

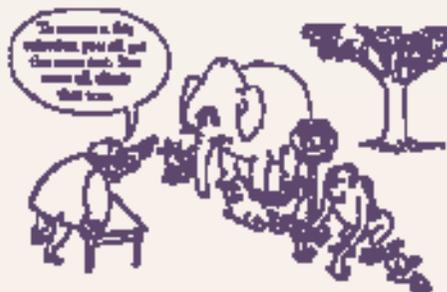
# GENDER EQUALITY in Community Development

# 1. Introduction

## Gender Mainstreaming

'Gender mainstreaming' can be defined as the process of incorporating gender equality issues into every stage of the development, implementation and evaluation of mainstream policies. The Irish government has adopted gender mainstreaming as a strategy to promote equal opportunities between women and men in the National Development Plan 2000-2006.

Why is it important to consider gender equality issues in mainstream policies? There is a dominant ethos in Western societies that opportunities should be equally open to all people. This is a fair and positive aspiration. However, it can be difficult for all people to access opportunities equally, as this cartoon shows.



Clearly some of the animals will find it much easier than others to climb the tree! A recognition of this inequality forms the underlying principle of gender mainstreaming: the process of gender mainstreaming begins with acknowledging the fact that women and men are not able to access opportunities with the same ease. In the past, other approaches - such as the introduction of legislation and positive action programmes - have been adopted to redress gender inequality. However, gender mainstreaming is more extensive in scope, aiming to take gender-related issues into account at every stage of policy

development and implementation. In order for men and women to be equally able to avail of all services and facilities, policy makers need to take account of the different situations and lifestyles of men and women, and plan for this. Gender mainstreaming has therefore been adopted to promote equality between women and men in the National Development Plan 2000-2006.

## The National Development Plan

This Plan is for the investment of over €51 billion over seven years in Irish regional development. Funding is provided for a range of policy fields, including infrastructure, education, training, industry, agriculture, forestry, fishing, tourism, and social inclusion. Over 130 measures are being funded, and these are organised into six 'Operational Programmes'. These Programmes are Employment and Human Resources; Productive Investment; Economic and Social Infrastructure; Peace (to promote peace and reconciliation in the border region); and two regional programmes - one for the Border, Midland and West region, and the other for the Southern and Eastern region. Gender mainstreaming is required for all but six of the NDP measures (these are water, waste water, waste management, energy, coastal protection, and roads).

The NDP Gender Equality Unit has been established in the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform to provide advice and support to all bodies working on the NDP to meet the requirement to mainstream gender equality issues. The Unit is producing a number of factsheets which outline the main gender equality issues in different policy sectors, as well as mechanisms which have been used to redress inequalities between women and men in the relevant field. This factsheet covers gender equality issues in Community Development.

### Why Gender Mainstreaming?

Mainstreaming is a strategy that aims to make equality considerations, and in the case of the NDP, gender equality, a regular part of the mainstream policy process. It has evolved since the early 1990s. Gradually more attention is being given to the implications that this strategy has for a range of policy issues, from budgetary policy through to research and its application in enterprise development. While some consideration has been given to the needs of the sector in Ireland, the specific issues affecting women and men – gender as a factor in structuring opportunities and access – needs to be integrated into the core analysis. Unless gender imbalance is specifically dealt with, many of the obstacles to participation and advancement will not be identified. Underlying the concept of mainstreaming is a recognition that women and men do not have the same situations, needs and resources, and that these differences can affect the way in which women and men can access everything from labour market participation to public services. By taking account of the different needs and situations of women and men, policy-makers can ensure better policy-targeting, more effective provision and greater equality.

A number of tools underpin a mainstreaming strategy. These include: explicitly incorporating a gender perspective into policy development; sound baseline data about the relative position of women and men across a range of areas; clear target setting and indicators; a comprehensive, responsive and clearly communicated monitoring system and a robust system of evaluation. Another useful tool that can be adapted for use in different national contexts is Gender Impact Assessment – a set of questions that helps to identify and respond to the different situations and needs of women and men.

## 2. Background

### Introduction to Community Development

Community development is a way of shaping the type of society we live in. It is underpinned by a desire to stimulate change and is used as an intervention to redress disadvantage and inequality. It is based on collective action and a belief in the value and effectiveness of building people's capacity to take an active part in the development of their communities, localities and regions. Community development is carried out, in the main, through the actions and activities of community and local development groups and organisations. It has been a feature of Irish society for decades.

### Community Development – Definitions

There are many interpretations of the term 'community development'. While it is not defined within the NDP itself, ADM suggests the following definition:

*...a developmental activity composed of both task and process. The task is the achievement of social change linked to equality and social justice, and the process is the application of the principles of participation, empowerment and collective decision-making in a structured and co-ordinated way.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Lloyd, Aiden, (1999) 'An analysis of community development within local development (drawing on case studies, practice and evaluation)'. ADM Insight Series

Another definition of community development is provided by a leading community and voluntary sector organisation, the Community Workers' Co-op;

*[Community development seeks] to challenge inequitable power relationships within society and promotes the redistribution of wealth and resources in a more just and equitable way. It is a process which involves and enables people to work together to influence and exert control over the political, social and economic issues that affect their lives. It is about a collective focus rather than a response to individual crisis and is based on solidarity with the interests of those experiencing exclusion.<sup>2</sup>*

Taken together, these definitions provide an understanding of community development based on two core concepts – the task of challenging inequality and the importance of participation and empowerment in the process adopted. Increasingly, and particularly as a result of government programmes, community development also encompasses an anti-poverty focus.

In summary, community development is a process which is committed to actively bringing about positive change based on equality. As such, it aligns closely with gender mainstreaming since both are concerned with redressing the imbalances and inequalities that exist in society and share a process centred approach to doing so.

