



# Policy Submission

## **Supporting Voluntary Activity**

**Submission on the Green Paper on the  
Community & Voluntary Sector  
and its Relationship with the State**

**October 1998**

REF/CPA

Final Draft

Combat Poverty Agency  
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**Combat Poverty Agency Submission**

to

**Minister for Social Community and Family Affairs**

on

**‘Supporting Voluntary Activity: A Green Paper on the Community and Voluntary  
Sector and its Relationship with the State’**

**October 1998**

**Combat Poverty Agency Submission to**  
**'Supporting Voluntary Activity: A Green Paper on the Community and Voluntary**  
**Sector and its relationship with the State'**

## **Introduction**

The community and voluntary sector plays an important role in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. The state has a key role in supporting and resourcing this sector, in listening and responding to needs and in using the experience of the sector to inform government policy. In making this submission the Agency is concerned to maximise the potential of state/community and voluntary sector relationships in tackling poverty and social exclusion.

This submission draws from internal staff/board discussions and from the Agency's work in developing supports for the community and voluntary sector over many years. A summary of these supports and of the Agency's remit in working with the community and voluntary sector (as outlined in the Combat Poverty Agency Act, 1986) is contained in Appendix 1. The Agency's view is that these supports contribute significantly to building the capacity of the sector, to developing standards of good practice and to assisting groups to engage more effectively in anti-poverty work at all levels. This is acknowledged in the review of the Agency which states that:

'An area where the Agency has been very effective is in supporting the development of an anti-poverty infrastructure, which is now a key part of the policy influencing process. The Agency has helped to develop community representatives who are able to play a full role in the various local and national bodies now operating in the policy development area. This anti-poverty infrastructure requires further support, both financial and developmental, if it is to survive and flourish.' (P.11. Review of the Combat Poverty Agency. Report to the Minister for Social Welfare by Goodbody Economic Consultants. May 1996)

The submission also draws from the proceedings of a conference about the Green Paper on the Community and Voluntary Sector and its relationship with the State which was organised by the Combat Poverty Agency in February 1998. This conference was attended by approximately 300 people from a broad range of groups involved in anti-poverty work within the community development sector, the voluntary sector and the statutory sector. A summary of conference proceedings, papers from the conference and a background paper<sup>1</sup> are available from the Agency.

This submission is laid out in sections as follows:

- \* General Response to the Green Paper
- \* State Responsibility for Welfare Provision

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<sup>1</sup> Background paper for the Combat Poverty Agency regarding their submission to the Green Paper on the Community and Voluntary Sector (unpublished). Eoin O'Sullivan. June 1998.

- \* Community and Voluntary Sector Contribution to Welfare Provision
- \* Principles to inform State/Sector Relationships
- \* Strengthening State/Sector Contribution to Tackling Poverty
  - Mutual Respect and Recognition
  - Equal Relationships
  - Quality Standards
  - Adequate State Funding
  - Adequate Mutual Support
- \* Response to Proposed Structures
- \* Combat Poverty Agency Role in Support for Community and Voluntary Sector
- \* Appendices

### **General Response to the Green Paper**

The Combat Poverty Agency welcomes the Green Paper as an important opportunity for reflection and consideration of the principles and practice which should inform relationships between the community and voluntary sector and the state and of how such relationships might develop in the future. It follows a period of significant change in which there has been

- increased recognition for and organisation within the sector in the development of national, regional and women's networks, in the expansion of the Community Development Programme and the Local Development Programme and in the emergence of the Community Platform
- enhanced participation of the sector in policy arenas and consultative fora, leading to increased demands on community and voluntary groups to contribute to a range of partnership arrangements and policy initiatives
- improved financial support for community development from the state, the National Lottery and the European Union with an increased demand for administrative efficiency and a stronger focus on planning and evaluation
- increased demand for and development of a range of technical and developmental supports

Whilst these changes have generally been perceived as positive, many have developed in a piece-meal manner with an uneven impact across the sector. The Green Paper provides an opportunity to develop a broad overview that acknowledges and consolidates the many positive developments that have taken place, identifies gaps and areas of under-development and responds to these in a coherent and systematic manner.

The publication of the Green Paper is also timely because:

- significant changes are being initiated in the delivery of local government and in its relationship to local development
- the Strategic Management Initiative is providing a framework for change within the Civil and Public Service, with a clearer focus on setting and evaluating policy objectives and with the aim of making the Civil and Public Service more open and accountable
- the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act will contribute to transparency at all levels
- the implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy will provide clear markers of the state's commitment to listening and responding to the voice of those experiencing poverty and disadvantage and the organisations that represent them
- there are parallel deliberations at EU level on relationships with the community and voluntary sector

and in turn will have the potential to contribute to and inform them in a positive way.

The role of the Combat Poverty Agency is to tackle poverty and inequality. In responding to the Green Paper the Agency's main interest and focus is therefore on that part of the community and voluntary sector concerned with poverty and social exclusion. This includes community development groups, anti-poverty networks and voluntary organisations working on poverty issues. These are also the groups which feature most strongly in the Green Paper. Whilst this submission will use the term community and voluntary sector, it is acknowledged that there are a broad range of voluntary groups which do not fall within the Agency's remit but whose relationship with the state also needs to be considered.<sup>2</sup>

Whilst the Green Paper refers in broad terms to the state, distinctions are not made between the political, administrative, legislative and judicial dimensions of the state and there is only limited indication of the engagement of other government departments outside of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. The White Paper should reflect the range of departments which have significant funding and other relationships with the community and voluntary sector. The inclusion of such departments in the steering group which has been established to oversee the consultation process leading to the White Paper is welcome.

- The White Paper should also reflect the linkages and alliances which have been developed in recent years between the community and voluntary sector in both parts of the island. Measures should be considered by which these may be consolidated and mechanisms created to allow for the development of common agendas, exchange of best practice and

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<sup>2</sup> The background paper prepared for the Agency by Eoin O'Sullivan provides an analysis and discussion on trends in welfare provision and the role of the broader voluntary sector generally within this.

the development of a shared infrastructure in areas such as training, networking and project support.

- the White Paper should acknowledge and consolidate the many positive developments that have taken place in state/sector relationships. It should also identify gaps and areas of underdevelopment and respond to these in a coherent and systematic manner
- the White Paper should take account of and in turn inform developments in local government reform, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Strategic Management Initiative and the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act
- the Agency's main interest and focus is on that part of the community and voluntary sector concerned with poverty and social exclusion. However, there are a broad range of voluntary groups which do not fall within the Agency's remit but whose relationship with the state also need to be considered
- distinctions should be made between the political, administrative, legislative and judicial dimensions of the state
- the White Paper should reflect the range of departments which have significant funding and other relationships with the community and voluntary sector
- the White Paper should reflect the linkages and alliances which have been developed in recent years between the community and voluntary sector in both parts of the island and contribute to the development of common agendas, exchange of best practice and the development of a shared infrastructure in areas such as training, networking and project support on a cross-border basis

### **State Responsibility for Welfare Provision**

The White Paper should include a clear statement of how the state perceives its own role and responsibilities. These include the direct provision and delivery of essential social services; providing for social, economic and cultural needs; an overarching role in setting out parameters and resourcing a full range of services, in circumstances where it may not be a direct service provider; ensuring the fair and socially just distribution of resources and opportunities and ensuring citizenship rights are upheld. Whilst many community and voluntary groups have a role in service provision, they should never be regarded as a low cost substitute for welfare provision by the state.

The development of the role of civil society and the growth and support of what is termed the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) sector in Europe in the last decade or so has been accompanied in many instances by a move to a less direct role for the state in welfare delivery. This has generally occurred in countries which formerly had highly developed welfare states eg. Britain and Finland. It is most clearly evident in former Eastern Block countries. Pluralistic welfare systems have emerged which involve a broader range of players in the provision of welfare, including the private sector and the community and voluntary sectors. During this time there has also been an increased focus on collective local responses to a range of complex and intractable social and economic problems.

In Ireland welfare pluralism, or a mixed economy of welfare provision, has well established historical roots. This history is one in which the state has only relatively recently taken on a direct delivery role in welfare services. Prior to that the voluntary sector had played a key role in welfare provision, primarily through church-led initiatives in the areas of health and education. More recently there has been an increased focus on collective local responses and a developing consensus on the importance of including the voice of the excluded within policy formulation and decision making processes.

