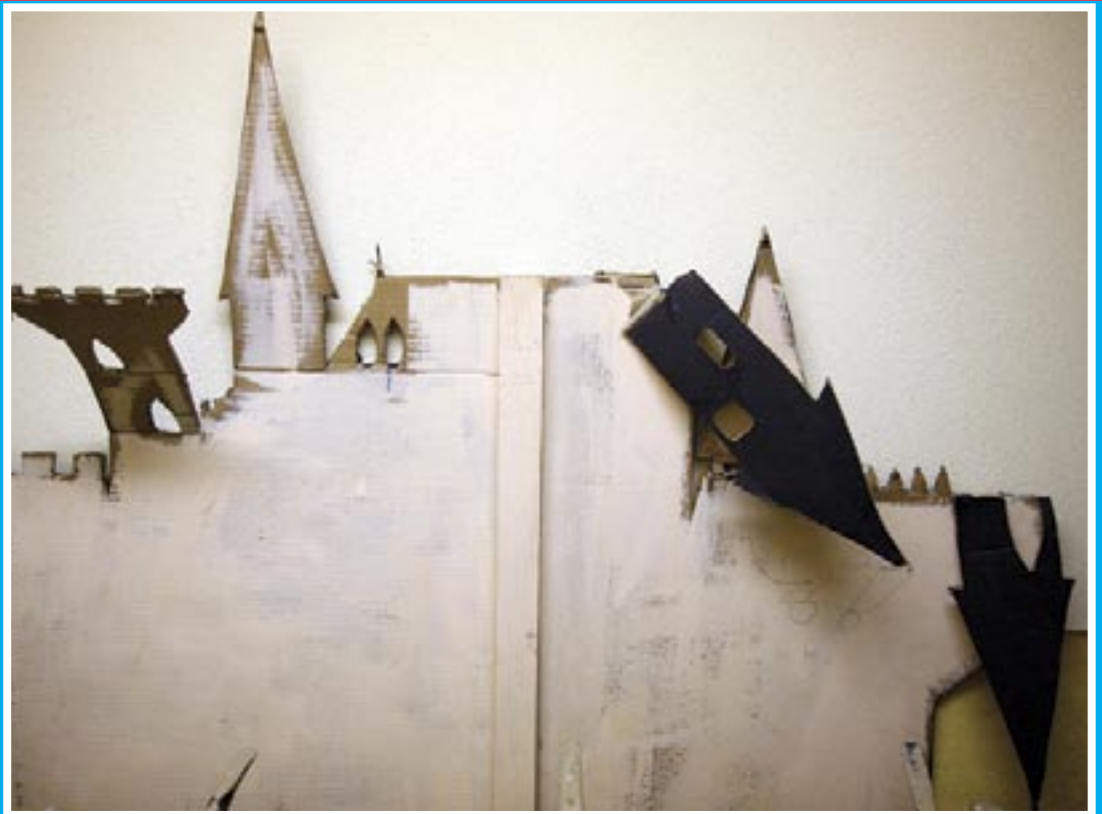


# ACTION ON POVERTY TODAY



- Peacebuilding – A human rights-based approach
- The new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion
- Evaluating Mainstreaming Social Inclusion

# Rising poverty and welfare changes in Germany

Germany now holds the presidency of the European Union, making this an appropriate moment to look at poverty and action against poverty there.

Though it was once a byword for universally high living standards and social welfare, Germany's poverty rate has been rising slowly, up from 11.7 per cent in 1993 to 12.8 per cent in 2003 and now 13.5 per cent. German experts have described this as 'well within the European average, not as good as Scandinavia, but much better than free-market countries like Ireland and Britain'. Unemployed people, children, young adults, single people, lone-parent families and large families are the most affected.

Recent governments have had a mixed record on poverty. After the Hartz commission in 2002 a series of welfare changes, called the 'Hartz reforms', were introduced:

- activation measures<sup>1</sup>
- making welfare benefits more conditional
- incentivisation to work.

Anti-poverty activists warned that these would increase poverty. The objective evidence, including reports by the Social Democratic party itself, is that this is exactly what has happened.

Germany has a big non-governmental sector, arguably the strongest in Europe, with many welfare services delivered by large voluntary organisations. A federal coalition against poverty, the NAK or *Nationale Armutskonferenz* (National Poverty Conference), was established in 1991. The NAK has two media speakers – in the spirit of gender balance, one a man and the other a women.

The NAK network publishes a range of policy positions, analyses of government policies and performance, and thematic publications on poverty, especially poverty and ill health. It produced specialised information sheets on the national action plans for social inclusion, social indicators, child poverty and the controversial Hartz reforms. Though it is a small, voluntary network, NAK is broad and influential. More information on the NAK can be sourced at [www.nationale-armutskonferenz.de/](http://www.nationale-armutskonferenz.de/)

As Germany is a decentralised state, much of the action against poverty takes place at regional level, and regional anti-poverty conferences have taken place in the Saarland, Lower Saxony, Thuringia, Mecklenburg-Eastern Pomerania and Saxony. They are accompanied by numerous groups with colourful titles: 'round tables' (in Oldenburg, Göttingen), 'action alliances' (Marburg, Frankfurt), 'social offensives' (Offenbach), 'social conferences' (Aschaffenburg), 'associations for social justice' (Gießen), 'poverty conferences' (Mönchengladbach, Cologne, Düren, Augsburg), 'circles' (Tübingen) and 'work forums' (Herzogenrath). The names give some idea of the type of group involved.