In recent times, community development has become recognised at both EU and domestic levels as an effective method of delivering policy particularly that which pertains to redressing disadvantage and inequality. This has been reflected in the allocation of substantial resources to community development previously through European anti-poverty programmes and more recently through EU Structural Funds programmes and community initiatives. From an Irish Government perspective, it has been reflected in a variety of ways, including:

- resourcing of community development initiatives through the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs;
- the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, with its emphasis on community development within the National Development Plan;
- the emergence of social partnership.

The last has resulted in the involvement of the community and voluntary sectors in negotiations leading to the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, Partnership 2000 and both successive National Development Plans.

While government and EU resources have enabled community development activity to take place at a community level through direct grant aid, there has also been an increasing trend towards a programmed and integrated approach to community development, directly resourced by government, broadly termed as 'local development initiatives'.

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<sup>2</sup> Community Workers Co-op.



Community development in Ireland is carried out within a sector known as the 'community and voluntary sector'. This sector is sometimes seen as comprising two discrete sub-sections – a community sector and a voluntary sector, reflecting their historical developments, and distinct philosophical origins. The origins of the voluntary sector can be traced back to the charitable and philanthropic organisations (many of them church-based) of the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The focus in the voluntary sector tends to be on service provision and there is a considerable reliance on charitable donations and fund raising. Many organisations in the sector are service-providers, particularly in the areas of health, disability and services for the elderly. Groups within the community sector tend to be smaller in scale and to focus on issues within a given community (either geographical or sectoral); they often have a social inclusion focus.

The term 'local development' is used to describe area based interventions in which a community development approach is often used.

In this factsheet, a brief overview of the main structures and organisations responsible for the provision of local and community development in Ireland is presented. This is followed by an examination of gender issues in community development. A number of case studies outlining good practice in relation to gender equality within the field of community development are provided along with suggested actions to be undertaken by organisations using or espousing a community development approach.

### **Overview of Local Partnership and Governance Structures in Ireland**

There are a number and range of community development initiatives operating throughout the country.

### **Community Development Programme**

The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs established the Community Development Programme (CDP) in 1990 in recognition of the role of community development in tackling poverty and disadvantage. It provides financial assistance to voluntary-led projects towards the staffing and equipping of local resource centres, which provide a focal point for community development activities in the region. It also supports other specialised community development projects and initiatives having a strategic importance.

### **Area Development Management**

Area Development Management Limited (ADM) was established in 1992 to promote social inclusion, reconciliation and equality and to counter disadvantage through integrated local, social and economic development. It is committed to the processes, principles and practices of community development. ADM manages specific programmes contained within the National Development Plan. These include the

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<sup>3</sup> NESF Report No. 6. Cited in a White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector.

Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme, the RAPID programme, and the Rural Transport Initiative.

### **Area-Based Partnerships**

Area-based partnerships are a key component in the delivery mechanisms for the social inclusion measures in the National Development Plan. The Local Development Social Inclusion Programme enables funding to be made available to 38 area-based partnerships and 34 designated community groups.<sup>4</sup> These are organisations and groups, which adopt a partnership approach to tackling local issues on the basis of comprehensive, integrated local action plans designed to counteract exclusion.

The membership of area-based partnerships comprises one-third statutory representatives, one-third social partners and one-third community and voluntary sector representatives. There are also guidelines regarding equal representation of women and men, advocating a 40:60 gender balance. Since 1999, partnerships are also obliged to include two elected representatives (from local councils or corporations). All sectors are responsible for nominating their own representatives. There are no guidelines laid down for the duration of the term of office or turnover of board members.

### **County Development Boards**

In 1999, City/County Development Boards (CDBs) were established throughout the country as part of the reform of local government. The CDBs are independent bodies funded and supported by the Local Authority. They promote co-operation and co-ordination between all agencies and development groups in their geographical areas. Members of CDBs are drawn from four sectors; local government; state agencies; local development and the social partners. The primary purpose of the CDBs is to devise a ten-year strategy for the economic, social and cultural development of the city/county.

### **Strategic Policy Committees**

In 1998, also as part of the reform of local government in Ireland, Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) were established within local authorities. The new structure was aimed at developing more effective involvement of county/city councillors and other relevant interests in the development of local policies.<sup>5</sup> SPCs mirror the functions of the local authority and have replaced committees which were previously internal. They have a one-third membership drawn from sectors relevant to the committees' work; the rest of the membership is made up of sitting councillors. The chair of each SPC is an elected representative.

### **Community Groups and Local Development Associations**

There are thousands of groups in the Ireland which fall into this category. A distinguishing feature of these autonomous associations and groups is that each has

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<sup>4</sup> *Groups which exist in areas where there are no partnerships and which operate like 'mini-partnerships', using the same approach and structures as area based-partnerships.*

<sup>5</sup> *New Roles, New Responsibilities – enhancing local democracy to eliminate poverty, Community Workers Co-op, 1998.*

control over its own finances and other resources and makes its own decisions on the activities/services it will provide. Management or decision-making structures are comprised of people from the community and they exist solely or primarily to benefit the community (geographic or interest based) through the activities or services provided. Some employ staff usually comprising of community development workers and administrative support.

### **Community Development in the National Development Plan (NDP)**

Community Development is named both as a specific measure within the 'Promoting Social Inclusion Programme' of the NDP and is also evident in the Regional Operational Programmes.

### **Regional Operational Programmes**

The Regional Operational Programmes encompass a broad range of measures at regional level designed to combat poverty and promote equality and social inclusion. Measures aimed at promoting social exclusion reflect the nature of deprivation in each region.

### **Promoting Social Inclusion**

The Social Inclusion Programme 'Community Development and Family Support' Measure, with an allocation of €321million, is committed to providing;

*'support for community development, which enhances the capacity of disadvantaged local communities to participate in mainstream development initiatives, is an integral part of the Government's overall social and economic development strategy. Projects funded under this Measure will support a wide range of self-help activities designed to provide a first step for individuals to escape from poverty and to improve family life in disadvantaged communities. (The Measure will) resource projects that act as catalysts for development in disadvantaged communities will also be supported.'*<sup>6</sup>

Actions include:

- Provision of physical infrastructure for community, recreational and employment purposes
- Provision of support for training, information exchange and local group networking for local community development groups and organisations
- Funding for the Community Development Programme
- Provision of core funding to community and family support groups
- Provision of Family and Community Services Resources Centres to provide parenting skills training
- Establishment of a Family Services Project.

