

Policy Submission

**Submission to the
Department of Finance
on the
National Development Plan
2007-2013**

March 2006



SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

on

THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
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Introduction

Combat Poverty is a state advisory agency developing and promoting measures to combat poverty in Ireland. It does this through its statutory functions of policy advice, research, project support, innovation and evaluation, and public education. Combat Poverty, with Pobal, is also responsible for implementing measures of the Peace Programme and Interreg in the Border Region through Border Action, and on a cross-border basis with its Consortium partners Co-operation Ireland and Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.

In the National Development Plan period 2000-2006 Combat Poverty and the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) in the Department of Social and Family Affairs has provided specialist support on social inclusion to Managing Authorities and Measure Managers in the NDP.

Summary

The Combat Poverty Agency believes that the National Development Plan (NDP) in Ireland has considerable potential to combat poverty and social exclusion. During the past two programming periods social inclusion has become a more prominent feature in the NDP, and it is important that this progress be maintained and intensified. This is very much in line with current thinking on *Mainstreaming Social Inclusion*, where poverty and social exclusion issues, including an equality perspective, are integrated into all areas and levels of policy-making and promoted through the participation of public bodies, social partners, NGOs and other relevant actors.

The Combat Poverty Agency believes that the next National Development Plan should have the following features:

- *Priority for social inclusion*: maintaining the priority given to social inclusion in the Irish policy framework;
- *Social inclusion as a horizontal principle*: developing the system of poverty proofing/poverty impact assessment;
- *Complementarity*: fitting in with and reflecting national policies for combating poverty and social exclusion;
- *Balanced regional development*: to address issues of concentrations of poverty and rural poverty;
- *Greater effectiveness*: improving the outcomes of the funds in combating exclusion;
- *Strengthened implementation*: with reinforced systems for indicators, monitoring and reporting;
- *Enhanced application*: applying the learning of the current NDP 2000-6; and
- *A Common Chapter*: a north-south chapter building on peace building and social inclusion work in the Border Region and on a North-South basis.

In addition, a NDP Social Inclusion Unit should be established, situated in Combat Poverty, and modelled on the other Units providing support to the horizontal principles in the NDP. Specific elements of the work would include:

- Raising awareness of social inclusion issues in the NDP through promotion and development of the current guide;
- Identifying relevant social inclusion indicators, building on earlier work;
- Advising on data collection to support monitoring;
- Supporting the analysis of data to assess impact;
- Linking the work on social inclusion in the NDP with the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Inclusion and other relevant social inclusion policies and programmes;
- Working with the other specialist units on gender and equality to ensure a more integrated approach across the horizontal principles;
- Providing training on social inclusion and social inclusion indicators to implementing bodies, as required;
- Research projects to support the work; and
- Providing monitoring reports on the overall implementation of social inclusion in the NDP.

1 The Combat Poverty Agency and the National Development Plan

Combat Poverty is a state advisory agency developing and promoting measures to combat poverty in Ireland. It does this through its statutory functions of policy advice, research, project support, innovation and evaluation, and public education. Combat Poverty, with Pobal, is also responsible for implementing measures of the Peace Programme and Interreg in the Border Region through Border Action, and on a cross-border basis with its Consortium partners Co-operation Ireland and Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.

In the National Development Plan period 2000-2006 Combat Poverty and the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) in the Department of Social and Family Affairs has provided specialist support on social inclusion to Managing Authorities and Measure Managers in the NDP.

Representatives of Combat Poverty have participated in the monitoring committees for the Border, Midland and Western and the Southern and Eastern Region Operational Programmes and in the Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Co-ordinating Committee.

From 2001, Combat Poverty began a pilot project, which, with the endorsement of the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, and in collaboration with the Office for Social Inclusion in that Department and with the regional assemblies, sought to improve the quality of indicators, monitoring and reporting within the regional programmes, so as to sharpen their impact on social exclusion. Following the Mid-Term Review of the National Development Plan, this work was extended to the Employment and Human Resources and the Economic and Social Infrastructure Operational Programmes and Combat Poverty is now also represented on these Monitoring Committees.

Combat Poverty has, quite recently, prepared a manual on *Embedding Social Inclusion in the National Development Plan*¹, drawn from its experience, with the Office for Social Inclusion, as a specialist unit.

Combat Poverty has also been involved in an EU funded transnational project under the EU Social Exclusion Programme. This project is working across Europe to explore how social inclusion can be mainstreamed across social policy and Combat Poverty is currently being funded to evaluate this mainstreaming approach.