## Germany's National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2000–2008

Unemployment, at 11.7 per cent, is the first focus of Germany's current National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. The plan aims to:

- introduce labour market schemes for unemployed people
- provide enhanced pre-school education for children under three years old – to tackle inequality at its root
- tackle child poverty (e.g. an improved child bonus, parental benefit)
- introduce measures for two specific groups: immigrants and people with disabilities.

To assist the German NAPinclusion, a permanent group of advisers on social integration has been established, bringing together 25 voluntary organisations and academic experts, flanked by local participative forums called *Forteil*. Each NAPinclusion should have examples of good practice: Germany's are the *Company and School* placement-and-grant scheme for educational under-achievers and the *Social City* project in 37 neighbourhoods to improve public spaces and living conditions.

BRIAN HARVEY is an Independent Research Consultant.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 15, Jargon buster

# VIEWPOINT

Nelson Mandela said:

*Vision without action is merely a dream*

*Action without vision is merely passing time*

*Vision with action can change the world.*



In Ireland in 2007, we have the vision, plans and resources to eliminate poverty. What we now need is the means to drive through their implementation and ensure better outcomes for people living in poverty.

In the last few months we have seen the publication of:

- Towards 2016 – a Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement for 2006–2016. The Agreement contains substantial commitments on social inclusion.
- Transforming Ireland – National Development Plan 2007–2013. This €184bn package includes €50bn specifically for social inclusion.
- Building Social Inclusion – National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007–2016.

These plans complement each other and set out a coherent agenda for the elimination of consistent poverty over the next ten years. The key challenge will be how well we can deliver national plans at the local level. Two recent pieces of work by Combat Poverty highlight the same issue – the need for better integration of local and national structures. In particular, there is a need for better involvement of local people in the delivery of measures to tackle poverty.

To ensure delivery of the various plan commitments in full, we need to target resources at those who need them most, monitor the extent to which they are making a difference and evaluate the outcomes. This is where all of these plans are weak. There is a lack of structured monitoring and evaluation. For example, how will we know if the substantial resources for social inclusion are being targeted at those who need them most? How will we know what difference they have made? How will we know what works and what doesn't work? These questions need to be addressed now so that, over the next ten years, we can be sure that we really are working towards the elimination of poverty in Ireland.

HELEN JOHNSTON is *Director of the Combat Poverty Agency.*

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# Healing the hurts of conflict with a human rights-based approach

Border Action<sup>1</sup> commissioned the Irish Centre for Human Rights at the National University of Ireland, Galway, to undertake research into a human rights-based approach to peacebuilding and reconciliation. The report, entitled *To Respect, Protect and Fulfil: A Human Rights-Based Approach to Peacebuilding and Reconciliation*, was launched recently.<sup>2</sup>



The purpose of the research was to examine the relationships between a human rights-based approach and post-conflict reconstruction, in Ireland and internationally, and to suggest a framework for the implementation of a human rights-based approach in the context of the Peace II Programme and possible future programmes. As discussions continue about the design and implementation of the Peace III Programme, its publication is timely.

The report identifies the principles of a human rights-based approach. It gives a full review of international and domestic human-rights law relevant to post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation on the island of Ireland. It also includes a very useful bibliography and an appendix of the main international human-rights conventions.

## Mainstreaming rights

Human rights are central to the Good Friday Agreement and the peace and reconciliation process in Northern Ireland and the border counties. The absence of respect for human rights was one of the underlying causes of the conflict and one of the characteristics of the conflict itself. To ensure that conflict never returns, we need to examine new ideas and means of ensuring

that the ideals of peace and reconciliation become embedded into the fabric of post-conflict society. The mainstreaming of human rights can ensure that the basic principles of international human rights become embedded in all aspects of community life.

The authors define a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to peacebuilding and reconciliation as:

the incorporation of international human rights standards into policies and projects established to aid the peacebuilding and reconciliation process ... Such recognition is founded on the premise that sustainable peace will not be achieved unless the root causes of conflict, too often due to the absence of economic opportunities, social inequalities and structural discrimination, are addressed and justice restored. Effective peacebuilding thus presupposes concerted efforts to promote human rights ...

A rights-based approach is founded on the conviction that each and every human being, by virtue of being human, is a holder of rights ... Human rights protection forms a safeguard against domination and discrimination for all communities

and the introduction of an explicit human rights dimension signals a fundamental change in the nature of the State.

As part of the research process, a survey of Peace II projects was carried out. Almost two-thirds of the projects that responded said that they dealt with human-rights issues and many had taken on the language of human rights. However, there was little human-rights training for projects and varying levels of awareness about human-rights legislation and bodies.



As a matter of course projects were applying the five principles of a human rights-based approach – legitimacy; empowerment; accountability and transparency; participation; and equality, non-discrimination and attention to vulnerable groups. The report found that many of the funded groups preferred using a human rights-based approach to advance their clients' interests because of the opportunities it offered for empowerment and autonomy.

### Flexible framework

The report's proposed framework for implementing a human rights-based approach in present and future programmes is adaptable for both projects and funders. It outlines how existing human-rights indicators, standards and principles can be incorporated into funding programmes such as Peace II.

Many elements of a human rights-based approach are already present in the practices and procedures of Border Action and its funded projects, and the framework builds on these. It suggests a number of specific ways in which Border Action and similar bodies could apply a human rights-based approach. The main elements would include:

- baseline analysis of the human-rights context, using recognised human-rights indicators, which can be used to measure social, economic and political change arising from activities under the programme
- support for awareness-raising and capacity-building among public sector bodies, implementing bodies and funded projects, including support for projects in identifying indicators and applying a HRBA
- the application of a HRBA when assessing, monitoring and evaluating projects and at programme level.