Other measures which refer to community development within the Social Inclusion Programme include: social employment; childcare; equality; youth services and services for the unemployed.

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<sup>6</sup> National Development Plan 2000-2006: 10.24 - Community Development and Family Support.

### EU Community Initiatives – co-funded by the Irish Government

In addition, two EU Community Initiatives, URBAN II and LEADER, which target social exclusion using a community development approach, are co-funded by the Irish government. LEADER fosters links between actions for the development of the rural economy and promotes a bottom up strategy for rural development. URBAN II sets out to tackle the problem of social exclusion in a specific geographic community, currently Ballyfermot, Dublin 10.

### Other Initiatives

RAPID (the Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development programme) targets the 25 urban centres in Ireland with the greatest concentration of disadvantage for priority funding under the NDP. It is managed by ADM.

CLAR (Ceantair Laga Ard-Riachtanais/Programme for Revitalising Rural Areas) is designed to tackle the problems of depopulation, and the decline and lack of services in 16 rural areas.

### Community Development and Gender Mainstreaming

Community Development, as a *process-centred approach* aimed at bringing about fundamental changes in society, has the potential to play a major role in gender mainstreaming, which also necessitates a process-centred approach.

Although gender mainstreaming focuses on equality between women and men, in practice the focus will nearly always be on the position of women. This is because, in most situations, women continue to constitute the most disadvantaged group.

## 3. Gender Issues in Community Development

As part of researching this factsheet, a focus group was held to elicit the views and opinions of experienced community development workers who had a thorough knowledge of gender issues. This resulted in the identification and examination of a number of gender related issues in community development. These, along with data from other sources, are presented in the following pages.

Despite the inherent commitment of community development to addressing inequality – within the community and voluntary sector itself and in the implementation of community development initiatives – significant gender inequalities exist. The following section outlines a number of issues which are the primary and most persistent factors in gender inequality within the community and local development sector. They are presented within the following categories:

1. Employment and volunteering trends
2. Underrepresentation of women in decision-making
3. 'Male culture' of boards/committees
4. Child-care
5. Gender analysis
6. Gender-disaggregated data
7. Multiple disadvantage

## Employment and Volunteering Trends

Within the community and voluntary sector there are two categories of workers, paid and unpaid (usually referred to as volunteers). Paid workers include, among others; community workers, development workers/officers, project managers, administration and finance staff and child-care workers. Members of management committees who oversee and manage community and voluntary sector projects (usually involving a considerable commitment in time, skills and responsibility) are always volunteers (charity law prohibits it from being otherwise) and they are included in the following statistics on volunteers. In addition, volunteers often work in helping organise events and in service delivery.

### Volunteers

The community and voluntary sector is a significant employer in Irish society. Paid employees constitute over 3 per cent of the non-agricultural workforce, *'which compares favourably with some of the major industries in the Irish economy'*.<sup>7</sup> When volunteering is included, this figure more than doubles – increasing the contribution of the voluntary sector to almost 7 per cent on-agricultural workforce. In 1995, there were 32,136 full-time employees in the voluntary and community sector, and almost as many volunteers – 31,919. The contribution of volunteers is highly significant and at £428.62m (€544.24m) is worth well over half the revenue from cash sources in the sector.<sup>8</sup>

The most recent research on volunteering in Ireland<sup>9</sup> includes data on a wide range of volunteering activity, from individual blood donors to babysitting and to people involved in the community and voluntary sector. It indicates that while both women and men were almost equally involved in formal volunteering (19 per cent and 22 per cent for men and women respectively), a significantly greater percentage of women (26 per cent) were involved in formal volunteering compared with men (14 per cent). For both men and women, committee work was the foremost activity, with slightly more women than men (43 per cent and 37 per cent) involved at this level. Voluntary sports activities account for 32 per cent of men's volunteering activity and for 3 per cent of women's. The role of sport in tackling health, social and other developmental needs, especially among young people, is significant. Most sport is organised on a voluntary basis with many hours expended, predominantly by men, in local communities. Because this is not usually categorised as 'community development activity', it is often not formally recognised or given due recognition in the wider community development field. These figures are not available on a gender-disaggregated basis.

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<sup>7</sup> Freda Donoghue, et al, *'Uncovering the Non-Profit Sector in Ireland'*, National College of Ireland, 1999.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* Note that categories include culture and arts, sports and recreation, education, research, nursing homes, mental and other health, social services, emergency and relief, income support and maintenance, community development, housing, employment and training, civic and advocacy, legal, foundations, international activities and religion and as such is broader than the definition of 'community and voluntary sector' used in this factsheet.

<sup>9</sup> 'Ruddle, Dr. Helen & Mulvihill, Raymond ' *Reaching Out – Charitable Giving and Volunteering in the Republic of Ireland*', National College of Ireland, 1997/98.

## Employment

Recently collated figures provide a picture, specifically of the community and voluntary sector, in Northern Ireland.<sup>10</sup> Given that the community and voluntary sectors north and south are broadly similar, the Northern Ireland research provides a useful indication of employment trends within the sector which are likely to be similar to those in the Republic.

In Northern Ireland, women who make up 72.4 per cent of the workforce dominate the sector, but as shown in a salary survey carried out by the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action in 2001,<sup>11</sup> only 2 per cent of women in the sector hold the highest-level jobs. Part-time posts make up 44.8 per cent of the workforce (defined as less than 16 hours per week). Women are significantly over represented in the part-time workforce, comprising 77.7 per cent of all part-time workers in the community and voluntary sector.<sup>12</sup> As with any field of work, the significance in the over representation of women in part-time employment lies in the resultant lower pension and leave entitlements.