The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) provides a useful analysis in which to locate increased interest in and engagement of the community and voluntary sector by the state. In its analysis of social partnership, the NESF suggests that 'Irish and international developments indicate that we may be witnessing an historical shift in the role of the centre and national government', in which, 'The complexity, volatility and diversity of economic and social problems, and of social groups, is undermining the capacity of traditional, post-war, legislative and administrative systems. Parliaments find it difficult to pass laws which can accommodate the variety and unpredictability of situations which need to be addressed. Administrative systems designed for uniform delivery of a predictable range of services cannot meet the new needs and demands of citizens.' ( A Framework for Partnership - Enriching Strategic Consensus through Participation, Forum Report No. 16. NESF. 1997. P. 42) It goes on to suggest a role for national government 'as policy entrepreneur and facilitator of information pooling and deliberation'. (Ibid. P. 51)

- **the White Paper should contain a clear statement of how the state perceives its own role and responsibilities**

### **Community and Voluntary Sector Contribution to Welfare Provision**

The Green Paper acknowledges in a positive way the role and contribution of the community and voluntary sector and the need for participatory democracy in which active citizenship is fostered. It states that 'An active voluntary and community sector contributes to a democratic, pluralist society, provides opportunities for the development of decentralised institutional administrative structures and fosters a climate in which innovative solutions to complex social problems and enhancement of quality of life can be pursued and realised.' This acknowledgement has also been signalled in other arenas eg the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Strategic Management Initiative and Partnership 2000. The National Economic and Social Forum argues for the strengthening of social partnership and participatory democracy in ways which complement representative democracy. In its 'Strategy into the 21st Century', the National Economic and Social Council suggests that 'public policy is most effective when social actors are responsible for ever-improving competitiveness and social inclusion' and the need for 'a frame-work in which social inclusion and fairness are achieved by harnessing Ireland's high levels of community involvement, extensive voluntary associations and absence of deep social divisions. This requires extending the benefits of social partnership by consciously promoting a wider distribution of the fruits of growth and wider participation in policy deliberation and implementation'. The report also states that

'The Council believes that the widest participation in social life, economic activity and policy-making are inseparable and fundamental requirements for the well-being of Irish society. The inclusiveness and quality of relationships in social life, communities, economic life and public governance are goals in themselves. These are desirable, quite apart from the fact that inclusive and co-operative participation is productive - economically, socially and in public policy terms' (NESC, 1996 p. 175).

Increased recognition for the sector in Ireland has been mirrored in Europe where there have been parallel deliberations and developments. These are most clearly seen in the development of the EU Social Policy Forum, the Platform of Social NGO's, the Council of Europe's Initiative on Human Dignity and Social Exclusion and the Communication of the Commission of the European Communities on Promoting the Role of Voluntary Organisations and Foundations in Europe.

It is acknowledged that most community and voluntary groups have a role in one or more of the following:

- Service delivery or provision. A distinction may be made between services which are best provided by the state or private sectors and those which are better delivered by community or voluntary groups
- Advocacy/campaigning; generating informed public debate on economic, social and cultural issues; seeking social change through policy change and development
- Self-help or mutual aid, including groups whose main aim is to promote empowerment and participation
- Provision of resources (services to members, training, facilities etc.) and co-ordination, which often includes a representative role and an interface between the sector and public authorities

(These typologies are adapted from the Communication from the European Commission on Promoting the Role of Voluntary Organizations and Foundations in Europe, Directorate-General XX111, 1997. Page 7.)

In reality, many groups have a multiplicity of roles or take on new and different roles as circumstances and priorities dictate. A distinction can be made, irrespective of roles, between those groups which work 'for' people and those which work 'with' people.

In acknowledging these roles and the increased demands on community and voluntary groups, it is essential that support and resources are provided to enable groups to fulfil these roles efficiently, to enhance their capacity to meet new demands and challenges and to engage effectively in new sets of relationships. Unlike other sectoral interests there is very limited or no capacity within the community and voluntary sector concerned with poverty to be



financially self-sustaining. To enable genuine equality and social participation, adequate state support is an essential mechanism which will also enhance the realisation of social citizenship and democracy.

- **it is essential that support and resources are provided to enable community and voluntary groups to fulfil their roles efficiently, to enhance their capacity to meet new demands and challenges and to engage effectively in new sets of relationships**

### **Principles to inform State/Sector Relationships**

The Green Paper's enunciation of clear principles to underpin future relationships between the state and the sector, against which progress may be measured, is welcome. A primary focus on principles avoids the likelihood of an unduly structured framework which might serve to rigidify and inhibit a sector whose strength is frequently defined as including its dynamism, flexibility and capacity to define and respond to social need. Equally helpful is the commitment in the Green Paper to consistency in the philosophy underpinning state and sector partnership. To assist this consistency, the Agency suggests that the principles contained in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy should be expanded and strengthened to more clearly form the basis for the principles in the White Paper. These principles are clearly applicable in the context of state and community/voluntary sector relationships and have the added advantage of already having been endorsed and referred to by the political and administrative systems.

Extensive consultations which were held in planning the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) included broad participation from groups in the community and voluntary sector and from a range of government departments and agencies. The NAPS core principles were subsequently adopted and 'will be applied, in an SMI context, by departments and agencies in implementing the measures set out in this Strategy across the range of their activities.' (Page 7, National Anti-Poverty Strategy, Sharing in Progress, April 1997).

The NAPS core principles might be expanded as follows

- respecting the autonomy and independence of the community and voluntary sector
- ensuring equal access and equal participation for all
- guaranteeing the rights of minorities especially through anti-discrimination measures and affirmative action
- the reduction of inequalities and in particular, addressing the gender dimensions of poverty
- the development of the partnership approach building on national and local partnership processes
- guaranteeing the involvement of the community and voluntary sector
- enhancing social solidarity through empowerment approaches whilst respecting individual freedom and dignity
- guaranteeing appropriate consultative processes, especially with users and potential users of services

Most of these principles are already strongly reflected and elaborated in the Green Paper.

The principles underpinning social partnership as set out in Partnership 2000 are also pertinent. These are elaborated by the National Economic and Social Forum (Report No. 16. Pages 17/18) and include a 'shared understanding of the key mechanisms and relationships in the formulation and implementation of policy' ( NESF is careful to distinguish this from the need for consensus); inter-dependence between the partners; a problem-solving approach, which involves different participants depending on the agenda items under consideration; acceptance that the benefits of economic growth be shared by all citizens and the importance of monitoring the partnership.

The UK government has committed itself to work in closer partnership with the community and voluntary sector (as outlined in the Labour Party's policy document 'Building the Future Together'. March, 1997). In the first instance, individual 'compacts' between the state and the sector will be negotiated and developed in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The intention is that these would then form the basis for an overarching UK Compact. A draft 'Compact Between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland' is currently being prepared by the Voluntary Activity Unit in the Department of Health and Social Services in conjunction with representatives of the community and voluntary sector. It contains a set of shared values and shared principles that might also be relevant, particularly in the context of cross-border and north/south linkages and expanded opportunities for more interaction between the two jurisdictions under the Peace Agreement (the draft document is available from the Voluntary Activity Unit, Compact Team, Block C.4, Castle Buildings, Belfast BT4 3PP. It may also be accessed on the internet at <http://www.nicva.org/compact>).

Mechanisms must be developed to ensure that principles to underpin relationships between the state and sector, when agreed, are reflected in policy and practice and monitored effectively.

- **the principles contained in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy should be expanded and strengthened to more clearly form the basis for the principles in the White Paper**
- **principles to underpin relationships between the state and sector, when agreed, should be reflected in policy and practice and monitored effectively**

### **Strengthening State/Sector Contribution to Tackling Poverty**

The primary concern of the Agency in respect of the Green Paper is in its potential to enhance and develop the contribution of both the state and the community and voluntary sector to tackling poverty.

The state's policy commitment to tackling poverty is most clearly articulated in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS). The potential of this is yet to be tested. There is a

commitment in the NAPS to developing durable mechanisms for the involvement of the sector. It is anticipated that research which has been commissioned by the Agency in collaboration with the NAPS Unit in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs will contribute to developing models of involvement. The appropriateness and effective implementation of whatever mechanisms are agreed will be a key yard-stick by which to measure new forms of relationship between the state and the sector.