A baseline analysis at programme level would provide a model for similar analysis at project level:

In using information from the baseline assessment, project administrators are making initial judgements as to the likely areas that need to be addressed, the ways in which human rights standards can be realised, how human rights principles can be strengthened, and how human rights standards and principles will guide specific projects from start to finish.

The survey of Peace II-funded projects revealed that, although projects had a broad understanding of human-rights principles, these were not necessarily drawn from human-rights legislation and treaties. The report suggests that policymakers, service providers and funders should assist community and voluntary organisations in devising and implementing a human rights-based strategy.

Many organisations funded by Peace II understand the potential for human-rights principles to empower disadvantaged groups and help them achieve the changes that are needed. However, in order to do so, they must be fully informed of the relevant human-rights legislation, in plain English and with guidance as to the protections that each of the rights provides.

*To Respect, Protect and Fulfil: A Human Rights-Based Approach to Peacebuilding and Reconciliation* is available on request from Border Action, European Union House, Monaghan, Co. Monaghan, tel: (047) 71340.

The report can also be downloaded at [www.borderaction.ie](http://www.borderaction.ie).

RUTH TAILLON is a Research Officer with Border Action

<sup>1</sup> See p. 15, Jargon Buster

<sup>2</sup> Schabas, William and Fitzmaurice, Peter (2007), *To Respect, Protect and Fulfil: A Human Rights-Based Approach to Peacebuilding and Reconciliation*, Galway: Irish Centre for Human Rights, NUI; Border Action

# New measures needed to deliver poverty policies

Combat Poverty recently published a policy statement<sup>1</sup> that calls for better integration of local and national administrative structures and policies to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

The statement draws on Combat Poverty's ongoing work with local authorities to tackle poverty and social exclusion; a European-funded project on Mainstreaming Social Inclusion (MSI);<sup>2</sup> and a recent Combat Poverty<sup>3</sup> report which identified the linkages between national and local levels to implement the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.

The report, *Poverty and Social Inclusion: Linking Local and National Structures*, found that there was a comprehensive institutional framework for integrating poverty and social inclusion into the broad policy arena at national level. It also found that recent developments had increased the role of local authorities in tackling poverty. However, it concluded that a more integrated approach to policy development and implementation

the presence of social inclusion in a corporate plan did not guarantee clear and explicit linkages to actions in the operational plan.

## ● Integrating local input

Central government needs to put in place a communication process that will integrate the local government experience with the national framework. Currently initiatives emerge from central government without local input, while agencies such as local authorities, area-based partnerships and other service delivery bodies do not see themselves as having a role in policy formulation. There is a need to accept that responsibility to deliver policies to address poverty, and to implement the NAP/inclusion, lies at both national and local level.

## ● Aligning local and national priorities

Alignment of central and local priorities is weak due to



was needed, involving better communications and coordination between national and local government and between agencies at local level.

Other findings emerged under the following headings:

## ● Putting policies into action

While Statements of Strategy adopted by government departments may take into account the NAP/inclusion, this may not translate into corporate plans or individual performance management systems. This is also found at local departmental and agency level. For example,

conflicting priorities and perspectives. As a result, national policies tend not to become fully embedded at local level.

## ● Consolidating existing structures

There is a local perception that too many new partnerships and programmes are being developed, rather than building on existing partnerships. This is despite efforts to establish greater coordination through CDBs<sup>4</sup> and the cohesion process developed by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, which is seeking one overarching institutional framework at county and city level.

### ● Administrative boundaries

Many agencies and bodies do not have the same administrative boundaries, which presents real challenges to the development of integrated policies on social issues.

### ● Sustainable priorities

There are too many special programmes and short-term initiatives rather than a comprehensive, sustained response through mainstream services. There is a sense at local level of no clear priorities from central government, with an assumption that each initiative requires the same level of priority.

### ● Lack of resources

There is a lack of resources. The institutional spectrum has expanded rapidly but without any major overhaul of local resources or any real devolution of power.

### ● Lack of joined-up thinking

There is entrenched thinking at all levels, which causes administrative or organisational cultures to block progress in the implementation of policy.

## Recommendations

Combat Poverty's policy statement acknowledges that the national and local structures needed to implement social inclusion objectives are already in place but stresses the need for coherence in how these elements

## National level

● Set up a National Implementation Group with a clear role in monitoring the local delivery of the NAP/inclusion via the CDBs. This group should comprise government departments, CDBs, the County and City Managers Association, Combat Poverty and other appropriate agencies, and it should be chaired by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

● To ensure synergy between national and local government structures, councillors and local authority management should be represented in the relevant social inclusion consultative structures.

● Government departments and national agencies should include NAP/inclusion objectives as part of their corporate planning priorities. They should ensure that these objectives are fully integrated into their business and action plans. NAP/inclusion should also be incorporated into the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS).

## Local level

● A local anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy (LAPIS) should be implemented by each city and county authority, and adequate resources and support should be provided at national level.



interact and deliver on objectives. The inherent lack of connectivity between national and local structures is reducing the impact of policies and their ability to tackle poverty effectively.

The statement recommends a number of specific actions for national and local levels to ensure that targets are met and that anti-poverty policies achieve their potential. The key recommendations include:

SHARON KEANE is Acting Policy Liaison Officer with the Combat Poverty Agency.