2 The Importance of the National Development Plan

The National Development Plan has made a significant contribution in a number of areas, viz:

- Promoting social inclusion;
- Supporting regional development; and
- Advancing north/south co-operation and peace building.

Specifically:

- The National Development Plan 1994-9 prioritised human resource development, a substantial part of which was devoted to addressing unemployment and other problems of economic and social deprivation. Disadvantaged communities were specifically targeted in the operational programme for local, urban and rural development. It is calculated independently that 29% of the funds were targeted at social exclusion and inequalityⁱⁱ.
- For the 2000-6 period the National Development Plan declared social inclusion to be one of four over-arching objectives. The plan emphasised at many points the importance of reaching marginalised groups, disadvantaged urban and rural areas and targeting those in the most difficult circumstances. An Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Co-ordinating Committee was appointed to follow the equal opportunities and social inclusion commitments of the plan. The proportion of the plan devoted to objectives of social inclusion was independently estimated to have risen to 37%ⁱⁱⁱ.
- The two Regional Assemblies promoted regional development through a range of measures through promoting infrastructural development and promoting social inclusion in disadvantaged urban and rural areas.
- The Peace Programme in the border region, and on a cross-border basis, has had a positive impact in rebuilding communities affected by the Northern Ireland conflict and by promoting social inclusion and peace building.
- These developments illustrate the progressive prominence of social inclusion in Ireland.

Nevertheless, many challenges still exist.

- Poverty levels in Ireland remain unacceptably high:
 - One fifth of the population is at risk of poverty;
 - 7% of the population are in consistent poverty, experiencing deprivation of basic necessities as well as being on a low income;
 - The Irish income distribution remains very unequal with persons in the top fifth of the population having five times the incomes of those in the bottom fifth;

- Lone parent households have a very high risk of poverty, as well as people who are ill or disabled, people in rented accommodation and people who are unemployed; and
- Households with children, especially larger families, show high levels of deprivation.
- Poverty remains unevenly distributed through-out the country:
 - There are higher poverty rates in the Border, Midland and Western Region and in the counties of Donegal, Cavan, Leitrim, Longford and Mayo in particular;
 - In general, the countryside and villages have a higher poverty risk than the larger cities
 - Local authority tenants have a particularly high poverty risk; and
 - The drivers of these differences in poverty rates are related more to the socio-economic composition of poor households rather than location *per se*.
- While much progress has been made in promoting peace building, reconciliation and cross-border co-operation much remains to be done:
 - As peace building is a long term process, it remains vital to support and build on the work initiated under the Peace Programmes in mainstream programmes, to ensure long-term political, economic and social benefits.
 - Experience from other societies that have experienced conflict, such as South Africa, shows that there is a need to focus on social issues, reconciliation and civic participation as well as physical and economic reconstruction in order to build lasting peace; and
 - Continued North-South co-operation is required to help increase mutual understanding between the communities in Ireland and Northern Ireland.
- To date, there has been a failure to adequately link with national strategies such as the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.
- Better monitoring of progress towards outcomes is required.

3 Features of the National Development Plan

The Combat Poverty Agency believes in the importance of building on the progress made to date. Any new National Development Plan should have the following features:

1. **Priority for social inclusion:** maintaining the priority given to social inclusion in the Irish policy framework;
2. **Social inclusion as a horizontal principle:** developing the system of poverty proofing/poverty impact assessment ;
3. **Complementarity:** fitting in with and respecting national policies for combating poverty and social exclusion;
4. **Balanced regional development:** to address issues of concentrations of poverty and rural poverty;
5. **Greater effectiveness:** improving the outcomes of the NDP in combating exclusion;
6. **Strengthened implementation:** with reinforced systems for indicators, monitoring and reporting, drawing on issues identified and learning from the specialist units;
7. **Enhanced application:** applying the learning of the current NDP 2000-6;
8. **A Common Chapter:** a north-south chapter building on peace building and social inclusion work in the Border Region and on a North-South basis.

Each is now elaborated in turn.

3.1 Priority for social inclusion: maintaining the priority given to social inclusion in the Irish policy framework

Making social inclusion an over-arching objective in the National Development Plan was an important breakthrough in the recognition of the issue in Irish society and as an objective of Irish public administration. This gave the issue renewed impetus and responded to previous criticisms that such an objective had been given insufficient explicit attention. The problem of poverty in Ireland remains acute. Accordingly, social inclusion should be maintained as an over-arching objective of the National Development Plan for 2007-2013. In addition, it is important to ensure the integration of social and economic issues and to facilitate more joined up government.