The Green Paper 'presupposes the central allocation of resources within a facilitative and enabling framework' (Page 24) and refers frequently to an enabling state. To ensure the adequate allocation of central resources and the capacity to perform a facilitative and enabling role will require:

- a commitment to provide adequate funding and support to the community and voluntary sector, including the provision of core funding and investment in an infrastructure of support to the sector;
- a range of mechanisms for dialogue, participation and consultation with the sector in areas of social and economic planning and decision making and consideration of the circumstances in which particular mechanisms are most appropriate. Such mechanisms will allow for more effective engagement with the sector and opportunities to listen and co-ordinate responses to issues of mutual concern. Each government department should indicate how it plans to develop its relationship with the sector and how it intends to put the principles and commitments in the White Paper into practice;
- enhanced understanding of the community and voluntary sector. In order to provide for needs in an appropriate and consistent way, an investment in research and development is required. In particular, accurate and up to date information is needed on an ongoing basis about the range and type of groups operating within the sector and their varying roles and functions;
- training and awareness raising for public servants on issues relevant to relationships with the community and voluntary sector. This could include knowledge and understanding of the sector, community development and poverty and equality issues. It might also include opportunities for the short-term placement of public servants within the community and voluntary sector and for those involved in the sector within the public administration system. An audit should be undertaken to assess needs in this respect and programmes developed over time to meet these needs;
- the development of appropriate skills and knowledge for public servants who have responsibility for engaging with the community and voluntary sector and the recruitment of specialist practitioners for positions which require specialist skills;

- the development of citizen charters in key service areas which detail rights, entitlements and opportunities for participation. Such charters should be accompanied by strategies to ensure that their provisions are met;
- establishing agreed mechanisms for monitoring and assessing the work of funded groups within the sector;
- a commitment to the development of mechanisms to facilitate mainstreaming of actions and ideas where these have demonstrated effectiveness at local level and have broader relevance for public policy and provision;
- development of intra-state relationships and integrative mechanisms at regional and national levels. This is crucial in the context of a growing acknowledgement of the importance and a growing demand for integrated responses to poverty, disadvantage and related problems at local level.

**To ensure adequate allocation of central resources and the capacity to perform a facilitative and enabling role will require:**

- **a commitment to provide adequate funding and support to the community and voluntary sector**
- **a range of mechanisms for dialogue, participation and consultation with the sector. There is a need for the state to consider who it is appropriate to involve in policy discussions and on what basis**
- **each government department should indicate how it plans to develop its relationship with the sector and how it intends to put the principles and commitments in the White Paper into practice**
- **enhanced understanding of the community and voluntary sector**
- **investment in research and development is required. In particular, accurate and up to date information is needed on an ongoing basis about the range and type of groups operating within the sector and their varying roles and functions**
- **training and awareness raising for public servants on issues relevant to relationships with the community and voluntary sector. An audit should be undertaken to assess needs in this respect and programmes developed over time to meet these needs**
- **the development of appropriate skills and knowledge for public servants who have responsibility for engaging with the community and voluntary sector and the recruitment of specialist practitioners for positions which require specialist skills**
- **the development of citizen charters in key service areas which detail rights, entitlements and opportunities for participation**
- **establishing agreed mechanisms for monitoring and assessing the work of funded groups within the sector**
- **the development of mechanisms to facilitate mainstreaming**
- **development of intra-state relationships and integrative mechanisms at regional and national levels**

The contribution the sector can make to tackling poverty and social exclusion includes:

- working for social change in favour of people living in poverty
- empowering the excluded
- working in solidarity with those who experience injustice and prejudice and promoting anti-discrimination policy and practice
- ensuring that the interests and concerns of disadvantaged people and groups are prioritised in decision making arenas
- ensuring that those experiencing poverty and exclusion are actively involved in the policy making process
- working to ensure that the provision of state services adequately meets the needs of those experiencing poverty and exclusion and providing for new and innovative responses to social and economic needs
- identifying and defining social and economic problems
- providing services in a way which both meets needs and empowers service users and which reaches the most excluded, isolated and marginalised groups and individuals.

In order for the community and voluntary sector and the state to perform their roles effectively and in order to promote the development of an autonomous and responsive sector, the following are required:

- Mutual Respect and Recognition
- Equal Relationships
- Quality Standards
- Adequate State Funding
- Adequate Mutual Support

**\* Mutual Respect and Recognition**

If relationships between the community and voluntary sector and the state are to develop in ways which are beneficial to and valued by both and that can be seen to have added value for the communities and groups on whose behalf they are entered into, they must be based on mutual respect and trust. There must be shared commitment to the principles which are agreed and recognition and respect for the different roles and contributions of each. There must also be understanding of the contexts in which their respective roles are performed.

- **relationships between the state and the sector must be based on mutual respect and trust. There must be shared commitment to the principles which are agreed and recognition and respect for the different roles and contributions of each**

\* **Equal Relationships**

There is a need to build and develop equal relationships at all levels both between the state and the sector and within the community and voluntary sector. Effective interaction between the community and voluntary sector and the state takes place in different ways and at different levels. It includes mechanisms and opportunities for dialogue, consultation, joint planning, participation in decision making and representation. Distinctions are needed between these and the circumstances in which each is appropriate eg. information exchange, canvassing views of users and potential users, planning and monitoring for more effective and relevant delivery of services and initiatives, lobbying and contributing to the policy making process.

Mechanisms for participation in all of these ways need to be developed at central and local government levels and across a range of policy arenas. However, such mechanisms should not inhibit informal interaction and the rights of groups to lobby directly for the interests they represent with others who have policy responsibilities.

It is important to acknowledge the range of mechanisms and opportunities for interaction and participation that have been opened up over the last number of years and to build on these. However, there is also a need to open up discussion about how these might be built on and to identify gaps in current arrangements. It will also be important to ensure that particular sets of interests within the community and voluntary sector have opportunities for interaction and participation at the most appropriate levels. Such interests may be issue issues under consideration. based eg women's group or groups dealing with housing issues or they may be defined by size and stage of development eg newly formed groups with little access to resources.

There is a need to ensure that mechanisms are open and inclusive to the range of interests they are developed to serve and that supports and resources, both human and financial, are available to ensure the effective involvement of those most affected by the

The issue of whether there should be an umbrella body for the community and voluntary sector is one which ultimately can only be decided by the sector itself. Whilst arguments have been put forward both for and against such a body, there is no evidence of a strong lobby for this to date. However, the Agency's conference on the Green Paper earlier this year clearly highlighted the need for dialogue within the sector itself about which organisational mechanisms would both maximise the potential of the sector to a) work for policy change and development and b) enhance capacity within the sector to do so.

- **there is a need to build and develop equal relationships at all levels both between the state and the sector and within the community and voluntary sector**

- mechanisms for participation at different levels need to be developed at central and local government levels and across a range of policy arenas
- opportunities for interaction and participation that currently exist should be built on. However, there is also a need to open up discussion about how these might be developed in the future and to identify and address gaps in current arrangements
- supports and resources, both human and financial, are needed to ensure the effective involvement of those most affected by the particular issues under consideration
- there is need for dialogue within the sector itself about which organisational mechanisms would both maximise the potential of the sector to a) work for policy change and development and b) enhance capacity within the sector to do so

\* **Quality standards**

Principles of openness, accountability and transparency are equally important in the community and voluntary sector, in the statutory sector and in the private sector. The development of quality standards which reflect these principles should be a priority concern across all sectors. The achievement of quality standards requires support and encouragement as well as a significant investment in training and skills development. It also requires active support, advice and good quality information. This is particularly the case in community and voluntary groups where a commitment to the involvement of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion at all levels of project management and development is frequently both a core value of the organisation and an expectation of funders. Quality standards imply not only adherence to legal minimum standards but a commitment to best practice. There is a need to clarify who sets standards as well as how and by whom they are monitored. There is need also for greater consistency in how the work of community and voluntary organisations is monitored and the development of agreed monitoring procedures. The development of high standards can be enhanced by:

**Training**, especially in relation to legal issues, management, employment issues, programme planning and development, research and evaluation, policy development and participation and communication skills, including information technology. Such training is required for both paid workers and volunteers.