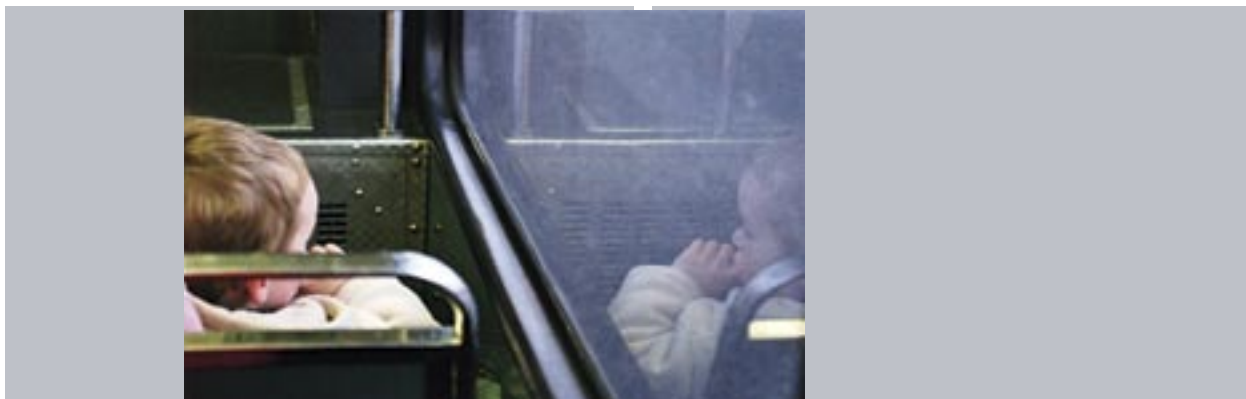
<sup>1</sup> *Linking Local and National Structures: Tackling Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion*, Combat Poverty Agency, Dublin (2007)

<sup>2</sup> The MSI project evaluated the impact of social inclusion policies across nine countries under the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) during 2006.

<sup>3</sup> *Poverty and Social Exclusion: Linking Local and National Structures*, Ó'Riordáin, S., Combat Poverty Agency, Dublin (2007)

<sup>4</sup> County and City Development Boards

# Children's rights referendum



An Taoiseach announced on 3 November 2006 that a referendum would be held to amend the Constitution to strengthen the rights of children. This raises the questions: Is there a need to change the Constitution, why single out children's rights for a referendum, and why now?

Children already have rights under the Constitution: they enjoy the same fundamental rights as all individuals living in the State. What is lacking is a sufficiently clear constitutional recognition of the needs of children that are different from, and additional to, those of adults. Children are currently almost invisible in the Constitution and this places restrictions on court decisions and on the legislation that may be enacted for the protection of their rights.

The Children's Rights Alliance, as an umbrella group of over 80 non-governmental organisations, has been actively seeking to ensure that the wording in the proposed referendum will indeed, as An Taoiseach promised in his announcement, 'put the rights of children in a central place in our Constitution'.

## Consultation process

At the request of the Minister of State for Children, Brian Lenihan TD, the Alliance undertook extensive consultation with the non-governmental sector to inform the process of framing the wording for the proposed amendment. Following this, it published a synthesis of its findings, *The Constitution and Children: A Position Paper on the Proposed Referendum on Children's Rights*, in January 2007.

In its Position Paper, the Alliance highlights the key reforms it hopes the referendum will bring about. It considers it essential that the wording should make children's rights visible within the Constitution and that it should grant children, as individuals, constitutional recognition in their own right. The amendment must also give prime importance to the principle of 'best interests of the child', so that both the legislature and the courts

will have clear guidance on balancing competing rights. Furthermore, it must ensure that children are treated equally, regardless of the type of family in which they are living.

## Change in attitude

Strengthening the rights of children in the Constitution has the potential to impact in a real and positive way on the lives of all children and their families. Constitutional, and consequent legislative, modification would promote changes in attitudes that would affect the operation of the legal system, the provision of services to support children and families, and the evolution of administrative practices. It would also give an important impetus to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention on Human Rights.

In his announcement of the referendum An Taoiseach described constitutional change as 'an essential first step in creating a new culture of respect for the rights of the child'.

This 'first step', it is hoped, will be followed by the legislative changes and the additional investment of resources and services needed to ensure that all children in Ireland are safe, secure, educated, protected and enabled to reach their full potential.

For further information see [www.childrensrights.ie](http://www.childrensrights.ie) or contact the Children's Rights Alliance at (01) 662 9400.

JILLIAN VAN TURNHOUT is *Chief Executive of the Children's Rights Alliance*.

# FLAC drive to restore universal Child Benefit



FLAC<sup>1</sup> has examined the Habitual Residence Condition as it affects Child Benefit and children at risk of poverty. As a result, it has launched a campaign for the reinstatement of universal Child Benefit.

Previously known as 'Children's Allowance', Child Benefit used to be a universal payment. It was paid to every child living in the State, regardless of family income or immigration status. It was paid in line with the Government's commitment to end child poverty and was seen as a major mechanism in the fight against poverty. Since 1 May 2004, however, Child Benefit is no longer a universal payment and some children living in the state are being denied a key instrument for helping to take them out of poverty.

