and staff as to how this type of high-level generic objective would be implemented, measured and achieved. It is not clear to what extent, if any, various directorates acknowledge or take account of NAP/inclusion in formulating draft budget proposals.
- Performance indicators for local authorities could include clear measures around section 69(1)g of the Local Government Act, '... the need to promote Social Inclusion'. Local authorities would be willing to lead the process of agreeing an appropriate set of performance indicators for themselves, and also for all agencies at local level, through the CDBs.
- Organisational plans reflect the CDB strategy, through the integration of the local social inclusion strategy. A small budget has been provided for the implementation of social inclusion actions.

C ACTIONS TO UNDERPIN POLICY PROCESS AT LOCAL LEVEL

1. What, if any, action do you think particularly needs to be implemented over the next three years to ensure that the local priorities set out in regard to social inclusion can be fully applied to meet local need?

At the local level

- The priorities agreed by the CDB should be implemented at the local level.
- Agencies on the Board need to be given the direction to buy in locally to the actions and they need to be given the flexibility by their parent department/organisation to contribute to actions either in the form of staff time/financial contributions or office space.
- The development of a local poverty profile, using not just Census information, but information from all available local sources, should allow us to particularly target the most deprived areas and groups.
- Completion of the cohesion process. Additional resources to meet the geographical gaps and the general gaps in services.
- Commitment from all partners to provide the necessary resources to enable the local priorities to be addressed.

- Review of the effectiveness of the LDSIP at local level. Implementation of the Traveller inter- agency action plan. Implementation of the childcare action plan. Secure funding for an inter-agency resource centre for the county.
- Include a module on social inclusion in internal staff induction programme. Cohesion and endorsement process require consensus. Resources and training are required to ensure continuation of service delivery in this area. The concept of a key worker, representing many agencies, working with marginalised groups/individuals who lack the capacity to deal with the multiple agencies on which they depend for services.
- Strengthening of the work with the Community Forum is a crucial action to achieve the above. Update individual contact details from other committees.
- Strengthen the role of the SIM to enhance local prioritisation mechanisms.
- Implement the actions outlined in the internal social inclusion strategy.
- Commitment of resources from the local agencies, both staff and financial.
- More resources for SIM, SIU, C&E. Better buy-in by all agencies.
- The CDBs need to be facilitated to continue with the implementation of their 10-year strategies. The priority actions under the 3-year review of the CDBs have resulted in target groups being identified but now need to be implemented. The Local Anti-Poverty Strategy needs to be implemented.
- A dedicated resource, e.g. Social Inclusion Unit.
- Improvement of service delivery between agencies, target specific areas through RAPID on specific groups. There must be a commitment from all to deliver and adjust existing activities where necessary to address priorities with greater focus on outcomes.
- All agencies to present work plans to SIM – transparency re work. Funding available for actions. Commitment of staff and agencies, time and resources. This may require clear direction from senior management and government departments. Appointment of Social Inclusion Officer in each agency.
- Make any performance-related award for staffs of all agencies dependent on an element of CDB-related work. Local agency corporate plans, budgets and business plans should be reviewed and ‘proofed’ against the activities of the CDB, and in future should be required to include a proofing template showing how this was incorporated into organisational considerations.
- A policy unit within the county should be established to ensure that all policy issues affecting the population can be discussed, debated, consulted on and agreed as recommendations for submission at national level with officials, council members, the CDB, the Community and Voluntary Forum and the general public.
- Resources to develop a dedicated social inclusion unit under the LA or CDB. Endorsement of all plans by CDB, not just LAs.

At the regional level

- The inter-county communication on social inclusion, particularly through the neighbouring CDBs, should be strengthened.
- The operational framework of regional bodies needs to be flexible in response to local needs. This can be difficult as regional bodies' remit and focus will differ on local needs.
- Agreement on emerging issues for a particular region which will strengthen the bargaining/lobbying position of departments/organisations with a regional structure.
- More focused response by regional agencies re delivery of services.
- Co-ordination of the planning and development of childcare facilities and services. Education. Co-ordination and integration on disability issues especially infrastructural planning and implementation.
- A model for effective liaison between members and organisations of the CDB at micro-level needs to be implemented (as they can have a regional or a national focus).
- Introduce a social inclusion brief to regional authorities.
- Regional agencies need to respond and listen to the local needs and to feed the information up to the parent body/department.
- More support in the form of resourced national social inclusion support unit, with significant involvement from Combat Poverty Agency. The role of the OSI needs to be expanded. Huge need to rationalise regional structures in the border region, as spending money on unconnected projects and not linking with the CDBs. The regional authorities are ineffective in relation to social inclusion. The regional assembly policy makers must link with the CDBs in a more structured way.
- Regional bodies need to continue to work at county level with regard to local priorities.
- Regional bodies need to work through directors in CDB, to focus on cross-county issues. Not the responsibility of regional bodies.
- Difficult to say as regional boundaries vary depending on policy area and also the CDB remit is based in county boundaries.
- SIMs, AITs and NAP/inclusion have integration workshops at regional level.
- Create a regional forum for exchanging information, especially policy documents that could save time and encourage collective lobbying and agree regional actions for policy formation.
- Regional agencies should integrate regional plans, e.g. FÁS, IDA, EI, and HSE.