**Accreditation** A national accreditation system is needed for people working in community and voluntary organisations who have not previously had access to formal training. Progression routes which provide for access to mainstream education, training and paid work are required, particularly for people working in a voluntary capacity within the community and voluntary sector. A national system should be developed in partnership with community and voluntary organisations and training agencies who are concerned with this issue, Aontas, Teastas, other relevant statutory groups and relevant higher and further education providers and authorities. This issue should be dealt with as a priority in the White Paper which will follow the forthcoming Green Paper on Adult Education.

*A new and simplified form of legal status* The current process of incorporation as a company limited by guarantee is complicated and difficult. In addition, the rules governing this type of structure are not appropriate to the operation and development of groups in the community and voluntary sector. However, legal incorporation may be required prior to the receipt of state funding. In addition the absence of such status can mean that individual members of a group can be personally liable for debts and other liabilities incurred by the group.

A new and simple form of legal incorporation which is appropriate to the needs and status of community groups should be developed. Models which are available to community and voluntary organisations in the UK and elsewhere in Europe should be examined to assess their potential application in an Irish context.

The current process of obtaining charitable status (which does not confer legal status) from the Revenue Commissioners is slow and difficult and many groups fail to qualify. There is also confusion over the right to campaign for groups designated as charities. Procedures for granting of charitable status should be reviewed. The possibility of using registration as a means of building an information bank on the community and voluntary sector should also be examined in this context.

*Networking* Opportunities should be created and resourced which allow groups to meet and share information and experience with others in similar situations or at a similar stage of development. Well organised and focussed networking of this kind provides an important mechanism for the identification of best practice and high standards.

- **principles of openness, accountability and transparency are equally important in the community and voluntary sector, in the statutory sector and in the private sector. The development of quality standards which reflect these principles should be a priority concern across all sectors. The achievement of quality standards requires support and encouragement as well as a significant investment in training and skills development. It also requires active support, advice and good quality information**
- **quality standards imply not only adherence to legal minimum standards but a commitment to best practice**
- **there is a need to clarify who sets standards as well as how and by whom they are monitored**
- **agreed monitoring procedures should be developed**
- **training is needed, especially in relation to legal issues, management, employment issues, programme planning and development, research and evaluation, policy development, participation and communication skills, including information technology**
- **a national accreditation system is needed for people working in community and voluntary organisations who have not previously had access to formal training. Progression routes which provide for access to mainstream education, training and paid work are required**



- a new and simple form of legal incorporation which is appropriate to the needs and status of community groups should be developed
- procedures for granting of charitable status should be reviewed. The possibility of using registration as a means of building an information bank on the community and voluntary sector should also be examined in this context
- networking opportunities should be created and resourced which allow groups to meet and share information and experience with others in similar situations or at a similar stage of development

**\* Adequate State Funding**

***Core Funding***

Financial allocations to community and voluntary organisations need to be put on a planned and rational basis, the provisions of which are open to all on an equal basis. The commitment in the Green Paper to the development of agreed criteria for the allocation and disbursement of funds is welcome. Both the level of funding and accounting requirements should be appropriate to the capacity and stage of development of a group. There is a need for core funding for groups who have reached a certain stage of development and effectiveness and who have the capacity to consolidate and develop their work in a planned and systematic way. There should be clearly defined criteria for the inclusion of groups into schemes and programmes which provide for core funding. In addition, there is a need for smaller amounts of funding to be made available on a once-off basis to provide for occasional needs or to act as a catalyst to groups in developing particular areas of their work. This type of funding can be particularly valuable for small, informal or newly emerging groups. Where appropriate, support should be made available to groups to develop their capacity to manage funds effectively.

Whilst it is acknowledged that community and voluntary groups receive funding from a multiplicity of sources, state funding is often essential in providing for core elements of work. The lack of adequate secure core funding which allows a group to plan and develop its work over time is one of the most frequently articulated concerns of community and voluntary organisations. Community and voluntary groups need a sound financial basis on which to grow and develop. Core funding should take account of the resources needed to become good employers and retain staff, provide training and development opportunities for paid staff and voluntary workers, develop work planning and evaluation and to fund the core work of the organisation. Core funding, which should be provided on a multi-annual (3-5 year) basis, should include provision for each of these elements and should incorporate proper safeguards for both the state and the sector.

In addition to adequate core funding there is a need for:

- funding to enhance and develop supports to the sector
- provision for capital costs for premises and equipment
- funding for innovative responses to newly identified or changing needs

- mechanisms for mainstreaming effective time-limited initiatives and/or the lessons arising from such initiatives
- consideration of likely reduction in EU funding for community and voluntary activity
- availability of matching funding to community and voluntary organisations on a consistent and equitable basis
- once-off grants which can be important in acting as a catalyst for work in under-developed areas, can encourage the development of standards and good practice and can be an important mechanism for providing training and development opportunities

### ***Community Employment Programme***

There is need for a critical evaluation of the use of the Community Employment Programme (CEP) to fund voluntary and community groups. Whilst CEP expenditure is included as funding for the sector in the Green Paper and is clearly a very important source of revenue for community and voluntary groups, it is designated elsewhere as a labour market programme for unemployed people. The Agency supports the view expressed by Mary Murphy, the Assistant General Secretary of the Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed, in her response to the Green Paper at the Agency's conference earlier this year that 'The White Paper must address the conflicting demands arising from the labour market needs of CE participants, the needs of CE sponsors and quality standards of service delivery.' However, it will be important that any changes be negotiated with all stakeholders and phased in over time.

### ***Future funding and programme of support for national anti-poverty networks***

A submission about future funding for a programme of support for national anti-poverty networks was presented by the Agency to the DSCFA for consideration in August. This submission drew from the evaluation of the Agency's pilot programme of support for national networks which ran from 1993-1995, from the views of Agency Board and staff and from discussions with the national networks which are currently funded by the Agency on an interim basis. It recommends that an additional, ring-fenced budget be made available to the Agency for this purpose. The budget should provide for core costs for the existing networks, for programme support and evaluation and for the phased development of newer networks or networking activity, in line with agreed criteria. The main activities of networks in the programme should focus on supporting anti-poverty work, promoting the involvement and development of members, contributing to policy development on issues affecting people living in poverty and developing links between policy and local experience. There should be clear criteria agreed against which decisions about which networks to include should be assessed and their involvement should be reviewed at regular intervals.

### ***Role of Trusts and Foundations***

The combined efforts of all sectors of society are required to tackle the unacceptable levels of poverty and social exclusion in Ireland. In this context and applying the ethos of social partnership where groups additional to elected representatives and civil and public servants contribute to national policy making, corporate interests can contribute to maintaining social cohesion. The Green Paper's discussion on Community Foundations provides a useful start

for a more widescale debate on what such a contribution might be. The Foundation idea itself can potentially provide a new, independent and additional funding source for the work of the community and voluntary sector. However, it will be important to ensure that the Foundation's support remains additional to rather than substitutes for the core funding of voluntary and community activity that is the responsibility of government. From the perspective of fairness in the tax system, the costs to the state of the necessary tax breaks to private wealth must be a consideration in the development of a Foundation.

It will also be important not to confuse different but equally valid concepts such as promoting business involvement in local communities and the development of charitable foundations.

The Agency recently published a report entitled 'Community Foundations: An Introductory Report on International Experience and Irish Potential'. The Foreword to this report summarises the benefits of community foundations as well as raising a number of cautionary issues. This Foreword is contained in Appendix 2.

### *National Lottery*

The Agency's submission to the National Lottery Review Group (February 1997) makes detailed recommendations about disbursement and priorities for Lottery funding. The submission stresses the point that national lottery funds should be additional and should not be used for general government purposes. A significant proportion of the funds, it argues, should be used to support developmental and innovatory work. It suggests that voluntary and community organisations should be the main beneficiaries and that priority should be given to groups tackling poverty and disadvantage. The submission also argues that an additional category should be created in the form of a Social Solidarity Fund. This fund should be allocated at least 20% of surplus lottery funds to promote social solidarity through tackling poverty, disadvantage and exclusion. In addition, all existing lottery categories should contain a cross-cutting theme of tackling poverty and disadvantage and should give priority to supporting work with particularly disadvantaged and excluded groups such as Travellers, other ethnic groups, refugees, people with disabilities and people out of home. A summary of the submission's recommendations is contained in Appendix 3 and the full submission is available from the Combat Poverty Agency.

