



Community Work Ireland working collectively  
to support and promote community work as a means  
of addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality

Unit 6, Westside Community Development  
Resource Centre, Seamus Quirke Road, Galway  
Tel. 353-91-528325  
Email [info@communityworkireland.ie](mailto:info@communityworkireland.ie)  
Web [www.communityworkireland.ie](http://www.communityworkireland.ie)

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Community Work Ireland

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Submission to Ireland 2040

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March 2017

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## Introduction

Established in 1981, Community Work Ireland (formerly the Community Workers' Co-operative) is the leading national organization that promotes and supports community work as a means of addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality and ultimately as a means of achieving social change that will contribute to the creation of a more just, sustainable and equal society.

CWI has in excess of 800 individual and organisational members working in and with the most disadvantaged communities throughout Ireland (urban, rural and issue based). Since its establishment, Community Work Ireland has been concerned to promote best practice and a commitment to social justice and inclusion in policies, programmes and measures with the remit and/or potential to address poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

Community Work Ireland (CWI) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the initial phase of Ireland 2040 and hope that our observations make a useful contribution to the final National Planning Framework.

## Context

Community work Ireland is a community development organisation. Community development is widely recognised nationally and internationally as; 'A developmental activity comprised of both a task and a process. The task is social change to achieve equality, social justice and human rights, and the process is the application of principles of participation, empowerment and collective decision making in a structured and co-ordinated way'. CWI recognises that community development is based on a number of core values including;

- Collectivity – Involving approaches to planning and decision making which focus on the potential benefits for communities from actions and policies rather than focusing only on benefits to individuals.
- Community Empowerment - Involving approaches to planning and decision making which lead people and communities to be resilient, organised, included and influential.
- Social Justice and Sustainable Development – Involving approaches to planning and decision making which involve; promoting policies and practices that challenge injustice, poverty, inequality, discrimination and social exclusion, valuing diversity of identities and promoting environmentally, economically and socially sustainable policies and practices based on environmental justice principles.
- Human Rights, Equality and Anti-discrimination - Involving rights based approaches to planning and decision making and working towards a society where human rights and equality are recognised and realised and discrimination is addressed.



- Participation - Ensuring meaningful participation involves the self- identification of needs and interests by communities and the formulation of responses by those communities to ensure the realisation of their rights.

CWI believes that these core values should underpin all community engagement and decision making structures and processes. CWI believes that in order for this vision to be realised, strong community development, appropriately supported by the state and its agencies is necessary.

CWI members work with and in the most disadvantaged and marginalised areas in the country. These are the communities that have been failed social, economically, culturally and politically by successive governments and plans. Ireland 2040 must focus attention on these communities and ensure that they are resourced to reach their full potential.

## CWI Submission Framework

It is the recommendation of CWI that Ireland 2040 should be informed by the Sustainable Development Goals that seek to end poverty and inequality and promote sustainable development.

### Health & Wellbeing

It is the recommendation of CWI that the health and wellbeing of all communities should be the central concern of Ireland 2040. This means creating the social, economic and cultural infrastructure and services to ensure the health and wellbeing of all communities. It must be particularly concerned for the health and wellbeing of the poorest and most marginalised communities, including communities of place and communities of interest. In addition, it should ensure that retrospective action is taken in and with these communities to ensure that they have access to the facilities, jobs and opportunities that will ensure their health and wellbeing. Finally, and importantly, structural inequalities in health and wellbeing must be recognised and measures to address them framed by the social determinants of health.

### Living environment

Living environments should:

- be planned as sustainable area in which to live. This can be best achieved in consultation with, and recognition of, the needs of the community, ensuring access to appropriate public services, education, childcare, recreation and employment opportunities.
- provide for safe places to live. They must instill a sense of place and pride in areas. There must be adequate recreation facilities for people of all ages, including children teenagers and young adults, and older people. These facilities must be physically and socioeconomically accessible.

Ireland 2040 should:

- plan for appropriate living environments for minorities. Traveller accommodation must be provided by all local authorities in consultation with the Travellers affected and their representative organisations. The National Planning Framework must ensure sanctions where local authorities do not meet their obligations.

- make adequate provision for the social, economic and physical regeneration of the most marginalised communities. All planning and implementation must take place with communities at the core.

## Balanced Regional Development

Rural areas in Ireland have been significantly affected by unbalanced regional planning. Ireland 2040 must concern itself with more balanced regional development. However, in so doing it is vital that the mistakes of the past are not repeated on small scales. Social inclusion must be a key concern of any regional development activities, ensuring the social, economic and cultural inclusion of the most marginalized communities in rural areas. This also requires focusing on and addressing issues such as violence against women, discrimination and poverty.