At the national level

- Full support and prioritisation for the implementation of social inclusion policies at a local level.
- A formal mechanism is needed whereby decisions are made locally. Consultation with relevant local structures like the CDB on priority issues to be taken into consideration.
- Reactivation of national taskforce or similar central integration groups which allow effective feedback from local and regional to national on a two-way basis. This would also involve giving recognition to inter-agency social inclusion work as a way in which agencies are monitored from a performance perspective and in the budgets allocated to agencies.
- National policies and programmes need to be flexible enough to meet needs of a rural county where poverty is more scattered and hidden.
- A commitment to contribute appropriately to addressing these priorities, a supportive response to applications for resources or to feedback which suggests that national policy needs to be changed or improved, and a commitment to provide local offices of national agencies with the freedom and resources to contribute to addressing the priorities.
- More integrated policy and planning at departmental level. Strong leadership by lead departments on key issues and target groups in order to address complex issues facing groups such as Travellers and Refugee and Asylum Seekers. Proactive planning in relation to the latter in terms of addressing new poverty issues, especially child poverty.

Education: key area in terms of social inclusion from literacy, to early school leaving, to second chance education/adult education.

Youth: huge need to implement policy, resource the delivery of the Youth Act and co-ordinate the agencies.

Introduce sanctions at local level when national policy is not implemented, e.g. delivery of transient sites where it has been agreed in the Traveller Accommodation Programme.

- Develop national templates for poverty, gender, equality, etc of all actions, by all member agencies. Develop direct links via NAP/inclusion office. Address data deficiencies at national level as done through the new assessment of housing needs forms.
- Adopt a national co-ordination mechanism for SIM/CDBs and establish social inclusion units throughout the local authority network.
- Need to allow regional/local agencies to be flexible when allocating budgets and priorities to local action. Need inter-departmental linkages at national level and better co-ordination.

- National support for local authorities, need significant resources increase, allocations of a small proportion of mainstream budgets to tackle social inclusion, e.g. DoEHLG, housing allocations to include 1 per cent for building communities and 99 per cent for infrastructure.
- Continued development and support of the Strategic Policy Committees and local area committees.
- Continued support of the Community and Voluntary Forum.
- Central co-ordination structure required to take on board local issues. Available resources with an element of flexibility to provide rapid responses.
- A national inter-departmental co-ordinating structure required to lead the process and show national commitment and be empowered to remove blockages that may emerge. Should cover the CDB full range of activities, not just poverty, given the cross-cutting nature of social inclusion issues.
- Training for each department re social inclusion and department's role.
- Link the CDB process more fully to an overall national co-ordination structure, which prioritises social inclusion and integrated service delivery. This will provide clear and consistent input from the 'centre' to all local agencies and CDBs, and to national and regional parent bodies. Complete the local, rural and community development 'cohesion' process. Ensure the national agencies and funding authorities (Pobal etc) more effectively engage with and reflect the work and priorities of CDBs in their own plans and programmes. Establish some common measures of social inclusion, social capital and quality of life.
- Establish a policy unit in each county to facilitate county council members, LA officials, the CDB, Community and Voluntary Forum and the general public to make quality submission at a national level.
- Create a space for local authority members and officials to feed into policy issues on an ongoing basis. Establish a process whereby there is an information flow created between the national, regional and local levels. Feedback needs to be given to individuals, groups and organisations that make submissions nationally. Information flow up and back is essential for empowering the local level to make submissions. Otherwise, disillusionment and negativity can set in.
- An inter-departmental task force on social inclusion which ensures that local agencies are mandated and resourced to deliver on collaborative actions as identified by the CDBs and SIM.

Summary

There needs to be a mechanism in place that integrates local, regional and national issues in some form or another. Suggestions include a task force (inter-departmental), allowing effective feedback at all levels. Link the CDB process more fully to an overall national co-ordination structure, thus providing a clear and consistent input from the 'centre' to all local agencies and CDBs, and to national and regional parent bodies. A Social Inclusion Policy unit in all counties. Transparency and co-operation at all levels by all sections.