### *Core Funding*

- financial allocations to community and voluntary organisations need to be put on a planned and rational basis, the provisions of which are open to all on an equal basis
- both the level of funding and accounting requirements should be appropriate to the capacity and stage of development of a group
- there is a need for core funding for groups who have reached a certain stage of development and effectiveness and who have the capacity to consolidate and develop their work in a planned and systematic way. There should be clearly defined criteria for the inclusion of groups into schemes and programmes which provide for core funding

- where appropriate, support should be made available to groups to develop their capacity to manage funds effectively
- core funding should take account of the resources needed to become good employers and retain staff, provide training and development opportunities for paid staff and voluntary workers, develop work planning and evaluation and to fund the core work of the organisation. Core funding should be provided on a multi-annual (3-5year) basis

*In addition to core funding there is need for:*

- funding to enhance and develop supports to the sector
- provision for capital costs for premises and equipment
- funding for innovative responses to newly identified or changing needs
- mechanisms for mainstreaming effective time-limited initiatives and/or the lessons arising from such initiatives
- consideration of likely reduction in EU funding for community and voluntary activity
- availability of matching funding to community and voluntary organisations on a consistent and equitable basis
- once-off grants which can be important in acting as a catalyst for work in under-developed areas, can encourage the development of standards and good practice and can be an important mechanism for providing training and development opportunities

*Community Employment Programme*

- there is need for a critical evaluation of the use of the Community Employment Programme (CEP) to fund voluntary and community groups

*National anti-poverty networks*

- the Agency should take responsibility for funding and development of a long term mainstream programme of support for national anti-poverty networks and an additional, ring-fenced budget should be made available to the Agency for this purpose. There should be clear criteria agreed against which decisions about which networks to include should be assessed and their involvement should be reviewed at regular intervals

*Trusts and Foundations*

- the Foundation idea itself can potentially provide a new, independent and additional funding source for the work of the community and voluntary sector. However, it will be important to ensure that the Foundation's support remains additional to rather than substitutes for the core funding of voluntary and community activity that is the responsibility of government. From the perspective of fairness in the tax system, the costs to the state of the necessary tax breaks to private wealth must be a consideration in the development of a Foundation

- there is also need to promote business involvement in local communities and the development of charitable foundations

#### *National Lottery*

- A significant proportion of lottery funds should be used to support developmental and innovatory work. Voluntary and community organisations should be the main beneficiaries and priority should be given to groups tackling poverty and disadvantage
- all existing lottery categories should contain a cross-cutting theme of tackling poverty and disadvantage and should give priority to supporting work with particularly disadvantaged and excluded groups such as Travellers, other ethnic groups, refugees, people with disabilities and people out of home

#### \* **Adequate Mutual Support**

There is general acknowledgement that investment in the development of people and infrastructure is a key element in achieving successful outcomes at the level of project/ programme delivery and organisational development. This is equally true in the state sector and the community and voluntary sector as it is in the private sector. There is need for a commitment to significant additional investment in this regard. Supports are required for workers, for members of management committees and for other volunteers.

A key principle in the provision of support is that those requiring support are involved in both defining those needs and in identifying the means by which they are met. A wide range of supports are required if groups are to maximise their potential but these must be delivered at the appropriate stage of a group's development, as defined by them. Supports may be needed to encourage empowerment and participation; to facilitate organisational development; to engage in policy development or to develop technical skills and knowledge.

The Agency believes that the present levels of support for the voluntary and community sector at a national level are very limited and piecemeal and lack overall coherence. They do not take account of the considerable growth in the sector in recent years. However, the Agency also believes that, given the variety and diversity of the sector, no one agency can be expected to meet all these needs. The Agency thus does not believe that the solution to this issue is to create a single new state agency or independent unit funded by the state to support the sector. Rather the best approach is to It is this function which requires a co-ordinated approach at national level. A key principle in developing such a structure should be to build on the work of existing organisations and agencies which provide support to the sector. Subsequently, where gaps are identified, these should be met by either revising and/or expanding the role of an existing agency or else by supporting new initiatives emerging from within the voluntary sector to provide supports. Whilst state supports and technical assistance delivered by private sector organisations/consultants play an important role, the Agency believes that there is a need for the promotion and development of supports from within the community and voluntary sector itself.

The starting point for appropriate and effective support should be the expressed needs of community and voluntary groups themselves and should include consideration of the characteristics of effective support and of criteria for the provision of support.

The Agency considers that a key mechanism for ensuring that there is a planned and coherent development of support systems for the sector could be the proposed national unit. It could play an important role in bringing together the different agencies involved in this area and working with the community and voluntary sector to identify and fill gaps that may exist (see section below on the proposed National Unit). However, the Agency would also caution that, while a more coherent and planned approach is needed, care must be taken not to force support structures into narrow and rigid boxes. The variety and diversity of the voluntary and community sector is such that an effective support system will necessarily reflect this variety and diversity. It is not realistic to expect individual voluntary and community groups always to have all their support needs met by one source. On occasion they may need support from several different agencies to help them with different needs.

In addition to effective national level planning and co-ordination of support structures the Combat Poverty Agency also believes that there should be regular bilateral meetings between all support agencies working with the voluntary and community sector. The Green Paper specifically refers to the relationship between the National Social Service Board (NSSB) and the Combat Poverty Agency. However, it is the Agency's view that there needs to be regular collaboration between the Agency and all relevant support agencies, not just the NSSB.

The Green Paper specifically suggests that the National Social Service Board and the Combat Poverty Agency should be clear about their respective and distinct roles and develop a collaborative working relationship. There is already a good working relationship between the two agencies and this has been further enhanced during discussions in relation to the Green Paper. In practice there has been little duplication in the roles the two organisations play as they mainly work with different groups. However, both agencies are conscious that as their support work with the voluntary and community sector expands it will be very important to ensure that there continues to be good collaboration. This is particularly the case in areas such as the production of resource materials, the provision of information and training. They thus intend to formalise a system of regular bilateral meetings to ensure the maximum clarity, information exchange and co-operation in relation to supports they offer to the community and voluntary sector.

- **significant additional investment is needed to maximise the capacity of community and voluntary groups to develop their work. Supports are required for workers, for members of management committees and for other volunteers**
- **a key principle in the provision of support is that those requiring support are involved in both defining needs and in identifying the means by which they are met**

- supports are needed to encourage empowerment and participation; to facilitate organisational development; to engage in policy development and to develop technical skills and knowledge
- there is a need to develop a coherent and planned approach to providing support based on a mix of provision by both state and voluntary sector support organisations
- the work of existing organisations and agencies which provide support to the sector should be built on
- there is a need to promote and develop supports from within the community and voluntary sector itself
- care must be taken not to force support structures into narrow and rigid boxes
- there should be regular bilateral meetings between all support agencies working with the voluntary and community sector

## Response to Proposed Structures

### *Proposed National Unit*

The Agency supports the concept of establishing a national unit within a Government department. The role of such a unit should be a strategic one of mobilising and co-ordinating support within government for the voluntary and community sector, developing government policy in relation to the sector and enhancing liaison and partnership between the voluntary sector and government. The unit should **not** be involved in directly providing support services to the sector. This should be the task of specialist state agencies employing staff with appropriate skills and experience and of organisations emerging from within the voluntary and community sector.

The particular responsibilities of a national unit should include:

- overseeing the implementation of the forthcoming white paper and co-ordinating, developing and monitoring government policy in relation to the community and voluntary sector;
- promoting the value of the community and voluntary sector within government, encouraging and monitoring support given to the sector by government departments and other statutory organisations and promoting inter-statutory liaison at national and local levels;
- in conjunction with voluntary liaison units in other departments, state agencies such as CPA and NSSB and other relevant organisations such as ADM and appropriate community and voluntary agencies, ensuring the development and resourcing of a coherent structure of support for the sector at local, regional and national levels;

- interfacing with the community and voluntary sector on issues affecting the development of the sector, providing for the participation of the sector in the development of public policy and ensuring that different parts of the voluntary sector are adequately resourced to be enabled to network together on issues of common interest.

The national unit, while being based in one department (probably either the DSCFA or the Department of Health) should be constituted as an interdepartmental unit operating under the Strategic Management Initiative in a similar manner to the NAPS Unit. It should be supported by a steering committee made up of interdepartmental representatives of the voluntary activity units in other departments, CPA, NSSB, ADM and members of the community and voluntary sector. To reflect the important lead roles played by both the DSCFA and the DoH in relation to the community and voluntary sector this committee should be co-chaired by a senior official from each department.

