



Policy Submission

**Proposal to the
Community Development Programme
on Specialist Support for
Developmental Community Arts**

November 1996

PROPOSAL
TO DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME
FROM THE COMBAT POVERTY AGENCY
FOR SPECIALIST SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENTAL COMMUNITY ARTS IN
THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
November 1996

COMBAT POVERTY AGENCY'S COMMUNITY ARTS PILOT PROGRAMME

Over the last four years the Combat Poverty Agency has been running a community arts pilot programme. The main aims of the programme were to encourage community arts practice in community development work and explore the link between the two.

During the community arts pilot programme, the Agency funded five community development projects, three of which were part of the Department's Community Development Programme, and sought to draw on the lessons of the projects in framing policy. The five projects were:

- i. P.A.R.C. (Parents Alone Resource Centre), Coolock;
- ii. North Wall Women's Centre: the Balcony Belles Drama Group;
- iii. Pléaráca (An Scéim Ealaíon Pobail), Ros Muc, Co Na Gaillimhe;
- iv. Pavee Point: Travellers Heritage Centre linked to Travellers Arts Schools in Ennis and Tullamore;
- v. Knocknaheeny/Hollyhill Community Arts (Voices from the Tower), Cork.

For two years, 1993-4, the pilot programme was part of a larger EU HORIZON pilot programme co-managed by the Combat Poverty Agency and CAFE (Creative Activity For Everyone).

The learning from the Agency's pilot programme has been demonstrated in a number of ways including publications and a video (1). Last month, the Agency published a policy document entitled *Creating Change, A Strategy for Developmental Community Arts*.

Creating Change focuses on three areas:

- the role of arts and cultural work in community development and anti-poverty work;
- an attempt to define the characteristics of and conditions for community arts practice that can enhance community development and anti-poverty work;
- an attempt to identify resources and policy recommendations to support and enhance the work.

DEVELOPMENTAL COMMUNITY ARTS

It is clear from the pilot programme and other community arts activities that the Agency has been involved in, such as Unspoken Truths, that community arts can enhance and deepen the community development process in unique and significant ways (for further information on this see Cullen, 1995)

However, the Agency argues that community arts activities per se are not community development, they do not necessarily work for social change and on occasion, may contribute to maintaining structures of disadvantage and discrimination. Developmental community arts is an attempt to define the conditions required if community arts activities are to have an impact on community developmental and anti-poverty work. In short, the Agency considers that developmental community arts are those community arts practices that are integrated in and led by community development objectives.

Despite the valuable contribution developmental community arts has made to the regeneration of disadvantaged communities, the community arts sector as a whole has suffered from a lack of commitment and resources from mainstream policy makers. When the Agency's pilot community arts programme comes to an end in December, despite their success, the arts aspects of the five local projects will struggle to survive because of the lack of mainstream support for this work. **Creating Change** outlines a range of recommendations for resourcing the work including measures such as on-going long term funding; seeding and project grant schemes; centres for advice and expertise; networks; education and training programmes; recognition of the social economy dimension to the work; material supports such as venues.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE

The Agency considers that the Department of Social Welfare has a major role to play in supporting and developing this work. Ways in which it can achieve this include:

1. Developmental Community Arts Fund

Work with the Arts Council, along with the Department of Education, to set up and run a Developmental Community Arts Fund which would resource groups active in disadvantaged areas to undertake community development through the arts (for further information on this see recommendation 3.2.1. in **Creating Change**).

2. Grants

Encourage and support developmental community arts initiatives through the grants to voluntary bodies.

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3. RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Specialist support for developmental community arts within the Community Development Programme.

The Agency considers that the Community Development Programme (CDP) is the key arena for developmental community arts. Three of the projects in the community arts pilot programme were based in projects in the CDP, Plearaca and Knocknaheeny/Hollyhill Community Arts, while led by community arts activities, have become catalysts and resources for community development in their local areas. The Agency has targeted projects in the CDP throughout the pilot programme including when disseminating the learning from the pilot. The Agency is currently running a Developmental Community Arts training programme for CDP projects in the northern half of the Republic.