In the Republic, the contribution of volunteers within the community and voluntary sector is referred to in a research report *Áit ag an mBord: Representation of Women in Decision-Making Structures for Local Development in Ireland*. It describes the voluntary sector as hugely dependent on the commitment and work of women depicting them as the 'mainstay' of voluntary social services, community development projects and community resource centres around the country. It also comments that this work is undervalued:

'Women's work in their communities has in many ways been regarded as a 'natural' extension of their caring work in the home and has been treated in the same terms – lack of value and invisibility.'<sup>13</sup>

## Senior Positions

As indicated above, women are significantly over represented within the community and voluntary sector as a whole, this position is, however is not reflected in a gender breakdown of senior decision-making positions. For example, women make up 43 per cent of area based partnership managers, a statistic which appears acceptable in its own right, until one examines the gender breakdown of those employed as community development workers and in other less senior positions. Here we find that out of the 232 community workers employed in area-based partnerships 70 per cent are women and 30 per cent are men. While women are highly over represented as community development workers in the partnerships, this is not reflected in management.

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<sup>10</sup> Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, *'State of the Sector III,' 2002.*

<sup>11</sup> Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, *'State of the Sector II,' 2001.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Women in Local Development Consortium 'Áit ag an mBord: Representation of Women in Decision-Making Structures for Local Development in Ireland'.*

A similar situation exists within County and City Development Boards. Of 34 Directors of Community and Enterprise employed by the County Development Boards, 26 are men and 7 are women.<sup>14</sup> While of the 83 Community and Enterprise Development Officers (CEDOs), 57 are women and 23 are men.<sup>15</sup>

Within the field of employment in community development, the under-representation of women in senior decision-making positions – which command a higher degree of power, salaries, and control over decision-making – and the under-representation of men in community /development worker positions is clearly a cause for concern.

### Underrepresentation of Women in Decision-Making

Women account for between just 15 per cent and 30 per cent of representatives in local development decision-making structures in Ireland.<sup>16</sup> The decision-making structures with the highest female representation are the Boards of the area-based partnership companies at 30 per cent and the lowest at 15 per cent occur in local authorities, county and city councils.

Area-based partnerships, LEADER companies, County Development Boards, Strategic Policy Committees and URBAN initiatives are among the most significant decision-making bodies in local and community development in Ireland. Between them, they devise the long-term strategies for the development of local areas, identify priority areas of work and target groups and decide on budget allocations for each. The following table provides a gender breakdown of the membership of various boards.

### Area-Based Partnerships

**Table: 1 Gender Composition in Partnership Boards in Sub-Programme II of Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development (1994–1999)<sup>17</sup>**

Type of Partnership	Total Board Membership	
	Male	Female
Dublin	62%	38%
Other Urban	70%	30%
Rural LEADER	78%	22%
Rural Non-LEADER	67%	33%
<b>Total Percentage</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Total Number</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>235</b>

Men are over represented and women significantly underrepresented across all of these structures. While the Dublin partnerships overall are close to reaching the

<sup>14</sup> One position was vacant at the time of writing. Source; Department of the Environment and Local Government.

<sup>15</sup> Three positions were vacant at the time of writing. Source; Department of the Environment and Local Government.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

60:40 government recommendation,<sup>18</sup> women comprise just 22 per cent of those on the Boards of LEADER companies.

The community and voluntary sector representation is the most gender-balanced with almost 50:50 female/male representation.

Only 19 per cent of Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) members are women. Nationally, 18 per cent of all SPC members come from the Community and Voluntary sector, of these; 94 per cent are men and 6 per cent are women,<sup>19</sup> which does not reflect the over representation of women in the community and voluntary sector. For example, only 15 per cent of those elected to local government in the 2002 general election, were women.<sup>20</sup> There is only one woman County Manager (out of 27), no women in the post of City Manager and Town Clerk (combined post), and only 2 out of 23 County Secretaries (or 9 per cent) are women.<sup>21</sup>

The under-representation of women can be perpetuated by the nomination or selection procedures for boards and committees and/or the lack of procedures for monitoring membership or ensuring turnover of board/committee membership.

For example, the Department of Environment and Local Government document which outlines guidelines for County and City Development Boards states that the local government sector will be represented by the chairs of the SPCs, the cathaoirleach or mayor of the county or city, the city or county manager, and a councillor representing the town local authorities (if any) in the county.<sup>22</sup> Given the under-representation of women in all these positions, limiting criteria such as this inadvertently excludes the majority of women in local government from assuming a position on their County Development Boards.

The significance of the gender imbalance on these boards is the extent to which the experiences, needs and priorities of women will be reflected in area-based action plans and budget spending priorities. Government increasingly sees community development activity as a means of bringing about change. The absence of women in shaping or influencing that change is very likely to result in the creation of solutions which do not take their needs and experiences into account.

Two recent research publications highlight this issue. *Áit ag an mBord: Representation of Women in Decision-Making Structures for Local Development in Ireland* notes that

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<sup>18</sup> Section 2.23 *Gender Balance on Boards of State-sponsored Bodies of the Cabinet Handbook* states: 'In making or recommending appointments to boards of State-sponsored Bodies, Ministers should have regard to the objective of achieving a minimum representation of 40 per cent for both men and women on such boards.'

<sup>19</sup> *Walsh, Barbara, 'Making your Voice Heard', Briefing Paper for Community Representatives on Strategic Policy Committees, Community Workers Co-operative*

<sup>20</sup> *Dept. of Environment & Local Government*

<sup>21</sup> *Women in Local Development Consortium 'Áit ag an mBord: Representation of Women in Decision-Making Structures for Local Development in Ireland' p 96*

<sup>22</sup> *Department of the Environment and Local Government 'A Shared Vision for County/City Development Boards: Guidelines on the CDB Strategies for Economic, Social and Cultural Development', May 2000.*

...women live and act in communities on a daily basis and can be expected to have a particular knowledge of local issues in a direct and immediate way.

Respondents in this research expressed concern that their experience and expertise at community level was often ignored or unknown, higher up the decision-making line.