## Qualifying condition

This came about when the Government introduced the 'Habitual Residence Condition' (HRC)<sup>2</sup> in response to the enlargement of the European Union in May 2004. The HRC is an additional qualifying condition imposed on anyone seeking to avail of child benefit schemes administered by the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

The measure was later deemed to be in breach of EU legislation and the Government had to reinstate the payment to EEA<sup>3</sup> workers. However, it still applies to other families who first claimed Child Benefit after 1 May 2004. This includes people who are not permitted to work, such as asylum-seekers and those awaiting a residency application decision; non-Irish nationals with no work record in Ireland, including those who are undocumented because their employers failed to register them; and non-EEA nationals working here for less than two years who cannot prove a centre of interest in Ireland and previous EU work experience.

What this means is that the children of such families are being treated differently to other children in the State. While the measure was created to control the flow of workers into Ireland, now it is affecting some children most at risk of poverty. In its examination of the HRC,

FLAC focused on identifying who was being excluded from Child Benefit.

## Rights lost

The findings were that the payment is not universal, despite the Government's continued assertions to the contrary. While the State recognises that Child Benefit is a key mechanism for ending child poverty, it is not prepared to put children's rights above other considerations. International law supports putting the child first. The International Convention on the Rights of the Child, signed and ratified by Ireland, holds that all actions that affect children must put their best interests first. Further, it provides that state parties must respect and ensure the rights of children, including the rights to benefit from social security without discrimination.

This has led FLAC to launch a campaign to restore universal Child Benefit. It is supported by a number of other organisations, including MRCI, the Vincentian Refugee Centre, SIPTU, ICTU, the Immigrant Council of Ireland, Integrating Ireland and the Irish Refugee Council. A campaign pack is available with information and suggested actions. FLAC is calling on people to raise this issue with their local representatives and to take part in its postcard campaign. FLAC is asking the Government to respect its own pledge to end child poverty, to honour its commitment to children's human rights, and to restore Child Benefit as a universal payment.

To learn more about the campaign or to receive a pack, please contact [campaigns@flac.ie](mailto:campaigns@flac.ie) or see [www.flac.ie](http://www.flac.ie).

MARCELA RODRIGUEZ FARRELLY is *Research and Development Officer* and YVONNE WOODS is *Information Officer* with FLAC.

<sup>1</sup> Free Legal Aid Centres Ltd

<sup>2</sup> See p. 15, Jargon Buster

<sup>3</sup> See p. 15, Jargon Buster

<sup>4</sup> Migrant Rights Centre Ireland

# An evaluation of mainstreaming social inclusion in Europe



For the past three years, Combat Poverty has worked with partners across Europe to study how social inclusion issues are mainstreamed into public policymaking. As part of this a methodology was developed for evaluating mainstreaming across different countries and regions.

In 2006, working with 17 partner organisations from nine European states,<sup>1</sup> Combat Poverty undertook a project to test this methodology.<sup>2</sup> The project sought to establish if mainstreaming social inclusion could be measured and, if so, whether mainstreaming had an impact on the policy process and outcomes.

A survey was conducted across the nine countries among public officials at national, regional and local authority levels; representatives of anti-poverty NGOs; social partners; and other civil society organisations. Political leaders in the regional and local authorities were also targeted.

Although the replies from the respondents varied, some interesting findings emerged:

## MSI definition

The definition of mainstreaming social inclusion agreed by the partners is:

Mainstreaming social inclusion is the integration of poverty and social inclusion objectives, including an equality perspective, into all areas and levels of policy-making, and that is promoted through the participation of public bodies, social partners, NGOs and other relevant actors.

This met with a high degree of support, with 88 per cent of respondents agreeing that it met their understanding of mainstreaming. However, less than 60 per cent

thought that the definition was relevant to their country or local authority area. In Ireland, 72 per cent of respondents agreed that the definition was close to their understanding and, in contrast to a number of other countries, 80 per cent said it was relevant to the Irish situation.

## Political commitment

When asked about the political commitment to reduce poverty and social exclusion, 96 per cent of respondents said that these issues were on their government's agenda. However less than half (46 per cent) said that they were high on the agendas. Among Irish respondents, 48 per cent said that reductions in poverty and social exclusion were high on the policy agenda.

## Public policy areas

Eleven policy areas were examined to see how social inclusion was mainstreamed into each one, and whether governments used legislation as a tool to underpin their commitments to tackling poverty. When these policy areas were categorised into economic, social and 'other' areas, it emerged that mainstreaming social inclusion was not thought of as a high priority within economic or 'other' areas.

Less than one-quarter of respondents said that social inclusion was taken into consideration to a 'high' degree in economic policy development, and just 14 per cent said that when economic legislation was enacted social inclusion was incorporated to a 'high' extent.



In contrast, social inclusion was strongly linked to employment policies and almost half of respondents said that employment policies incorporated social inclusion concerns to a 'high' degree. Over one-third (34 per cent) said that social inclusion got 'high' consideration in employment legislation.

In Ireland, just 37 per cent of respondents said that social inclusion got high prominence in employment policies, while one-fifth said it was a high priority in economic development. Regarding legislation, just 12 per cent said that social inclusion was incorporated into legislation on economic development policies and 27 per cent into employment laws.

In the context of social policy, just under half of respondents said that social inclusion was considered in social protection policies and 42 per cent said it was incorporated into legislation to a 'high' degree. Just under two-thirds of Irish respondents said that social welfare policies incorporated social inclusion to a 'high' degree and 46 per cent said that it was prominent in social welfare legislation.

In policy areas considered 'non-social', social inclusion was generally not seen as a priority. Only 13 per cent of respondents said that social inclusion was a high priority in transport policies and only 11 per cent thought it was a high consideration in transport legislation. Irish responses were similar.