## Sustainable Development

Climate change and environmental injustices affect all communities, but in particular affects those most marginalised most. Disadvantaged communities are least able to adapt or mitigate the effects of climate change. Ireland 2040 should provide real action on climate change but in doing so has to have regard for the most marginalised communities and resource and support them to adapt to the new reality that climate change will bring in the very near future.

## Participation

The right to be consulted and to participate in decisions that affect your life is a fundamental principle of community development and of a healthy democracy. This principle should be central to Ireland 2040. This right is now reflected in a variety of international and national instruments and policies. The United Nations, for example, states that political and public participation rights play a crucial role in the promotion of democratic governance, the rule of law, social inclusion and economic development, as well as in the advancement of all human rights. At a national level, Ireland is a member of The Open Government Partnership (OGP)<sup>i</sup>. As part of this international initiative, every two years, Ireland makes commitments to make the State ever more transparent, ever more accountable and ever more inclusive in how it reaches decisions. The first OGP National Action Plan was launched in 2014<sup>ii</sup>. The commitments in the National Action Plan span three core areas, one of which is to build citizen participation. It commits to greater citizen consultation and involvement to strengthen democracy and improve public services, in the belief that this is essential to the functioning of government institutions and economic growth<sup>iii</sup>. Meaningful participation increases the legitimacy of public decision-making, improves citizens' knowledge and awareness of complex policy challenges, helps decision-makers to make better decisions and can lead to the improvement in the quality of service provision<sup>iv</sup>.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 introduced a duty on the public sector that should bring a focus on non-discrimination, equality and human rights centre-stage in their planning, policy-making, employment, service provision and procurement. It is a legal requirement that requires public bodies, which includes all bodies, groups and organisations in receipt of public funding to have regard to the need to promote equality, protect human rights and prohibit discrimination for employees and people accessing public services in carrying out their functions. In this context, the participation of people from the target population who experience inequality or who have human rights concerns is an important element in the implementation of a positive duty. This participation informs impact assessments and, at a later stage, informs any reviews of policies and programmes. Effective participation strategies ensure that this participation leads to clearly

identifiable equality and human rights outcomes rather than being consultation for consultation sake. Effective participation strategies employ a variety of methods to engage the most isolated, vulnerable and socially excluded groups<sup>v</sup>.

## Community Development Infrastructure

Ireland 2040 must significantly reinforce the infrastructure to ensure the participation of people and communities in decisions that affect their lives. The National Planning Framework must create the conditions for concerted action on poverty, inequality and social exclusion. This will require the development of a community development infrastructure that will support and enable this to happen.

Local authorities (through the Local Community Development Committees) have been given a greater role in local development and community development than ever before Ireland 2040 must ensure a requirement on LCDCs to ensure that the most marginalised communities are included in all aspects of planning and decision-making. Failure to do should be sanctioned. Public Participation Networks should be required to prove that they are fully inclusive of marginalised communities and are proactively ensuring their active participation. Local authorities must be required to prove that they proactively ensured the inclusion of marginalised communities in the development and actions of the Local Economic and Community Plans.

The implementation of ethnic identifiers must take place in partnership with Traveller organisations which have developed models and training for their implementation as part of the actions of all other local structures arising from Ireland 2040.

## Future consultation and implementation

In further developing Ireland 2040, the Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government must resource and enable the voices of the most marginalised communities, from local to national levels. This can be channeled through existing community development organisations at national level, such as Pavee Point, the Migrants Rights Centre, Community Work Ireland and others. Regarding future implementation processes decision-making and oversight structures must include and resource the participation of marginalised communities through their representative organisations.

## Implementation

CWI notes that the preliminary stakeholder consultation included few civil society organisations and none that work with and in the most marginalised communities. Important voices of those with the lived experience of these communities was lost. In its implementation, Ireland 2040 must ensure that this does not reoccur.

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<sup>i</sup> The Open Government Partnership is an initiative of 70 countries. It aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. It is run by a steering committee composed of governments and civil society organisations.

<sup>ii</sup> Ireland is currently developing its second National Action Plan that will include commitments and actions to achieve three central aims: Increased Citizen Engagement; Increased Transparency and Open Data; Strengthened Governance and Accountability

<sup>iii</sup> Department of Public Expenditure & Reform *Draft Consultation Principles/Guidance for Public Consultation*.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid

<sup>v</sup> 2011. Setting out the case for a public sector positive duty: A briefing paper by the Equality & Rights Alliance