Another report, *Women and Local Development*,<sup>23</sup> commented that:

Policies have tended to focus on employing women within local development agencies rather than on harnessing women's power as social actors to contribute to, and be targeted by, development processes in their local areas.

The absence of this input is alluded to in a European manual on integrating gender equality into local and regional development, which asserts that

'Greater participation by women in social and economic development is crucial for the effectiveness and sustainability of the development process.' (Braithwaite, 1998)

The *'Women and Local Development'* report adds that in Ireland, this tends to happen in policy, but not in practice.<sup>24</sup> It argues that implementation has not happened because of the lack of necessary resources to facilitate great participation by women.

Barriers such as lack of childcare, transport and caring responsibilities that prevent women from advancing socially, economically and politically in Irish society,<sup>25</sup> also persist within the field of community development. A briefing paper on Strategic Policy Committees<sup>26</sup> noted a number of barriers to community participation on the committees, including those, which have particularly affected women;

Times of meetings are inconvenient for community representatives and although travel expenses may be paid, childcare, social or eldercare expenses are not, which have implications for the participation of women.

These undoubtedly serve as major contributory factors for the lack of women in senior decision-making positions (both in a paid and voluntary capacity) in the field of community development.

### **'Male Culture' of Boards/Committees**

A number of studies have identified organisational culture as a key factor in the persistence of gender disparities. As outlined earlier, the majority of board and committee members in the field of community development, particularly those representing the statutory sector, are men. On Boards which operate at a county or regional level and use a partnership approach, the male members are typically in senior positions within their own agencies and are likely to have a working relationship outside the board. These relationships influence the culture, which

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<sup>23</sup> National Women's Council of Ireland, *'Women and Local Development'* p. 8

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> McMinn & O'Meara, *'Research into the Sustainability of Community Women's Groups in the Six Southern Border Counties'*, WEFT, 2000

<sup>26</sup> Community Workers Co-operative, *'Making Your Voice Heard'*.

governs on these structures. This frequently result in the creation of informal networks which men are able to access, but which women are effectively excluded or marginalised from.

One study,<sup>27</sup> in particular refers to the barriers posed by this culture;

*...even when a woman succeeds in overcoming significant problems in relation to caring and finance, her experience when she starts to attend meetings is extremely discouraging. Participants (in the research) expressed this sense of discouragement as being a real barrier to their continued participation.*

Men are still very much in charge. It takes a very strong woman to make an impression. I had to shout louder and stronger than any man round the table. I was at a meeting recently where I just left and went home to my kids where I could make better use of my time. I got so frustrated. I tried to make a point about five times and each time I opened my mouth someone cut across me.

Participants in this research specifically referred to the informal networks:

*'[networks are] extremely powerful, but difficult to identify and very difficult for women to access.'*

*'I was chair of 15 men at one point on a board of management. It made no odds, they went off and made the decision in the pub together and came back and went through the ritual. I resigned eventually. It's a big issue for women. These lads all work together, nod and a wink, they all know and understand each other.'*

Area based partnership companies do provide a new mechanism for women to become more involved in effecting change at local level. However some other research<sup>28</sup> which highlights the experience of women in 38 area based partnership companies outlines that partnership culture can be exclusive rather than inclusive:

The culture is not inclusive and open to participation. Women's issues are not important in the partnership; neither are women's ways of doing things.

Many women who do get involved on boards report that they can often feel uncomfortable in this environment and therefore limit (consciously or unconsciously) their participation. The outcome of this is that decisions made on these boards are unlikely to reflect women's priorities or disproportionately reflect men's.

The overall culture of local political structures functions to effectively marginalise women, whatever the gender guidelines or government policies may stipulate. This male-dominated culture was difficult to challenge since women were always in a minority on boards or other representative structures, and were not infrequently a minority of one.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Women in Local Development Consortium, 'Ait ag an mBord - Representation of Women in Decision Making Structures for Local Development in Ireland', 2002.*

<sup>28</sup> *'Gender Equality in the Partnerships: Women's Experience,' Community Action Network (CAN)*

<sup>29</sup> *Women in Local Development Consortium 'Ait ag an mBord: Representation of Women in Decision-Making Structures for Local Development in Ireland'*

## Childcare

Over €436m (EU & Exchequer funding) will be invested in childcare in Ireland over the life of the National Development Plan 2000–2006. Most of this will be provided through community and voluntary sector efforts.

A recent census of community services<sup>30</sup> undertaken by ADM indicated that 99 per cent of those employed full-time in childcare provision are women. The same percentage pertains to part-time employment in childcare services. However, over 6 per cent of those in the highest salary bracket (earning more than £22,000) are men.

**Table 2: ADM National Childcare Census 1999/2000 – Full Time Paid Staff by Type**

Full-time Paid Staff	Males	Females	Total
Manager/Co-ordinator	8	625	633
Child-Care Worker	3	467	470
Montessori Teacher	2	278	280
Nursery Nurse	-	217	217
Playgroup Assistant	6	588	594
Playgroup Leader	-	338	338
Supervisor (CE)	1	150	151
Not Stated	-	-	-
Other	8	204	212
Full time	28	2,867	2,895

In addition, this census found that 1,204 Community Employment participants were involved in childcare services. Of these 97 per cent were female. Of 81 FÁS Jobs Initiative Scheme participants involved in childcare, 96 per cent were women.

**Table 3: ADM National Childcare Census 1999/2000 – Salary Range of Child-care Staff**

Salary Range	NUMBER OF STAFF					
	Total	Full Time	Part Time	Male	Female	% Female
A £0 – £5,000	3157	604	2553	12	3145	99.6%
B £5,001 – £10,000	1347	918	429	8	1339	99.4%
C £10,001 – £12,000	521	469	52	7	514	98.7%
D £12,001 – £14,000	296	262	34	6	290	98%
E £14,001 – £16,000	177	166	11	0	177	100%
F £16,001 – £18,000	98	89	9	3	95	97%
G £18,001 – £20,000	63	61	2	4	59	93.7%
H £20,001 – £22,000	39	39	0	0	39	100%
I Over £22,000	33	33	0	2	31	94%
Other/Not Stated	544	254	290	11	533	98%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,275</b>	<b>2,895</b>	<b>3,380</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>6,222</b>	<b>99%</b>

<sup>30</sup> ADM National Childcare Census 1999/2000.