2. What in your opinion is required to strengthen the articulation of local policy issues into the national arena?

- A forum for bringing the responses of the CDBs to the national arena.
- Task force reconvened. Currently there is very little support and no driving force for the CDBs at national level. The development of quarterly reports. Consultation by government departments on local priorities in the allocation of funding.
- Clear mechanism for two-way communication from local to national.
- Combat Poverty to periodically meet with the SIM groups at county level. Consideration of reports from the SIM groups.
- Some form of engagement with policy-makers at national level.
- LAs who have social inclusion units are better placed to combine good models of research and action that reflect the experience of the target groups and communities affected by poverty and the agencies serving them. Good policy work comes out of informed debate and openness to engaging/listening and recording the experiences of those most affected by inequality and poverty. The SPCs have the potential to be good forums for shared discussion and informed debate. They need to be resourced and supported in terms of training and as a policy-making structure at local level with the capacity to collectively improve the level of debate and awareness of all participants, in particular elected members in their legislative capacity.
- Include social inclusion awareness training in all agency seminars, publications and directives. Provide mechanisms for reporting and mainstreaming of positive outcomes from a social inclusion perspective to each government department.

- Establish national co-ordinating body for CDBs similar to the National Monitoring Committee which monitors progress in relation to the RAPID programme and receives regular updates on issues at local level.
- System of information flow from SIM/CDB to national level and then discussion at national level.
- Mainstream funds, in the form of development contributions, waste environment, housing, etc. but with comprehensive control to ensure focus and effectiveness.
- Need access to national arena. Task force would provide a unique and valuable forum to channel local issues. A strong commitment at central level is required for this to work.
- Regional education offices, RAPID programme.
- Improved policy development at local level including research, meaningful data-gathering boundaries and mechanisms, improved consultation arrangements from national level; use review of CDB strategies to feed into national policy. Strengthening of SPCs nationally. Local activists to inform T.D.s. Communications structure to be enhanced. Community forum.
- Sound research at local level. More active participation by senior managers at local level. The belief that something will change if work is done and policy issues are highlighted.
- Consultation and engagement with local authority and CDB at an early stage in policy formulation. At the moment it is difficult to input effectively in policy formulation. There is a failure to recognise that public advertisements do not provide an opportunity for consultation and effective policy input by CDBs as policy framework is substantially developed.
- Mechanisms for local authority members and officials to voice their opinions and submit policy documents at a national level and have these responded to.
- Resources to conduct more extensive research and to support CDB members in integrating social inclusion.

3. Can you identify examples of best practice where you consider that the national arena clearly responded to local priorities from within the policy framework of the local authority?

- The inter- agency Traveller project was one which initially did not use the existing CDB structures but is now being brought in under the aegis of the Board and local priorities.
- National grant schemes for playgrounds. Establishment of Clár programmes. Establishment of social inclusion units and RAPID areas. However, unfortunately, only selected areas/authorities have the advantage of these initiatives.
- Policy papers submitted to government departments on a number of issues. Through the SIM groups and the inter-departmental task forces of the National Monitoring Group, the RAPID programme has the opportunity to directly communicate policy issues emerging from the implementation of the RAPID programme at local level.
- RAPID programme – establishment of the leverage fund was a specific response at national level to issues arising at local level.
- Playground grant scheme – responded to local needs for more playground. Disability Strategy funding to make buildings accessible.
- Social inclusion units but more needed. Excellent input into legislation by Local Government Act that is driven by Policy Unit in DoEHLG. NAP/ inclusion includes consultation process. Gradual recognition that specific social inclusion work is required in local authority housing estates.
- RAPID programme represents a good example where LAs are centrally prioritised.
- Expansion of library service. The provision of department funding has resulted in the provision of new library facilities at local level. Implementation of specific objectives outlined in the Traveller Accommodation Plan. Department funding has resulted in the local authority implementing two successful projects.
- A forthcoming example may arise from the manner in which local policy submissions around the successor Rural Development programme are reflected, or otherwise, in the details of the national rural development strategy.
- There is no mechanism whereby the local authority regularly feeds into the policy-making arena.
- DoEHLG responded to demand for playgrounds through provision of incentives. Also the DoEHLG provided resources to assist local authorities deliver on Disability Act 2005 in response to local need.

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NOTES

The study: *Poverty and Social Inclusion: Linking Local and National Structures* was commissioned by the Combat Poverty Agency. Its purpose is to identify potential linkages between national and local levels in the context of the development and implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. It was commissioned to enable Combat Poverty to contribute to an on-going debate on the issue of incorporating social inclusion in the planning processes of both national and local government.

The study found that considerable effort has been invested in establishing a comprehensive institutional framework for integrating poverty and social inclusion into the broad policy arena. There is now a strong infrastructure for sustaining the principle that tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion are central to general policy formulation and implementation at national level. Considerable effort has also been put into the reform of local government.

At the same time a focus has been brought to bear on public service co-ordination at local level through the setting up of the County/City Development Boards (CDBs) and, in relation to social inclusion, the establishment of the CDB Social Inclusion Co-ordinating Measures Group (SIM). Many of the building blocks necessary to integrate the issue of poverty and social inclusion into both national and local levels are now in place.

The study concludes, however, that there is an ongoing need to create and reinforce important linkages between local and national levels. These linkages are essential to ensuring that national commitment in relation to poverty and social inclusion are translated into the local implementation framework.



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