A planning and monitoring forum should be established involving representatives of the community and voluntary sector which would play a key role in setting priorities for the National Unit and Steering Committee and in monitoring progress. For instance, the National Unit might agree annual work plans with the Forum and meet regularly with the Forum to report on progress in implementing the work programme. The Forum would provide a focus for structured dialogue between government and the voluntary and community sector on strategic issues affecting the relationship between the community and voluntary sector.

The name of the unit should reflect its strategic role and thus we would recommend that it is not called the National Support and Development Unit. Rather it should be called the Community and Voluntary Sector Strategic Policy Unit. The secretariat to the unit should include people with knowledge of the community and voluntary sector and skills in community development. Consideration should be given to drawing in such expertise on secondment from the sector.

### ***Community and Voluntary Activity Units***

The Agency supports the proposal in the Green Paper to establish units in relevant Government departments. In addition the Agency proposes that all other departments should have a senior named official who has specific responsibility for promoting support and liaison by her/his department with the community and voluntary sector and for ongoing liaison with the strategic policy unit. The same should also be required of other government agencies that have extensive contact with the sector such as the Health Boards, FAS and local authorities.

### ***Strengthening Regional and Specialist Support***

Resources for regional and specialist support for community development and anti-poverty work are inadequate and unevenly distributed. Significant additional resources are required if these supports are to adequately meet needs across the sector. The Community Development Programme funded by the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs has been to the forefront in acknowledging the need for a range of supports and providing for these on a



specialist and regional basis. Whilst this work has played a significant role in enhancing the capacity of community development groups, it has developed largely in isolation from broader needs across the sector and from other sources of support. This work now needs to be integrated into a broader range of supports to provide for needs across the sector in a systematic way.

Given the extraordinary growth in community development activity in recent years the Agency believes that there needs to be a radical rethink and a much more comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to the development of regional and specialist resource and support agencies. In addition to the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs' Community Development Programme there are now a wide range of organisations involved in funding and supporting community development activity. These include the Combat Poverty Agency, Area Development Management and the Area Based Partnerships, the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, other EU Initiatives, Health Boards and local authorities as well as a number of key voluntary bodies and private sector organisations.

It is no longer the most effective approach for the DSCFA to develop supports for community development in isolation from all these other developments. The key concern must be to ensure that community and voluntary groups in all parts of the country have access to adequate advice and support irrespective of their funding source. This requires a co-ordinated and planned approach for all regions involving all the relevant statutory and voluntary bodies so that the expertise and strengths of all bodies are drawn on. The appropriate provision will undoubtedly vary from area to area and should result from the maximum possible consultation between the different players in a region. In many areas there will be a variety of supports available providing different expertise and specialisms. This should be seen as positive provided that there is good communication and co-operation between them to avoid duplication of effort. It would be a mistake to try and force support structures into rigid boxes and there must be room for change over time as needs change.

The Combat Poverty Agency, as the statutory body with responsibility for supporting and encouraging community development activity, should be resourced to take the lead role in facilitating the bringing together of relevant statutory, community and voluntary actors in each region in order to audit existing supports, to identify gaps and to plan effective support provision for local groups. The Agency should also be resourced to play a key role in supporting, providing information and training and facilitating exchange and networking between bodies providing support for community development at regional level.

- **the Agency supports the concept of establishing a national unit within a Government department. The role of such a unit should be a strategic one of mobilising and co-ordinating support within government for the voluntary and community sector, developing government policy in relation to the sector and enhancing liaison and partnership between the voluntary sector and government. The unit should be called the Community and Voluntary Sector Strategic Policy Unit**

- the unit should be constituted as an interdepartmental unit operating under the Strategic Management Initiative in a similar manner to the NAPS Unit. It should be supported by a steering committee made up of interdepartmental representatives of the voluntary activity units in other departments, CPA, NSSB, ADM and members of the community and voluntary sector
- the steering committee should be co-chaired by a senior official from the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs and the Department of Health
- a planning and monitoring forum should be established involving representatives of the community and voluntary sector which would play a key role in setting priorities for the National Unit and Steering Committee and in monitoring progress
- consideration should be given to drawing expertise into the unit's secretariat on a secondment basis from the community and voluntary sector
- the Agency supports the proposal in the Green Paper to establish units in relevant Government departments. In addition the Agency proposes that all other departments should have a senior named official who has specific responsibility for promoting support and liaison by her/his department with the community and voluntary sector and for ongoing liaison with the strategic policy unit. The same should also be required of other government agencies that have extensive contact with the sector such as the Health Boards, FAS and local authorities
- resources for regional and specialist support for community development and anti-poverty work are inadequate and unevenly distributed. Significant additional resources are required if these supports are to adequately meet needs across the sector. Support provision within the Community Development Programme should be integrated into a broader range of supports to provide for needs across the sector in a systematic way
- a radical rethink and a much more comprehensive and co-ordinated approach is needed to the development of regional and specialist resource and support provision
- there is a need to ensure that community and voluntary groups in all parts of the country have access to adequate advice and support irrespective of their funding source. This requires a co-ordinated and planned approach for all regions involving all the relevant statutory and voluntary bodies so that the expertise and strengths of all bodies are drawn on
- the Combat Poverty Agency should be resourced to take the lead role in facilitating the bringing together of relevant statutory, community and voluntary actors in each region in order to audit existing supports, to identify gaps and to plan effective support provision for local groups. The Agency should also be resourced to play a key role in supporting, providing information and training and facilitating exchange and networking between bodies providing support for community development at regional level

### **Combat Poverty Agency Role in Support for the Community and Voluntary Sector**

While operating with quite limited resources we believe that the Combat Poverty Agency, as well as making a major contribution to policy development, has established a considerable track record of providing support for and encouraging innovation within the community development sector and for voluntary organisations tackling poverty (see Appendix 1). We believe that this experience and credibility should be developed and built on as a key element in the matrix of support for the sector at national level. In further developing its support role the Agency proposes to formally establish an *Advisory Council* consisting of representatives of the voluntary and community sector concerned with poverty, national programmes that have a significant anti-poverty and community development component such as the Local Urban and Rural Development Programme, the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and the Community Development Programme and agencies that have a direct role in promoting community development or in supporting the community and voluntary sector, such as ADM, the NSSB, local authorities and health boards.

The Agency has already played a key role in the areas outlined below. We believe that the Agency should be given the resources to take the lead role in these areas so that they can be developed on a more systematic basis. It is essential that the Agency should be adequately staffed to enable it to perform these roles. It is not possible to do this on its existing staffing levels.

#### ***Pilot Projects***

A central part of the Agency's work should continue to be the initiation and support of pilot projects testing out new approaches by the community and voluntary sector to tackling poverty and social exclusion. It should ensure that small pilot initiatives are adequately supported through advice and assistance from Agency staff. Considerable emphasis should be placed on the evaluation of such programmes to ensure that lessons learned are used to inform mainstream policy makers, funders and other voluntary and community groups.

#### ***Networking***

In order to improve good practice and exchange of learning and information and to enhance effectiveness in contributing to policy the Agency should be supported to play a lead role in promoting networking between community and voluntary organisations tackling poverty and ensuring the development of a coherent framework for co-operation between the various networks.

At a national level the Agency should:

- be responsible for a programme of support and funding to national networks of community and voluntary organisations representing those experiencing poverty and social exclusion in national policy fora;

- facilitate and support the representation of the sector on key national fora such as the National Economic and Social Forum, the National Economic and Social Council, and the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and in programmes such as the Community Development Programme and the Local Urban and Rural Development Programme.

At a local level the Agency should provide advice and, where appropriate, funding for the development of emerging local networks of community and voluntary groups tackling poverty. A networking budget should be made available for this purpose.

### ***Resource Materials***

The Agency should be resourced to further develop its growing range of practical publications aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the sector, promoting good practice and high standards within the sector and supporting it to work for social change. The Agency should link with regional and local support agencies to ensure that regular training opportunities are provided based on the support materials.