Clearly, the child-care sector is one in which women are significantly over-represented as employees both part-time and full-time. A significant number of those employed in child-care are in short-term, part-time positions, which (as with any sector) has negative implications for sick and holiday leave entitlement and for pension rights. It is also a sector characterised by low pay.

According to the ADM survey, of the 2,895 people who work full-time in the sector, 1,522 earn less than £10,000 per year; 604 people earn less than £5,000 as a full-time salary. The last figure is problematic since it suggests that some child-care workers are being paid below the minimum wage.

Significantly, while women are highly over-represented as employees within the sector, their representation decreases at the highest salary scale level. Women comprise 98.7 percent – 100 per cent of those employed within the first five points of the salary scale, under £16,000 (€20,315) and constitute 94 percent of those at the highest point of the scale, i.e. over £22,000 (€27,934) per year.

#### **Budget Allocation/County Childcare Committees**

County Childcare Strategy Committees were established to achieve the overall objectives of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme. The committees were formed to ensure local co-ordination and Health Boards facilitated involvement in decision-making and their establishment. These committees are highly significant since they will be responsible for advising on the delivery of the €317.4 million committed to childcare in the NDP. It is a cause for concern that the huge numbers of women involved in the child-care sector – as workers, volunteers and primary users – is not reflected in decision-making positions. A random sample of county child-care committees indicated that women account for 79 per cent membership while men comprise 21 per cent.<sup>31</sup> Of the 33 county child-care committees in Ireland, 66.6 percent of the chairs are women, 33.3 percent men. So, while men comprise 1 per cent of those employed within the sector, they comprise 33.3 per cent of the most significant decision-making positions. It is encouraging to note that men are increasingly becoming involved in the traditionally female dominated field of community development, but this should be at the expense of women playing a disproportionate role in decision-making.

Procedures for board selection and the absence of systems for monitoring membership or ensuring a turnover of board/committee membership can inadvertently discriminate against women. The health boards as the lead agency on county child-care committees hold the position of chair on many of the child-care committees. Given the over-representation of men in managerial positions within the health boards, it is inevitable that they will be over-represented in the chairing of county child-care committees.

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<sup>31</sup> *Primary research carried out by the authors, June 2002.*

## Gender Analysis

There is a common assumption that women's involvement in community development initiatives will automatically lead to changes in relation to gender equality. The reality is that the involvement of women does not *necessarily* do so. It is highly unlikely that either women or men who are involved in local development initiatives will have had an opportunity to reflect critically on gender issues and/or have a high level of gender awareness. The absence of gender analysis of different impacts of policies and practices on women and men has resulted in the community development sector, despite its commitment to social change failing to tackle one of the most pervasive and far-reaching inequalities of all, that based on gender.

The resourcing of women's and men's groups is central to the ability of the community development sector to bring about change in relation to gender inequality. Within these single sex environments, both women and men are each afforded the opportunity to reflect critically upon gender roles in society, develop an analysis and formulate strategies to ensure the inclusion of an informed gender perspective within decision-making bodies. In the absence of this analysis, the opportunity provided by adopting a community development approach to make any real contribution to gender equality or bring about change in relation to this will be lost. Failure to facilitate a gender analysis and simply focusing on the inclusion of equal numbers of men and women can perpetuate gender inequalities in community development by simply supporting maintenance of the status quo.

## Gender-Disaggregated Data

The lack of gender-disaggregated data is an issue of concern in any work on gender mainstreaming. In its absence, it is not possible to establish a baseline to describe the current situation and to track changes over a given period of time. In the community development sector, the absence of available data both disaggregated on the basis of sex and otherwise, is particularly noticeable. Thus, for example, we do not have a gender breakdown of those employed in the community development sector throughout Ireland. Similarly, we cannot tell what the nature of the jobs and roles played by men and women is within the sector. We do not have statistical information on the numbers of women who are chairs of local development associations.

## Multiple Disadvantage

The 'community development' element of the NDP is unique in that it has the capacity to tackle multiple levels of disadvantage in Irish society. Neither women nor men are a homogenous group nor depending on their position within or belonging to other categories in society, will experience inequality and disadvantage to varying degrees. Therefore, men and women who belong to categories, which typically experience social exclusion, such as Travellers or refugees, and who, *also* experience gender inequality will be doubly disadvantaged. Any intervention, which seeks to redress gender inequality in Irish society, must take cognisance of the variety of responses required to meet such diversity of needs.

## 4. Case Studies

Progress in terms of gender work within the field of community development has been slow but steady over the last number of years. Various organisations with an interest in gender mainstreaming have attempted to raise awareness about issues of gender in relation to community development. A number of case studies, both local and international, are presented below. These serve to suggest possible ways of advancing gender mainstreaming within the area of community development.

### Donegal Gender Focus Group

In 2000 the Donegal Women's Network, Greasán na mBan, became involved in the emerging County Development Board and associated structures. A catalyst for this involvement was the low gender balance in the then newly formed CDB. Donegal Women's Network in collaboration with the Second Chance Education Project for Women initiated dialogue on gender equality with the CDB. It soon became apparent that this discussion group needed to expand in order to progress a gender equality agenda within the CDB structures. Thus, the initial group broadened to become the Gender Focus Group, convened by the Donegal Women's Network. The Group has been a catalyst for promoting a gender equality agenda within the CDB and associated structures. It has defined its purpose as working towards removing barriers and challenging the accepted gender-based values and norms in society which limit people's choices and behaviour. It is representative of key organisations throughout the county and has evolved from being an ad-hoc group to becoming a recognised sub-group of the CDB.