### Joined-up government

The survey results indicate a general lack of understanding and communication between central and local administration. Respondents in the central departments or ministries believed there was little commitment to social inclusion at a local level, but that it was a 'high' priority at central level. Those at

local authority level felt that social inclusion was not considered to be a high priority at national level, but that it was at local level!

The survey sought to measure the extent to which all relevant groups are involved in developing policy, as this is one of the main objectives of the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion. Respondents were asked about the extent of consultation and participation, and whether resources were provided to support the involvement of different actors. The study found that just 19 per cent of respondents thought that people directly experiencing poverty and social exclusion were involved to a 'high' degree; over one-quarter of respondents said that NGOs working against poverty and social exclusion had a 'high' involvement; and for other relevant civil society organisations the finding was 16 per cent.

NGOs in particular took a more negative view of their own involvement and the involvement of people experiencing poverty. One-quarter of all respondents said that NGOs participated in policy development, but only six per cent of NGOs agreed.

The study provides interesting insights into how national, regional and local administrations are mainstreaming social inclusion into their policymaking processes. In particular, it sheds light on the levels of political commitment, the administrative structures in place and the involvement of stakeholders. A report of the evaluation study is available on the Combat Poverty website, [www.combatpoverty.ie](http://www.combatpoverty.ie).

KEVIN O'KELLY *is Acting Head of Research and Policy at the Combat Poverty Agency.*

<sup>1</sup> The partner countries were Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the Slovak Republic and all regions of the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales).

<sup>2</sup> The pilot project to test this methodology was funded under the European Commission's Transnational Exchange Programme.

# Action plan sets 12 top goals to advance social inclusion

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAP/inclusion), together with the social inclusion elements of the National Development Plan, set out how the Government's social inclusion strategy will be achieved over the period 2007–2016. It reflects the Government's commitment to a coherent strategy for social inclusion based on the lifecycle approach set out in the National Partnership Agreement, Towards 2016.

The overall goal is to reduce the number of those in consistent poverty to between 2 per cent and 4 per cent by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016. Twelve high-level goals have also been identified, spanning all stages of the lifecycle. The goals include:

## Children

Three of the four goals for children relate to education. They focus on providing targeted pre-school education, tackling literacy difficulties in disadvantaged primary schools and increasing completion levels in upper second-level education. A fourth goal sets a target of maintaining the minimum child income support payment at 33 to 35 per cent of the adult social welfare rate.

## People of working age

The focus here is on providing those furthest from the labour market with the necessary support to take up employment. An active case-management approach will be introduced to support 50,000 people, including lone parents and the long-term unemployed, to move into education, training and jobs. The lowest social welfare rate of €185.80 in 2007 terms will, at a minimum, be maintained over the course of the plan, subject to available resources.

## Older people

The goals for older people focus on providing community care services, including home-care packages and enhanced day-care services, to enable older people to live independently in the community for as long as possible. An income payment target of at least €200 per week in 2007 terms has been set, with a commitment to review the pensions system.

## People with disabilities

The goal is to support education and participation among people with disabilities to facilitate full, rewarding lives. An additional 7,000 people with disabilities will be helped

into employment by 2010, with a view to increasing the employment rate of people with disabilities to 45 per cent by 2016.

## Communities

To build and support sustainable communities, high-level goals, focusing on housing, health and the integration of migrants, have been set. The accommodation needs of some 60,000 new households will be addressed between 2007 and 2009; 500 primary care teams will be developed by 2011; and a strategy to integrate newcomers into Irish society will be rolled out.

## Delivery

A new high-level group composed of government departments and state agencies will be established to ensure a better integration of supports to assist people into employment. This group will report to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion. Strong national to local level links will be supported by the Local Government Social Inclusion Steering Group, while the county and city development boards will have a key role in coordinating public service delivery at local level. The Office of the Minister for Children will provide a leadership role in improving outcomes for children.

## Monitoring and reporting

The new strategic framework introduces a monitoring and reporting process that is streamlined across the National Development Plan, the NAP/inclusion and Towards 2016. An annual Social Inclusion Report will be prepared by the Office for Social Inclusion and presented to the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, the Partnership Steering Group and the NDP Monitoring Committee.

CATHY BARRON *is an Assistant Principal in the Office for Social Inclusion.*

# Project puts rights tools into practice

In late 2006 and early 2007, the Participation and Practice of Rights (PPR) Project began training on a rights-based approach with two groups of residents from north Belfast – families bereaved through suicide and residents of the Seven Towers high-rise complex in the New Lodge area.

The PPR Project defines a rights-based approach as one that addresses the power relationship between duty bearers and rights holders. By empowering communities to assert their social and economic rights, the rights-based approach promotes participation by communities in decisions that affect their lives. This approach has the potential to increase the responsiveness of the State, thereby enhancing democratic accountability on the basis of right.

## Systematic exclusion

A rights-based approach acknowledges the systematic and institutional exclusion of disadvantaged communities from participation in decisions on resource allocation and service delivery. It also implies that in order to achieve sustainable change the processes of changing power relationships are as important as 'getting the result'.

The project began by identifying and recruiting communities in north Belfast who suffer some of the worst forms of social deprivation. It is naïve to believe that there were groups waiting to raise the banner of a 'rights-based approach', and the process of recruitment was long and arduous.

The residents of the Seven Towers, for example, had no organic housing committee or active infrastructure. The project used basic and innovative community organising tools to raise awareness, build trust and provide spaces for residents to discuss their issues.