Specific areas which should be addressed in the National Development Plan 2006-2013 include:

Employment Supports

- Targeting those farthest from the labour market, through a variety of approaches including case management;
- Providing support for NAPS target groups, such as women, lone parents, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities to access the labour market;
- Provision of education and training; and

- Support for the social economy;

Health

- Support for the roll out of the primary care strategy and the participation of people living in poverty in the delivery of primary care services;
- Support for building healthy communities through community development approaches;
- Support for access to health services.

Housing

- Increasing the supply and diversity of social housing;
- Addressing fuel poverty through retrofits.

Childcare

- Provision of affordable childcare facilities in disadvantaged areas and for target groups.

Transport

- Support for public transport initiatives;
- Support for the rural transport initiative.

E-inclusion

- Provision of support for ICT provision in disadvantaged areas and to target groups.

Culture

- Support for socially inclusive cultural activities.

The focus should reflect measures which will contribute towards meeting the targets set under the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2006-2008.

3.2 Social inclusion as a horizontal principle: developing the system of poverty proofing/poverty impact assessment

Social inclusion is a horizontal principle of the present National Development Plan, along with gender, the environment and rural development. In practical terms, this meant that all measures must be proofed to ensure that they contribute to alleviating and reducing poverty. Combating exclusion is not about having a section set aside to address the problem of social exclusion, but is about *all* the measures contributing to the issue. Put another way, it is wasteful to have one part contributing to inclusion, while another part acts in a socially exclusive way. In the course of the present NDP, all measure managers were required to consider how both their measure and individual projects contributed to the alleviation of poverty. Accordingly, it is essential that the National Development Plan continues to be proofed to ensure that its benefits reach the most disadvantaged communities, groups and members of society. This should be done along the lines already outlined by Combat Poverty^{iv}.

Social inclusion as a horizontal principle also led to the establishment of a cross-cutting committee designed to test the application of the principle to the funds, with the Combat Poverty Agency and Office for Social Inclusion operating as a specialist unit to support this process. This was an important institutional mechanism to check on progress and ensure its even application across all the funds and this system should be further resourced, see section 4 of this Submission. Whilst the operation of the horizontal principles was not without challenges (well documented in the Mid-Term Reviews), there has been significant progress and learning and it will be important to streamline and build on this in the next NDP.

3.3 Complementarity: fitting in with and respecting national policies for combating poverty and social exclusion

It is essential that the National Development Plan matches the priorities, objectives, sentiments and approaches to poverty and social exclusion to be found in existing national policies. The principal reference point here is the Irish National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion¹.

The principal features of this policy that is relevant to the NDP is:

- An appreciation of the scale of the problem of social exclusion;
- Addressing its root causes and acknowledgment of the importance of issues of equality, inequality and discrimination;
- The importance of planned responses and policies developed over time;
- The targeting of resources to those most in need, be they in distinct geographical urban and rural areas and categories where poverty is most acute (e.g. unemployed, people with disabilities, lone parents, Travellers);
- A full acknowledgment of the gender perspective;
- The need for effective systems of implementation;
- The use of innovative methods of delivery of programmes, measures and projects, using community development methods; and
- Consultation with those most affected by poverty and social exclusion.

The Office for Social Inclusion has recently undertaken a comprehensive consultation process to inform the next National Action Plan 2006-2008. Key priorities were subsequently identified at the Social Inclusion Forum, hosted by the National Economic and Social Forum. Areas of emphasis in the next National Action Plan 2006-2008 include:

- Families and children;
- People of working age;
- Older people;
- Access to public services; and
- Public participation.

¹ The new National Agreement, when finalised, is also likely to contain a social inclusion component and will also be an important reference point for the National Development Plan.

The social inclusion priorities and measures in the NDP should reflect the social inclusion objectives, targets and policies set out in the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion.

3.4 Balanced Regional Development to address issues of concentrations of poverty and rural poverty

Poverty is unevenly distributed through-out the country. There are higher poverty rates in the Border, Midland and Western Region, in the counties of Donegal, Cavan, Leitrim, Longford and Mayo in particular. In general, the countryside and villages have a higher poverty risk than the larger cities. Local authority tenants have a particularly high poverty risk. The factors determining these differences are related more to the socio-economic composition of poor households rather than location *per se*. Thus, while targeted policies have limited value in tackling poverty given the diffuse nature of poverty there are other reasons why they are valuable. Addressing neighbourhood issues in particular is important, as is providing integrated access to services at local level.