A number of actions have been undertaken to date:

- The hosting of a gender analysis workshop for members of the CDB and associated structures
- The development of a Gender Checklist Questionnaire for use within the CDB Structure<sup>32</sup>
- Presentations on gender equality to the CDB

In order to advance the work a stage further and to broaden the impact to the wider community, local development and statutory sectors, the Gender Focus Group established a new project (funded by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform: Equality for Women Measure), entitled 'Restoring the Balance: A County Donegal Focus on Gender'. The project is adopting a three-pronged approach to furthering gender mainstreaming.

In the first instance, it will work with women who have significant experience in community-based initiatives, with the aim of increasing their awareness of decision-making and political structures; demystifying those structures and encouraging them

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<sup>32</sup> Having piloted the checklist, the Group stated that it is best used within the context of an overall strategy on gender equality. The Group advises that the absence of discussion limits its use. The checklist is available from the Donegal Gender Equality Project.

to avail of opportunities when they arise. This will be achieved through running a leadership module for women, establishing a support mechanism for women in middle management, and developing a manual for women's effective participation within decision-making structures.

Secondly, the project is developing a programme of gender equality awareness-raising within both statutory organisations and the community sector, the purpose of which is to raise their awareness of gender equality issues and to encourage them to adopt a gender equality policy. Key actions here include running a two-day Gender Equality Training Programme within three statutory organisations and running a gender equality module within the community sector.

Thirdly, the project will undertake research on the current policies and practices that regarding family-friendly policies and flexible work practices within the public and industrial sector.

It is anticipated that the combination of these actions will result in the creation of a more welcoming environment for women who, as a result of the first step, may opt to assume places on these boards or at a more senior level within the organisation. It will also help ensure that the pursuit of a gender agenda does not become the sole province and responsibility of these women.

### **The Workers' Educational Association & the Women on the Fringes of Power Programme (Northern Ireland)**

The Worker's Educational Association (WEA) Opportunities for Women Learning (OWL) programme is a community-based women's education project. The project provides a range of accredited educational courses to women in Northern Ireland and in the six southern border counties of Ireland. The project is committed to enhancing the position of women socially, economically and politically in society and has been involved in capacity-building with women as a way of advancing that agenda. The anticipated first step towards doing that would have been the increased involvement of women in leading and recognised roles in community and local development initiatives. Despite having delivered education courses to thousands of women, OWL was concerned to find that women were still not 'breaking through' to more senior positions of power and decision-making within public and political organisations. In response to this, OWL designed a new initiative; Women on the Fringes of Power Programme, to increase gender awareness within public bodies, committees and boards, while at the same time assisting a number of women to become more actively involved at senior level in organisations and public life.

The *Women on the Fringes of Power Programme* adopts a dual approach. In the first instance, it provides gender-awareness training to public bodies, management committees and political parties, which it hopes will be 'host' to women who will choose to participate. Secondly, it offers training to potential board members. The participants (women) will be offered training and individual support to build their personal capacity to become active agents of change on these bodies, and thus to

redress the gender imbalance of power at decision-making level. This combination of a bottom-up support (for individual women) and top-down training (for decision making bodies) will facilitate and encourage engagement by these two on a number of levels. Agencies, which have availed of the training to date, include local authorities and LEADER programmes, among others.

### **Area Development Management**

In order to develop the gender mainstreaming agenda within area based partnerships, ADM has implemented a strategy comprising a number of different components.

### **Establishment of Gender Advisory Group**

In 1994, ADM set up a Gender Advisory Group as a sub-committee of the board. The Advisory Group drew up draft guidelines for gender equality in partnerships and community groups.

### **Development of Guidelines<sup>33</sup>**

These specific guidelines laid down on gender equality for the partnerships to promote the inclusion of women include: ('Towards Gender Equality in Integrated Development' (ADM, 1996))

- Gender balance in board membership (40 percent of either gender), women's inclusion in sub-group membership and at all staffing levels.
- Adequate and appropriate actions targeted at women in all aspects of the development and implementation of Local Development Plans (see below). The guidelines refer to the need for flexible structures in terms of organisation and process of all meetings and the use of equality principles specifically with regard to meeting times, travel, support for social care (care of dependent adults) and child-care.

The guidelines suggest Local Development Plans should:

- Demonstrate a commitment to equality and should specifically target gender equality.
- Provide information on membership, structures and staffing procedures and indicate how these will comply with gender equality guidelines.
- Pro-actively target women and women's groups in the consultative process to draw up plans.
- Include a socio-economic and demographic profile of women, which should include information on women's participation and experience in a number of matters including education/training; work; social welfare; amenities and support services; poverty and marginalisation; child-care services and involvement in voluntary activity.
- Target disadvantaged women across all measures.
- Reflect gender equality guidelines in annual priority listing.

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<sup>33</sup> Available from ADM, Holbrook House, Holles Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01 661 3611

## Commissioning of Action Research

In addition, the ADM Advisory Group commissioned action research with women involved in the partnerships to discuss their experiences and to consider the guidelines. The subsequent report *Gender Equality in the Partnerships: Women's Experience*, (Faughan et al) (year) provides a valuable insight into the experiences of women in local decision-making structures; and indeed some of its findings have been used throughout the body of this factsheet. It highlights the need for;

- Gender-awareness training and analysis at all levels in the partnership.
- Promotion of gender equality in board membership and in all aspects of decision-making.
- Solutions to redress gender inequality and the promotion of equality of meaning for women and men; in particular, there is a need for child-care.
- Creating procedures for gender equality within partnership companies. Following training, company procedures should be evaluated to ensure that they operate out of and demonstrate a commitment to equality.