From this the project learned that those who were most interested in a rights-based approach were communities who were struggling and not making progress but were determined not to give in. These groups did not necessarily believe a rights-based approach would work,

or that they would be well received by the State, but were interested because it was another potential tactic in their struggle for dignity.

## Networks for change

The creation of networks that link NGOs, community groups, academics, lawyers and international experts on human rights, in the context of localised, selected and concrete issues, has the power to generate real change. In the long-term it also creates different ways of working, not only for the residents but for all participants in the alliance, by engaging in a process that is mutually beneficial and strengthens the hands of all stakeholders.

To lay this groundwork, the project has carried out a number of activities. Workshops have been held for local community activists on 'a rights-based approach to housing'; participatory methods of contributing to the local health trust's consultation on complaints procedure have been used; and individual meetings have taken place to identify people who could offer different kinds of support to the group, when the residents have chosen their issues, carried out action research and devised a strategic plan.

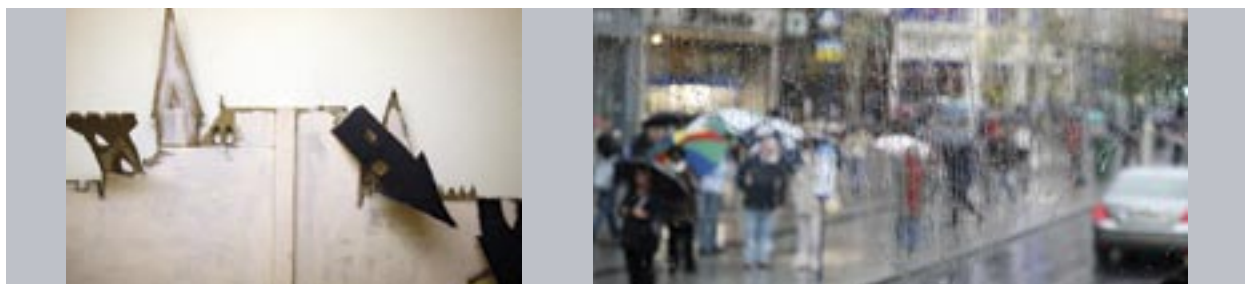
The next steps in the process is the development of indicators of social and economic rights to enable the communities themselves to begin measuring and monitoring rights progress in their areas. This work is being carried out by a number of groups in north Belfast and north inner-city Dublin. The project will look at ways of distributing this information to communities across the island.

DESSIE DONNELLY is a Local Development Worker with the Participation and Practice of Rights Project.



# Dublin Council squares up to challenge of putting social inclusion firmly on city's agenda

Embedding a social inclusion agenda into the largest local authority in the country is one of the biggest challenges for the Dublin City Council social inclusion unit. However, through determination and support from the top, the unit is putting social inclusion firmly on the agenda. Dublin City Council has taken several steps to involve the entire organisation in developing social inclusion policies, culminating in a special conference that helped inform the social inclusion agenda for 2007.



In a staff survey completed in September 2006, 39 per cent stated that their role had a social inclusion dimension to some extent. Asked what supports they thought necessary to implement the social inclusion agenda, staff suggested a guide book, training in poverty and social exclusion awareness, and more access to information.

## Staff conference

The social inclusion unit used the survey findings to plan the 'Raising the Barrier' conference on social inclusion, which took place on 10 November 2006. The day-long conference was a success. It gave staff the opportunity to learn not only about the work of Dublin City Council but also that of the Office for Social Inclusion and Combat Poverty Agency, and to hear the perspective of Galway County Council.

For many staff the highlight of the day was hearing the story of Deirdre Reid, a resident of Fatima Mansions who has been involved in the physical and social regeneration process for a number of years. Deirdre's story highlighted the pros and cons of working as a residents' representative and the benefits of working in partnership with Dublin City Council.

## Setting the agenda

The conference ended with a discussion on how the social inclusion unit could go forward and how to enhance the social inclusion agenda within the Council.

Based on the discussion, the unit was able to set in motion the social inclusion agenda for 2007.

The 2007 agenda sees Dublin City Council developing a strategy on social inclusion. This will reflect Dublin City Council's commitment to addressing social exclusion. The unit is also preparing a handbook for staff, which will define the principles of social inclusion and show examples of work carried out by departments. It will suggest practical ways of engaging with customers and staff in a more inclusive manner.

A high point in the social inclusion calendar will be the Social Inclusion Week from 23 to 27 April, which will highlight the Council's work in reducing social exclusion and poverty. A number of events will be held in the Council's offices and around the city.

In this and future years, the social inclusion unit will continue to support community-based projects and to embed the social inclusion agenda within the Council. This involves introducing social inclusion into all departments as a corporate issue. In doing this it has the support of the City Council, the City Development Board and other government agencies. As the unit gets stronger, its links with national and local agencies will develop, making the ending of social exclusion more attainable.

PATRICIA CUSSEN *is the Manager of the Social Inclusion Unit in Dublin City Council.*

# Dublin's Social Inclusion Week

From Monday to Friday, 23 to 27 April, Dublin City Council's first Social Inclusion Week will highlight the positive work that Dublin City Council and other agencies are doing to help reduce social exclusion and poverty, to promote an understanding of social inclusion in the city and to celebrate diversity.

The programme of events will start with an official launch on Monday evening, 23 April, with a special guest, followed on Tuesday evening by the launch of the RAPID DVD with the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Eamonn Ó Cuiv TD.