Because of the obvious success of the work, the number of CDP projects looking for advice and support to undertake community arts is increasing rapidly. However, in 1997 there will be no support provision for this work. It is a new, specialised area of work within community development and it is the Agency's view that no organisation currently has the brief or capacity to support the work. In addition, the Agency's Community Arts Development Workers (job share) will leave with the end of the pilot programme. Thus there is a major gap in terms of provision.

WHAT

A key recommendation in **Creating Change** is that this gap in support should be filled by the Department of Social Welfare setting up and supporting **specialist support for developmental community arts within the Community Development Programme**.

The specialist support would support projects in the CDP to undertake developmental community arts through: providing information; identifying training needs and where appropriate run training programmes; supporting networking and the sharing of experiences, practice and expertise; developing thinking on the work and policy implications.

WHERE

The evidence from the pilot programme and the work of the specialist support agencies already in existence suggests that there are two key issues concerning the location of specialist support for developmental community arts within the CDP. The questions are:

- i Is delivery of the service best located at local, regional or national level?
- ii Should the service be located within an existing or new group?

Local

If the service is to be delivered at a local level it would most likely be carried out by a number of local projects in the CDP who have already indicated an interest and expertise in developmental community arts. They would be resourced by the Department of Social Welfare to develop their capacity to act as regional specialist support agencies within the CDP.

Regional

Delivery of the service at regional level would most likely be carried out by existing regionally-based support agencies within the CDP. They would be resourced by the Department of Social Welfare to develop their capacity as specialist supports in developmental community arts.

These agencies would provide a regionally-based support to local projects and would link to appropriate regional structures and national agencies like CAFE and the Arts Council.

National

At national level, it is likely that either one CDP project or one CDP regional support agency, with interest and expertise in developmental community arts would be resourced to develop their capacity to act as a nationally-focused specialist support agency. A third option at national level is for the Department to set up or seek tenders for the establishment of a new organisation within the CDP to act as a specialist support agency. This national agency would link to the appropriate structures and agencies such as CAFE and the Arts Council.

HOW

At this stage, without further research and clarification, it is not possible for the Agency to recommend the most appropriate model for specialist support for developmental community arts within the CDP. However, given its role with the specialist support agencies in general and the experience of the process leading to the Mid-West Support Agency in particular, the Combat Poverty Agency recommends that the Department request the Agency to undertake a short research project. The research, like the Mid-West process, would include a period of consultation with appropriate agencies and local projects and work with a working group to refine and make recommendations on options for specialist support and resource requirements.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ARTS COUNCIL LED DEVELOPMENTAL COMMUNITY ARTS FUND

In the Agency's view, the key roles of the Arts Council and the Department of Social Welfare are specific to their particular agendas. They are separate but linked. The role of the Department

of Social Welfare's support initiatives for developmental community arts concerns anti-poverty and community development work - building the community's capacity building to take part in decisions that affect it. The community arts pilot programme has indicated that developmental community arts can enhance this process in a particular and important way. As part of this process, the work helps create the conditions for art to emerge; building interest and capacity in communities that traditionally have been excluded from the arts. The specialist support agency/ies would be assisting, advising and supporting projects in the CDP to undertake developmental community arts.

It is the Agency's view that the recommended Developmental Community Arts Fund would have a specific brief to grant-aid a range of developmental community arts activities. By locating the Fund within The Arts Council it is envisaged that the role of the Fund would focus mainly on supporting the art that emerges in disadvantaged communities and resourcing communities to make art of excellence. The Fund would have a brief for all projects undertaking developmental community arts, including but not just those in the CDP.

It is the Agency's view that both the DSW and the Arts Council have different and unique roles to play and different sites of influence in a long and enriching process of community development and social inclusion through the arts.

REFERENCES

1. Publications include the following:

CAFE/CPA (1995) *Creating A Difference*, Report of the Creative Activity/Combat Poverty Agency Community Arts Pilot Programme 1993-1994;

CAFE/CPA (1995) 16 minute video entitled *Creating A Difference*;

Barry Cullen (1995) *Creating Connections*, An Exploration of the Contribution of Community Arts to Community Development in Five Local Projects; Combat Poverty Agency.

Combat Poverty Agency (1996) *Creating Change*, A Strategy for Developmental Community Arts.