The provision of services is important in addressing social exclusion in rural areas where access is a particular issue. Also, supporting the local economy and the creation and support of employment opportunities is important in rural areas.

The issues which have a regional dimension and should be addressed in the National Development Plan 2006-2013 include:

- *Childcare* – provision of affordable childcare facilities in disadvantaged areas;
- *Support for the Community Development Support Programme;*
- *Support for the Family Resource Centres Programme;*
- *Support for the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme;*
- *Support for initiatives in RAPID/CLAR areas;*
- *Support for local health initiatives;*
- *Equality Supports;*
- *Youth Services* – provision of facilities and activities in disadvantaged areas;
- *Services for the unemployed;*
- *Rural Transport Supports;*
- *Rural Development Supports;*
- *Support for Social Inclusion work by local authorities* eg. estate management, libraries, play grounds;
- *Support for Drugs Task Forces;*
- *Supports for job creation in rural areas; and*
- *Support for R&D in rural areas.*

There should be complementarity between these measures and the National Spatial Strategy and the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion.

Regional and local poverty trends should be monitored and targets set for poverty reduction in line with national targets.

3.5 Greater effectiveness: improving the outcomes of the NDP in combating exclusion

Despite the greater prominence given to social inclusion within the NDP 2000-2006, there is reason to believe that ways can be found to make these stronger in promoting social inclusion. Commentaries on the NDP^v have noted the disproportionate balance of allocation of resources.

By way of illustrative example, the funding would be more effective if it was to:

- Rebalance the allocation for social housing for deprived groups, such as homeless people and Travellers;
- Concentrate health capital spending on those community and hospital services most required by lower income groups;
- Prioritise public transport, which benefits those with the fewest transport resources;
- Ensure the public transport system is fully accessible, thereby including people with disabilities;
- Refocus energy-related programmes on the problems of heating poorly-insulated low-income homes, where fuel poverty is a serious challenge;
- Increase the proportion made available to locally-based programmes for socio-economic development, which although welcome, have been disproportionately small;
- Rebalance education and training current and capital spending on the most deprived parts of the labour market; and
- Enhance the productive capacity of disadvantaged groups and communities.

3.6 Strengthened implementation: with reinforced systems for indicators, monitoring and reporting

Problems of implementation were at the core of Combat Poverty's pilot project. Combat Poverty drew attention to the very small number of social inclusion indicators, either in the programmes where one might expect them or further afield where there was still potential for their application. Combat Poverty pointed out that as a result there was the real danger that by the end of the current NDP period, very little fresh knowledge might be gained as to the effectiveness of the NDP in combating poverty. Accordingly, Combat Poverty proposed the application of social inclusion indicators to a wider range of measures. In conjunction with the NDP/CSF evaluation unit and the managing authorities, significant progress was made, although some gaps remain.

The problem with indicators was, in Combat Poverty's view, symptomatic of a broader problem within the monitoring and reporting process. Reporting to monitoring committees has concentrated on the roll-out of projects and the rate of spend. Whilst both are important, this has been at the expense of consideration of the actual impact, effect and value of the measures. Little time has been made available to consider the outcome of interventions. Although a new reporting template was introduced by the NDP/CSF evaluation unit to facilitate enhanced reporting on the horizontal principles, few measure

managers seem to have availed of such opportunities to do so, suggesting that they may need assistance in the development of these capacities.

The mid-term evaluation of the present national development plan, carried out by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)^{vi}, came to similar conclusions as Combat Poverty, and the ESRI put forward a number of proposals for the strengthening of indicators, monitoring and reporting. It is essential that technical assistance be directed to specialist units, such as Combat Poverty Agency and the Office for Social Inclusion, so that they can provide the kind of support necessary to measure managers to assist them with quality indicators, monitoring and reporting in the area of social inclusion.