The social inclusion team has also organised a number of training events for council staff, which will include training in 'plain English' and in LAPSIS (Local Anti-Poverty Social Inclusion Strategy). It is also planning to launch a social inclusion handbook for staff and to display in the council offices photographs, artwork and social inclusion initiatives.

Activities will also take place around the city, for example, there will be intercultural basketball between schools in the Inchicore area.

For more information on Dublin City Council's Social Inclusion Week, contact the social inclusion unit at [socialinclusion@dublincity.ie](mailto:socialinclusion@dublincity.ie) or phone (01) 222 2962.



## Jargon Buster

### Activation measures

These are social welfare or employment measures to encourage people to be active in the labour market rather than receive social supports.

### Border Action

Border Action is a partnership between Combat Poverty Agency and Pobal, formerly known as Area Development Management (ADM). It is responsible for managing a number of EU measures to support peace, reconciliation and social inclusion in the border regions by aiding social and economic development in local communities.

### EEA (European Economic Area)

The EEA was formed in 1992 when seven countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) made an agreement with the European Union that they would have access to the internal market but would not become full EU members. There are now 30 members. The EEA members that are not also EU members have a right to be consulted on EU legislation but do not have a right to vote. In the areas of free movement of goods, persons, services and capital; social policy; consumer protection; company law and statistics, the EEA-EFTA states apply EU law.

### ESRI revised definition of poverty

In 2006 the Economic and Social Research Institute reviewed the eight indicators of consistent poverty then in use to see if they were still relevant. It decided to keep six of the eight and add five new ones. The new items were the ability to keep the home warm; buy presents once a year; replace old furniture; have a social drink or meal once a month; and have a social outing once a fortnight.

The report was called Measuring Consistent Poverty in Ireland using EU SILC Data, Working Paper No. 165.

### Habitual Residence Condition (HRC)

This is a condition that must be met to qualify for a number of social welfare supports, including Child Benefit, Unemployment Assistance, non-contributory pension, carers and disability allowances and emergency accommodation. To qualify for the payment, applicants must provide evidence that they have been living in Ireland for two or more years and that they intend to settle permanently here. It was introduced in May 2004.

## Noticeboard

### Linking local and national structures; tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion – Combat Poverty Agency, Dublin 2006

A policy statement, *Linking Local and National Structures: Tackling Poverty and Social Inclusion*, has recently been published by Combat Poverty. It proposes new measures to support the delivery of national anti-poverty strategies at local level, including better alignment of national- and local-level priorities and a more integrated approach to policy development. The statement draws on the findings of a new research report – *Poverty and Social Inclusion: Linking Local and National Structures*, undertaken by ERM Consulting on behalf of Combat Poverty. Both publications are available from [publications@combatpoverty.ie](mailto:publications@combatpoverty.ie).

### NESF recommends a new approach for delivering quality public services

The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) is recommending radical reforms in the way public services are delivered in a new report, *Improving the Delivery of Quality Public Services*. The report is designed to assist in the implementation of public services reforms as outlined in the national partnership agreement Towards 2016 and in the National Economic and Social Council (NESF) report on the Developmental Welfare State. The report finds that there is often a wide gap between what service providers believe they are providing and the services that users need to receive. It highlights the challenges to developing more responsive services due to major demographic changes, inward migration, greater cultural diversity and rising expectations from the public for higher quality standards and value for money. Copies of the report are available from the Government Publication Sales Office or from NESF, price €9.00.

### The future of civil society in the UK and Ireland?

The Carnegie UK Trust has launched an inquiry to explore possible future threats to, and opportunities for, the development of a healthy civil society in the UK and Ireland. The purpose of this is to identify ways in which policy and practice can be enhanced to strengthen civil society. The inquiry will explore the future of civil society in the following three dimensions: (1) civil society as associational life (i.e. the future of civil society associations such as voluntary and community organisations, trade unions, faith-based organisations, philanthropic organisations, etc.); (2) civil society as the

‘good’ society and the contribution made by civil society associations in shaping this; and (3) civil society as the arena for public deliberation. To inform the work of the inquiry, the Trust is actively seeking public participation. To find out more, visit [http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/civil\\_society](http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/civil_society). Further information about the work of the Carnegie UK Trust can be found at [www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk](http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk).

### Conference on primary care

A conference examining the role of primary care services in tackling poverty and health inequalities will take place at Croke Park on 27 June. This event is likely to be of interest to health officials, anti-poverty groups and people working on matters to do with health and social policy. It is the third in a series of annual conferences hosted by Combat Poverty entitled *Poverty is Bad for Your Health*. For further information contact [elaine.byrne@combatpoverty.ie](mailto:elaine.byrne@combatpoverty.ie).

### National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007–2016 (NAP/inclusion)

The Government has published a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion for 2007–2016, which sets out an overall goal to reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2 per cent and 4 per cent by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016. The plan focuses on different life stages: children, people of working age, older people and people with disabilities. Twelve high-level goals have also been identified, spanning all stages of the lifecycle. Copies of the NAP/inclusion are available from the Government Publication Sales Office or from the Office for Social Inclusion website, [www.socialinclusion.ie](http://www.socialinclusion.ie).

### Anti-racism and intercultural awareness training for trainers

The Anti-Racism and Intercultural Awareness Training for Trainers Programme is a two-day training programme for people with training responsibilities in their organisations who have a background in training and facilitation. It aims to provide trainers with the necessary tools and knowledge to deliver anti-racism and intercultural training. Training will take place on 17 and 18 April 2007, and on 26 and 27 April 2007. For an application form, contact Kensika Monshengwo at the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism at (01) 858 8000.