### ***Training***

The Agency should build on its work in the area of management training and developing leadership within community and voluntary groups. Provision of training across the community and voluntary sector is under-resourced, lacks cohesion and requires a coherent system of accreditation. The Agency should take the lead role in ensuring that a coherent network of training support is developed for the community and voluntary sector tackling poverty. It should have a specific earmarked budget to fund the development of appropriate training opportunities by appropriate agencies.

### ***Information and Advice***

The Agency's information and advice services have grown steadily. This growth has been accompanied by an increasing demand for its services. The development of the Agency's library of information on community development and anti-poverty work should be further supported. The Agency should further extend its information to and links with regional support and resource agencies and promote the availability of its library and information services amongst the voluntary and community sector. The Agency should be resourced to be the primary source of information and advice on issues of practice or policy in relation to community development and anti-poverty work and for local, regional and national agencies providing support and resources to voluntary and community groups involved in tackling poverty at local level. In addition, the Agency should be supported to develop its work in increasing public awareness of key research findings on poverty and community development.

### ***Research and Evaluation***

The Agency has played a key role in developing the research infrastructure on poverty issues. It should be resourced to build on its extensive experience in the area of research to develop a coherent programme of research focussed on the role, extent and contribution of the

community and voluntary sector. It should both directly commission such research and respond to proposals from the sector, from universities and from research bodies, as well as promoting and encouraging research into the sector within each of these arenas.

The Agency should be resourced to further develop its role as a centre of expertise in the evaluation of community development and related anti-poverty programmes within the community and voluntary sector.

### ***Promoting Community Development in Statutory Agencies***

As the national agency responsible for advising on and supporting community development, the Agency should play a lead role in advising and supporting Departments and Agencies responsible for national programmes with a major community development component (eg. Community Development Programme and Local Urban and Rural Development Programme).

The Agency should also play a proactive role in promoting community development and anti-poverty practice and principles with statutory departments and agencies and local authorities.

### ***Linking Local Experience to National Policy Making***

The Agency should work with local groups and national policy makers to further enhance the contribution that experience at local level can contribute to national policy making in relation to poverty.

### ***Promoting North/South Exchange and Linkages***

The Agency should build on its experience of promoting cross-border linkages under the Peace and Reconciliation Programme and its Promoting Common Interest grant scheme to foster exchange of experience and learning between community and voluntary groups and practitioners in Northern Ireland and the Republic.

### ***Fostering EU and International Community Development Linkages***

The Agency should maintain its links with other national and international community development agencies and promote the exchange of learning and good practice.

### ***Promoting Private Support for Community Development***

The Agency should promote and encourage support for community development activity by independent charitable foundations and the private sector.

- **in further developing its support role with the community and voluntary sector, the Agency proposes to formally establish an *Advisory Council***
- **the Agency has already played a key role in the areas outlined below. The Agency should be given the resources to take the lead role in these areas so that they can be developed on a more systematic basis. It is essential that the Agency should be adequately staffed to enable it to perform these roles. It is not possible to do this on its existing staffing levels. The agency should be resourced to take the lead role in developing work in the following areas:**

- **initiation and support of pilot projects testing out new approaches to tackling poverty**
- **promoting networking between community and voluntary organisations tackling poverty**
- **developing a range of resource materials**
- **ensuring that a coherent network of training support is developed for the community and voluntary sector tackling poverty**
- **information and advice in relation to community development and anti-poverty issues**
- **research on the role, extent and contribution of the community and voluntary sector and evaluation of community development and related anti-poverty programmes**
- **promoting community development in statutory agencies**
- **linking local experience to national policy making**
- **promoting north/south exchange and linkages**
- **fostering EU and international community development linkages**
- **promoting private support for community development**

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## APPENDIX 1

The statutory responsibility of the Agency in supporting community development and voluntary activity is laid down in the Combat Poverty Agency Act (1986). It includes:

- evaluating, advising and making recommendations to the Minister in relation to policies and programmes of the state...and voluntary agencies in so far as such policies and programmes affect groups...afflicted...by poverty
- identification of possible new policies and programmes for..overcoming poverty and, in consultation with the Minister, testing...their effectiveness on an experimental basis
- collection and dissemination of information on poverty and community development and acting as a centre for counselling and training in relation to, and for assisting, encouraging and giving information on community development as a means of overcoming poverty
- in consultation with the Minister, fostering and assisting....projects of community development and activities to overcome poverty
- establishing and maintaining contact with such Departments of State...and voluntary agencies as seem appropriate....to enable it to perform its other functions

The Agency's role is guided by a strategic plan which is approved by the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs. It is drawn up every three years in consultation with a wide range of interests including community, voluntary and statutory groups. The strategic plan outlines priorities and establishes key objectives and goals. The Agency's role in supporting community and voluntary groups has included:

- piloting and providing training, technical assistance, networking opportunities and developmental support to the following anti-poverty programmes:
  - \* EU Anti-Poverty Programmes
  - \* programme of support for Women's Resource Centres
  - \* programme of support for Women's Networks

- \* programme of support for National Anti-Poverty Networks
  - \* programme of support for Developmental Community Arts
  - \* Demonstration Programme on Educational Disadvantage
  - \* Community Development Programme funded by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (DSCFA)
  - \* key elements of the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in the Border Counties (jointly with ADM Ltd.)
- providing support to groups engaged in anti-poverty work through grant schemes for
    - \* community development education and training (now transferred to DSCFA)
    - \* disadvantaged youth
    - \* information and public awareness
    - \* developing north/south links (Promoting Common Interest)
    - \* evaluation
    - \* research
    - \* drugs, poverty and policy
  - funding national anti-poverty networks
  - supporting role of sector in the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF), through NESF 'Assembly', and in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) and supporting the community representatives of local partnership boards
  - developing a range of resource materials that provide good quality information and practical assistance on aspects of organisational management and development for community and voluntary groups. The materials aim to support groups in their work and to promote good practice

- providing training and information days for community projects' staff and volunteers on aspects of organisational management and development
- organising and/or resourcing a wide range of networking opportunities
- responding to the information needs of local, regional and national community development projects and voluntary groups concerned about poverty
- providing a central library resource specialising in poverty, community development and related issues
- working to increase the resources available to the sector from the statutory and private sectors and from foundations. Promoting an understanding of community development and poverty within the statutory and private sectors
- supporting training initiatives aimed at enhancing practice or filling strategic gaps at national level eg. DCU Certificate in Voluntary Sector Management, Advanced Community Development Consultancy



## Background

One of the key tasks of the Combat Poverty Agency is to encourage the development of the community and voluntary sector as a key actor in anti-poverty work. In doing this the Agency is particularly concerned to foster a strong framework of support that can provide the sector with the training, information, advice and resources it needs to operate effectively. In relation to resources there has been a very significant and welcome increase in recent years in the amount of government and EU resources available to support voluntary and community activity. The Agency has played a key role since it was established in 1986 in arguing for this increased state support for the sector. At the same time the Agency has also been conscious that, compared to many other countries, the amount of private funding available to voluntary and community organisations has been quite limited. In particular, while there has always been a strong tradition of individual donations to charities, the extent of financial support from the private sector and wealthy individuals and the development of charitable foundations and trusts has been very limited. There are many economic and historical reasons why this has been the case. However, the Agency recognises that, with the rapid growth in the Irish economy and the increased wealth that this is generating, now is an opportune moment to explore ways in which support from the private sector might complement the growth in state and EU funding and in particular to examine the potential for charitable foundations in Ireland. In developing its thinking in this area the Agency has been aware of the work of a small number of indigenous foundations and a number of international foundations with which the Agency has worked over the years. They have demonstrated the significant contribution that foundations can make in supporting and encouraging new and innovative work and work with unpopular and unfashionable causes by the voluntary and community sector.

One particular model or mechanism that is becoming increasingly common internationally as a means of channeling private sector funding in support of charitable activity is that of a community trust or foundation. An example of such a body is the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust, which has been in existence since 1979. In addition to its own knowledge of these international developments the Agency has become aware that a number of people involved in the world of foundations and private sector philanthropy are interested in the possibility of promoting the development of community foundations in Ireland.

## The Combat Poverty Agency Study

In this context the Agency decided it would be worthwhile to examine the potential of community trusts in Ireland. With support from The Irish American Partnership the Agency commissioned John Everett of Smith Everett and Associates to undertake a two part study. Part One examines the development of community foundations internationally and Part Two analyses the potential for the introduction of this model in Ireland.