3.7 Enhanced application: applying the learning of the current NDP 2000-6

Ways must be found of ensuring that the learning generated in the current NDP period be applied in the new national development plan. In the course of its participation in the work of the current NDP 2000-6 and arising from its wider work against poverty, Combat Poverty emphasises the importance of the following:

- The approach of the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, operated by Pobal, for its rigorous approach to documentation, planning and monitoring, for its procedures for consultation with disadvantaged communities and focus on those areas in greatest need.
- The value of targeting to those geographical communities in greatest socio-economic need, as identified by use of a deprivation index, and to other groups in need, as identified in the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion. Several measures gave examples of effective geographical targeting (e.g. RAPID/CLAR areas) and group targeting (e.g. lone parents, people with disabilities, Travellers).
- The importance of progression and long-term outcomes in the employment and training measures. The ESRI mid-term evaluation rated a number of human resources measures as being successful in integrating unemployed people into the workforce.
- The need to build on progress made in making culture, recreation, heritage, environmental and sports facilities open to hitherto excluded groups.
- The importance of e-inclusion through the NDP to support e-connectivity and broadband.
- The importance of transport to isolated and disadvantaged rural communities;
- The value of measures to combat fuel poverty.
- Reinforcing those other areas where the ESRI mid-term evaluation found evidence of a positive impact on social inclusion, such as housing, education and childcare.
- The achievements of the Peace II programme in contributing to peace-building, reconciliation, economic and social reconstruction and addressing the legacy of the conflict^{vii}.

These key learning points should be applied directly to the new National Development Plan.

3.8A Common Chapter: a north-south chapter building on peace building and social inclusion work in the Border Region and on a North-South basis

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 should contain a north/south chapter building on cross-border and peace-building work. The strength of the EU funded Peace Programmes has been their additionality and innovative character^{viii}. However, they are small in comparison with mainstream programmes. Since peace and reconciliation are long term processes they need to be supported by mainstream policies. While investment in infrastructure and economic regeneration is important there is also a need to invest in social policies, such as education, health and social inclusion, as well as to support civil society.

There is a complex interrelationship between conflict and poverty – poverty as a cause of conflict and poverty as a consequence of poverty^{ix}. In particular, the Border Region has been affected by the Northern Ireland conflict which has contributed to poverty and social exclusion in these areas.

Both Ireland and Northern Ireland are in the process of revising their National Anti-Poverty Strategies. These contexts provide opportunities to ensure that conflict and peace-building are integral to anti-poverty strategies and are effectively mainstreamed. The opportunity to build on north south co-operation is central to this work.

The Common Chapter should build on current work and should include:

- A strong social inclusion focus;
- A conflict reconciliation and peace-building element;
- An economic development dimension;
- Civic participation;
- An all-island dimension. While the impact of the conflict is concentrated in Northern Ireland and the Border region, the legacy of the conflict has touched the whole of the island.

Consideration should be given to the establishment of a North-South Body tasked with tackling poverty, exclusion and inequalities related to the conflict, along the lines of the North-South bodies established under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. Such a body would work collaboratively with the relevant Departments in Ireland and Northern Ireland, but would bring an all-island perspective to the work and maximise synergies.

4 NDP Social Inclusion Unit

As stated above Combat Poverty Agency has provided support, in conjunction with the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI), to promote social inclusion in the current NDP. This has included: proposing relevant and appropriate social inclusion indicators, liaising with Managing Authorities and Measure Managers on indicators for social inclusion, data to support monitoring, linking the work on social inclusion in the NDP with other social inclusion policies, most specifically the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Inclusion. Much of this work has been through technical support, and focused mainly on the Regional Programmes. We have also produced a Guide to *Embedding Social Inclusion in the NDP* and provided a regular analysis of impact of NDP expenditure on promoting social inclusion.

Most of this work was funded from within Combat Poverty's own resources, limiting the support which could be provided, given other demands on the Agency's resources. In 2004 and 2005 €50,000 was provided by the Department of Finance to support the work, enabling additional technical support and the production of the Guide to *Embedding Social Inclusion in the NDP*.

The mid-term evaluations highlighted the need for further support in monitoring the impact of NDP spending and programmes on social inclusion. Technical support on gender and equality is provided through the Gender Mainstreaming Unit in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Gender Equality Unit in the Department of Education and Science and the Equality Studies Unit in the Equality Authority.

In the NDP 2007-2013 a NDP Social Inclusion Unit should be established, modelled on the other Units providing support to the horizontal principles in the NDP and situated in the Combat Poverty Agency. The case for a Social Inclusion Unit is strong, since as well as being a horizontal principle we have argued that the promotion of social inclusion should be a key objective of the NDP. It is important that this work is supported and is directly linked with mainstream social inclusion policy, such as the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion.