A number of additional actions/recommendations are suggested throughout the report (by the participants in the research). These include;

- Gender-equality objectives should be enforced rather than recommended by ADM.
- Gender balance should be achieved within each sector, rather than on the board as a whole.
- Workshops should be organised where women could come together to discuss different models of leadership, styles of participation, men's and women's way of working and where women's own beliefs and ethos on the issue of power would be strengthened.
- Training is essential to enable men and women to safely explore their behaviour, different ways of thinking and working, awareness of language and its impact and subsequently work to create a culture that reflects equality and partnership. This should be mandatory for board members.
- Strategies should be developed in each partnership to promote gender equality.
- Training for women in the structures and procedures of partnerships is vital to increase their self-confidence.
- Support for women by women was proposed. In particular, reference was made to the need for women from state agencies to meet with others in similar positions to provide support and hold discussions on gender.
- Measures to ensure the equal participation of women in the partnerships should be a concern for men and women and not just be regarded as a 'women's issue'.
- There is a need to include men in the debate on gender. This is based on a belief that change will occur only when the inequality experienced by women is no longer seen as a women's problem. Instead, it should be viewed as a problem of society to be resolved by women and men.

## Gender-Proofing Training

In 2002, ADM began an initiative that will result in the provision of tailor-made, gender-proofing training for members of area-based partnerships.

## European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)

The EAPN is an organisation committed to redressing poverty and social exclusion, using community development principles. It is an independent coalition of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and groups involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the member states of the European Union.

EAPN comprises members whose main and explicit purpose is 'to empower people and communities facing poverty and social exclusion to exercise their responsibilities and rights, to enable them to break their isolation and counter their social exclusion.' To further the issue of gender mainstreaming in its work, EAPN has developed 'gender proofing guidelines' which had to be adopted by each EAPN task force, each national network and the Executive Committee. The originals belong to EAPN (Europe)<sup>34</sup> and EAPN Ireland promotes their use in Ireland. Key guidelines include:

1. Each board/committee shall ensure that it includes a person with experience in 'mainstreaming' gender equality.
2. Each board/committee shall work towards a correct gender balance within its membership.
3. Each board/committee shall establish a monitoring mechanism to monitor gender aspects of its operation.
4. All members of each board/committee should ask themselves:
  - (a) Do they operate in an inclusive way? Do conditions allow/encourage all people to participate? If this is not the case, then what education/training is needed to enhance participation?
  - (b) Are steps being taken to ensure that the information collated and disseminated has a gender dimension? If not, why not? How can this problem be redressed?
  - (c) Is there a monitoring mechanism, to separately identify the effects of the task force/national network/executive committee activities on men and women?  
*(Please note that this is in addition to what has been outlined in section 3 above.)*
  - (d) If yes, have any potential adverse effects on men or women been identified and eliminated?
  - (e) Does adequate data exist to permit an evaluation of change/improvement on the basis of gender? If not, how can appropriate data be identified and collected so that this type of evaluation can take place?
  - (f) Will there be indicators, that reflect the contribution of women and men separately? If yes, what indicators will be used? If not, why not? How can we overcome this problem?

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<sup>34</sup> Available on [www.eapn.org](http://www.eapn.org)

- (g) A section on gender will be integrated into the annual report of EAPN. This means that each board/committee shall report annually in a separate written section on how far it has integrated a gender dimension into its operation and work.

In all the actions identified above, there is a further stipulation that proactive measures must be taken to ensure that the requirements are met.

## 5. Suggested Actions

To promote gender mainstreaming in their work, implementing agencies could consider the following actions:

Enforce the government target for 60:40 gender representations on all boards by developing and implementing proactive measures to ensure that this target is reached. Nominating organisations could be asked to achieve a gender balance in representation. This could be achieved in the following ways;

- Nominating organisations could consider the possibility of proposing a woman in place of a man to achieve a better balance of representation.
- Where an organisation has two representatives, it could ensure that one of these nominees is a woman.
- When new nominations are called for, the organisation could consider nominating a woman when the existing nominee resigns.
- An oft-cited difficulty is that there are not enough women at a sufficiently senior grade within the organisation who can be nominated on to inter-sectoral boards and committees. The grade of an organisation's representative should be reviewed with a view to ascertaining whether or not there is there a woman in the organisation at a lower level who could fulfil this role.
- Develop procedures to monitor and evaluate successful proactive measures and, where successful, share the results as models of good practice with other agencies.
- Avail of the funding available from the NDP Gender Equality Unit for gender-awareness training, gender-proofing and mainstreaming training and develop tools, resources and pilot initiatives suitable to the agenda of the agency.
- Collect gender-disaggregated data at all available opportunities. This would facilitate the setting of gender equality targets on the numbers of women and men involved in all local and community development schemes.
- To enable community and voluntary sector representatives effectively to participate in local development structures, specific funding could be made available to provide them with the skills to do so.
- Develop Guidelines for effective participation. These should focus on process and should be developed following individual consultation with both women and men. They should facilitate and encourage the type of behaviour expected by and acceptable to men and women to ensure that their participation is welcome and equally favoured. These 'good practice' guidelines should be included in selection, monitoring and review procedures and should be given a weighting similar to the project's other outputs.

- Ensure that consultation takes place with both women's and men's group in the development of local area plans. This will help to ensure that the gender analysis referred to earlier is taken into account in all local development strategies.
- Make child-care a 'live' issue in the everyday work of the agency. Provide child-care at all events and for all meetings. Develop family-friendly policies in the workplace.<sup>35</sup>
- Commitments are needed regarding specific proactive measures to redress gender equality. Targets and timescales need to be set to help ensure the measures implementation. Successful measures could be made available to other agencies to ensure sharing of good practice.
- Create a system of enforcement, which would result in the imposition of sanctions or punitive measures when proactive strategies, such as those specified, are not adhered to.
- Community development is an increasingly complex activity. Groups are under continued pressure to respond to a service and target led agenda. Given this, there is a danger that groups will have insufficient time and resources to consider issues relating to gender inequality and take action on these. The government's aim of challenging gender inequalities will require dedicated resources for gender specific work.



<sup>35</sup> *Investing in People – Family-friendly work arrangements in small and medium – sized enterprises, produced by the Equality Authority, provides information on a range of flexible working options.*

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