The study is driven from a donor perspective, since there has been little to no work undertaken in this area in Ireland. The Agency acknowledges John Everett's knowledge in this area and welcomes his contribution to the debate on the potential role of community foundations in Ireland and the production of this report for the Agency. While the Agency believes that this study makes an important contribution to our knowledge on the conditions necessary for a community foundation in Ireland, it recognises that this is only one cog in a larger wheel. The views of the community and voluntary sector would be critical in the establishment of a community foundation in Ireland, the role of the State



needs to be clearly identified and the role of philanthropy in Ireland in general warrants further consideration

The Agency is now publishing John Everett's report in order to provide more information about community foundations and to stimulate a wider debate about their potential in Ireland.

## Policy Context

In publishing the report the Agency is conscious that the issue of community trusts or foundations is very much on the policy agenda at this time and thus feels that a more informed debate about their potential at this stage would be helpful. This is particularly the case as the Government's Green Paper, *Supporting Voluntary Activity*, drawing heavily on an earlier draft of the Everett report, raises the question of community trusts. Furthermore, in the December 1997 Budget the Government specifically made provision for an initial sum of £750,000 to a Community Trust Challenge Fund. In addition to these developments there has been a growing discussion in the border counties about the potential for developing a community trust, perhaps on a cross-border basis, to give a long-term basis to the work that is currently being promoted under the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation<sup>1</sup>.

The Agency is also very conscious that while it is useful to learn from international experience it is also important to be very careful about importing an external model into a different national context. The development of foundations in general and community foundations in particular will only be helpful if it happens in a way that builds on and adds to the existing range of supports for the voluntary and community sector. Above all foundations should not be seen as a substitute for government or EU funding but rather as complementary and as a means of further broadening the funding base for the voluntary and community sector.

The Agency suggests that there are a number of considerations that should be kept to the forefront in considering the best way forward for the development of community foundations in Ireland. These have been identified as potential benefits and cautions.

## Benefits of Community Foundations

The potential benefits are seen as:

- the value of creating a permanent endowment which would capture some of the benefits of the "tiger economy" and invest wealth being generated today into a long-term resource to address future needs;
- the benefit of creating a mechanism which could assist businesses and wealthy individuals to develop more effective and better informed giving programmes and could help them to maximise the benefits of philanthropy;

<sup>1</sup> See Stutt, C. (April, 1998) *The Endowment Idea: Study of the Possible Role of a Community Foundation, as a sustainable funding resource for Northern Ireland and the border counties in the context of the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation*. Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust



- the need to fill the gap that currently exists in independent funding which is available to encourage new and innovative actions by the voluntary and community sector;
- community foundations can be used as a mechanism to attract money for funding community and voluntary activities;
- community foundations can fund activities which may not necessarily be funded by the State; and
- community foundation funding is not usually time-limited. In the form of a permanent endowment, funding can be provided on a developmental and continual basis.

## Cautions

However, there are a number of issues worthy of further consideration in the establishment of community trusts. These have been identified as:

- the need to avoid creating something which will be seen as a substitute for the core funding of voluntary and community activity or service provision that is the responsibility of government;
- the need to generate new money rather than become a mechanism for redirecting existing funding raised by charities;
- the importance of developing structures that are seen as being open, accountable and objective in the assessment of needs and priorities;
- the need to take account of what already exists in Ireland such as People in Need, the Ireland Funds, the Enterprise Trust, area based partnerships etc. and not to duplicate their roles;
- the need to ensure balance in the tax implications of promoting community foundations. While it is recognised that a facilitative tax system, using tax reliefs is required to encourage funding from private sources this needs to be weighed against the cost to the state of tax breaks and introducing regressive elements into the tax system;
- the need to be careful that the introduction of community foundations does not reinforce income inequalities; and
- the potential ethical considerations of some business funding.

The Combat Poverty Agency would like to thank John Everett for all the work he undertook in producing this report. He has collated a lot of very valuable information on the international experience of community foundations and has provided a stimulating critique of their potential in Ireland. His report should be valuable reading for policy makers, the private sector and the voluntary and community sector and should make an important contribution to the developing debate on the establishment of community trusts in Ireland.



Our thanks are also due to all those who assisted in his research and particularly the generous help given by people involved in developing community foundations internationally. A special word of thanks is due to The Irish American Partnership for co-funding this research and for all the help and guidance the Agency received from their associates in developing this project.

## Conclusion

The Agency is conscious that community trusts or foundations are only one means of encouraging increased support for voluntary and community activity by the private sector. It will shortly be commissioning further research into other models that have been developed internationally in order to further inform debate and policy development here in Ireland.

Combat Poverty Agency  
May 1998

# APPENDIX 3

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### General

1. An independent regulator should be appointed for the National Lottery who would monitor
  - (i) the operation of the lottery, especially its effects on low income groups, on charities and its links with gambling; and
  - (ii) the disbursement of surplus funds, especially transparency, distribution and the impact of the expenditure.
2. Predominantly, national lottery funds should be additional, and should not be used for general government purposes. A significant proportion of the funds should be used to support developmental and innovatory work. The extent of additionality should be reviewed every five years.
3. Voluntary and community organisations should be the main beneficiaries of lottery funding. Priority should be given to groups tackling poverty and disadvantage.

### Lottery Revenue

4. An independent study, commissioned by the independent regulator or other body independent of the lottery's operation, should be undertaken on revenue raised by the national lottery, with a particular focus on the contribution made by low income groups. The Combat Poverty Agency would be willing to assist with and advise on such a study.

### Disbursement of Lottery Funds

5. The State should take a percentage of the surplus lottery funds for provision of state services; the remainder should be allocated by independent boards or existing state agencies with particular expertise in the relevant areas, such as the Arts Council or Sports Council.
6. An additional special category should be added on Social Solidarity in addition to the current four categories. Funding under this head would be for voluntary and community organisations tackling poverty and social exclusion. An independent board or existing state agency could be given responsibility for allocating the funds under this head.



7. A wide ranging consultation exercise involving voluntary and community organisations throughout Ireland should take place on the disbursement of the national lottery funds. This could be undertaken initially by the Review group or the independent regulator, but should then be undertaken on an ongoing basis by the proposed Boards/State Agencies.
8. The transparency of the lottery in its disbursement and allocation of funding should be improved, through the comprehensive introduction of a standard application procedure with clear guidelines and criteria; the publication of lists of organisations funded and the production of an annual report.
9. Research should be undertaken to investigate the operation of national lotteries in other countries, paying particular attention to evaluations and reviews which have taken place.
10. A guide of models of good practice in the allocation and disbursement of lottery funds should be compiled and made available by the Review Group.

#### **Priorities for Lottery Funding**

11. At least 20% of surplus lottery funds should be allocated into a Social Solidarity Fund (as an additional category) to promote social solidarity through tackling poverty, disadvantage and exclusion.
12. In addition, all the lottery heads ie. (i) youth, sport, recreation and amenities; (ii) arts, culture and national heritage; (iii) the Irish language; and (iv) health and social services should contain a cross-cutting theme of tackling poverty and disadvantage.
13. A number of areas currently in receipt of lottery funding should continue to receive such funding as a priority. These have been identified as:
  - the Community Development Programme
  - lone parents groups
  - women's groups working with disadvantaged and excluded women
  - developmental work with community groups in rural areas, with a particular focus on addressing issues of poverty and exclusion.

14. A number of possible new or additional priority areas are identified for lottery funding. These are:
  - funding for local community and voluntary organisations working to tackle the problem of drug use in their areas
  - funding to support community development work on gay and lesbian issues
  - funding to support community development work which is tackling domestic violence in disadvantaged communities.
15. The lottery funding allocation for special projects for disadvantaged youth should be opened up so that new projects can join the programme and that, in general, that the programme be extended in recognition of the importance of the development of disadvantaged young people, possibly through supporting collaboration and networks of organisations working together to address educational disadvantage.
16. Lottery funding should be specifically allocated to support sports activities in disadvantaged communities, particularly for disadvantaged young people.
17. The national lottery allocation should assist in the establishment of a Developmental Community Arts Fund.
18. There should be particular priority under all categories for supporting work with particularly disadvantaged and excluded groups, such as
  - the Travelling Community
  - people with disabilities
  - people out of home, particularly outside the Dublin area
  - ethnic groups and refugees.