4.1 Remit of the NDP Social Inclusion Unit

The remit of the NDP Social Inclusion Unit would be to support the Managing Authorities and Implementing Bodies in the implementation and monitoring of social inclusion commitments in the NDP. Specific elements of the work would include:

- Raising awareness of social inclusion issues in the NDP through promotion and development of the current guide;
- Identifying relevant social inclusion indicators, building on earlier work;
- Advising on data collection to support monitoring;
- Supporting the analysis of data to assess impact;

- Linking the work on social inclusion in the NDP with the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Inclusion and other relevant social inclusion policies and programmes;
- Working with the other specialist units on gender and equality to ensure a more integrated approach across the horizontal principles;
- Providing training on social inclusion and social inclusion indicators to implementing bodies, as required;
- Research projects to support the work; and
- Providing monitoring reports on the overall implementation of social inclusion in the NDP.

4.2 Resourcing the NDP Social Inclusion Unit

Based on the operation of the other specialist units and the experience of our work in supporting social inclusion in the current NDP it is estimated that €0.7m be made available to provide social inclusion support.

4.3 Achievements under the current NDP

To support this case we have outlined achievements under the current NDP and issues remaining to be addressed.

4.3.1 Overview

- Improvement in reporting on social inclusion;
- Relationship between NDP and social inclusion more explicit and transparent; and
- New social inclusion indicators have been applied.

4.3.2 Examples of Improved Reporting

- Concentration of projects/facilities in CLAR/RAPID areas;
- Programme participants from disadvantaged areas/groups;
- Profiling of participants;
- Use of childcare programmes by children of lone parents; and
- Disadvantaged groups targeted.

4.3.3 Good Practice Examples

- Progression
 - Early school leaver progression
 - Vocational training and pathways
- Social welfare profile of participants
 - Employment support services
- Commentary on participating groups and trends
 - Back to Education initiative
- Issues raised with Managing Authority
 - National adult literacy strategy.

4.4 Problem Issues

However, there remains a range of issues to be addressed. These include:

- Quality of reporting remains variable;

- Social inclusion is often not included in the horizontal reports;
- Some measures do not have adequate reporting systems in place;
- Lack of compliance;
- Vague and mechanistic reporting;
- Lack of proportionality with small programmes being reported on in detail and large programmes with a lack of reporting detail;
- Lack of contextualisation;
- Lack of assessment and analysis;
- Little relationship between the programme and the quality of outcome eg. impact on poverty, NAPS targets;
- Lack of relevant information, skills, knowledge; and
- Challenge of administrative approach vis-à-vis programme approach.

5 Conclusions

In summary, Combat Poverty's view is that social inclusion objectives should remain an integral part of the National Development Plan.

The new National Development Plan should be devised drawing on the experience of national policy development in the field of social inclusion. We stress the importance of a new plan that has the following features:

- *Priority for social inclusion*: maintaining the priority given to social inclusion in the Irish policy framework;
- *Social inclusion as a horizontal principle*: developing the system of poverty proofing/poverty impact assessment;
- *Complementarity*: fitting in with and reflecting national policies for combating poverty and social exclusion;
- *Balanced regional development*: to address issues of concentrations of poverty and rural poverty;
- *Greater effectiveness*: improving the outcomes of the funds in combating exclusion;
- *Strengthened implementation*: with reinforced systems for indicators, monitoring and reporting;
- *Enhanced application*: applying the learning of the current NDP 2000-6; and
- *A Common Chapter*: a north-south chapter building on peace building and social inclusion work in the Border Region and on a North-South basis.

In addition, a NDP Social Inclusion Unit, situated in the Combat Poverty Agency, should be established modelled on the other Units providing support to the horizontal principles in the NDP. Specific elements of the work would include:

- Raising awareness of social inclusion issues in the NDP through promotion and development of the current guide;
- Identifying relevant social inclusion indicators, building on earlier work;
- Advising on data collection to support monitoring;
- Supporting the analysis of data to assess impact;
- Linking the work on social inclusion in the NDP with the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Inclusion and other relevant social inclusion policies and programmes;
- Working with the other specialist units on gender and equality to ensure a more integrated approach across the horizontal principles;
- Providing training on social inclusion and social inclusion indicators to implementing bodies, as required;
- Research projects to support the work; and
- Providing monitoring reports on the overall implementation of social inclusion in the NDP.

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- ⁱ Kathy Walsh: [*Poverty Impact Assessment in the National Development Plan*](#). Dublin, Combat Poverty Agency, 2006
- ⁱⁱ Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action & Community Workers Cooperative: *Equality and the structural funds*. Belfast & Galway, 1996.
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