

national collective of
**community based
women's
networks**



Local & Community Development Programme

2013 Annual Report



Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Community and Local Government

1. Foreword and Introduction

The National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks (NCCWN) was established as a national organisation in 2002. The rationale for the organisation was to enable women experiencing disadvantage, to network and have a voice in national policy developments. This consolidated many years of informal feminist networking and information sharing in the women's community sector, dating back to the 1990s. This networking arose from a shared concern to address women's poverty, the marginalisation and exclusion of women, and the need for a gender perspective in community development. Working from a feminist perspective and social inclusion ethos, equality is consistent as the central goal of the NCCWN in recognition that women's inequality is further compounded for disadvantaged women.

The local networks that make up the membership of the NCCWN developed from women's community development programmes. Community education is a core tool used in community development, and has its roots in working class women's activism to respond to women's inequality and oppression. It has continued to be at the heart of the NCCWN's activities and of the work of local women's Projects.

The NCCWN addresses a wide diversity of issues impacting on the most disadvantaged women in the community. The specific focus on women experiencing disadvantage includes support for women living in poverty and disadvantage, older women, lone parents, women from the Traveller community, minority ethnic and migrant women, disabled women, lesbian and bisexual women, women living in rural areas and women experiencing domestic violence.

2. Aims of the Project

The main aims of the NCCWN include:

- To make a contribution to the women's sector by strategic and meaningful representation and networking
- To promote the sector by developing and implementing an effective communication and information strategy
- To identify key policy areas to best promote and support the sector
- To devise a system of planning, implementing and evaluating the work being carried out to assess the impact on women at grassroots level
- To challenge barriers to women's collective work at a strategic level
- To collaborate and work with other women's organisations
- To work collaboratively to ensure that specific women's programme funding is directed to the women's sector
- To develop a representative regional structure

3. Objectives of the Project

In relation to the LCDP the NCCWN's main objectives include:

- Raise women's awareness and increase their knowledge of services available to them in their local communities and develop strategies and mechanisms for improved access to these services.
- Develop and sustain strategies and mechanisms to better coordinate local services for women increasing efficiency, reducing duplication and measuring outputs.
- Work with providers to improve access to a wide range of opportunities for women from disadvantaged communities by increasing awareness and supporting access to opportunities for learning and development.
- Develop and sustain supports to prepare and assist women to enter the labour market.
- Promote engagement with policy, practice and decision making processes on matters affecting women in our project areas.

4. Company Profile/Overview

Company's registered name: National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks (NCCWN)

Contact Details: 74-76 Manor Street, Waterford

Tel: 085 131 2983 **Email:** nccwn@eircom.net

Charity Number: 6420554P

Company Registration Number: 40054

Employers Registration Number: 9609243A

Tax Clearance Number: 06420554 – 00125E

Vision

The vision of the NCCWN is a just and equal society for women

Mission

The mission of the NCCWN is to empower and support community-based women who experience disadvantage and marginalisation as a result of barriers to participation and lack of opportunities. This will be achieved by our women's Projects bringing about positive and sustainable changes to their lives and society using collective action and feminist approaches, with an emphasis on policy and challenging structures, attitudes and behaviours that marginalise women

The NCCWN works from two core perspectives – feminism and community development. These perspectives permeate all the work of the NCCWN.

Values

The following values are at the core of the work of the NCCWN:

- **Women's empowerment** – working in a way that supports disadvantaged women to take leadership and make decisions on issues affecting them;
- **Community Education** – working from the grassroots up, combining an adult education approach with community development principles;
- **Social Inclusion** – working in an inclusive way with an anti-poverty focus;
- **Equality and recognition of diversity** – supporting and promoting the equal rights of disadvantaged women and challenging discrimination, especially under the nine grounds underpinned by Irish equality legislation;
- **Collective analysis, collective action and collective outcomes** - the NCCWN was formed on the basis that working together secures better outcomes for disadvantaged women as a group rather than individuals;
- **Feminism** - the NCCWN is a feminist organisation that sees women as equal to men and promotes the realisation of that.
- **Solidarity** – recognising that disadvantaged women experience greater barriers that are not shared by all women, the NCCWN is committed to taking action to overcome the challenges that face the women we represent.

The NCCWN is committed to ensuring that, within the constraints of legal requirements, the principle of local autonomy remains central.

Details of Board Members and administration staff responsible for overall work of the NCCWN

Ann Fitzgerald, Waterford Women's Centre*
Noeline O'Neill, Blaney Blades
Rita Hansard, Clondalkin Women's Network (**Company Secretary**) *
Gillian Aspell, Dochas for Women
Madge O'Callaghan, Clare Women's Network
Rachel Doyle, National Women's Council of Ireland*
Rita Sweeney, Ronanstown Women's CDP (**Chairperson**)
Sharon Perry, Southside Women's Action Network* (**Vice Chairperson**)
Bernadette Kennedy, Southwest Kerry Women's Association *
Carol McCrossan, Donegal Women's Network
Brigid McGourty, North Leitrim Women's Centre

* Also registered as directors

National Coordinator: Miriam Holt

Administrator: Sinead Greaney

The NCCWN local Women's Projects are listed below:

- **Clare** - Clare Women's Network
- **Donegal** – Donegal Women's Network
- **Dublin** – SWAN; WTT; Clondalkin Women's Network, Rowlagh Women's Group, Ronanstown Women's CDP; NCCWN
- **Kerry** – South Kerry Women's Assoc
- **Leitrim** – North Leitrim Women's
- **Limerick** – Limerick Women's
- **Mayo** – Claremorris Women's Group
- **Monaghan** – Dochas, Blaney Blades
- **Roscommon** – Roscommon Women's Network
- **Waterford** – Waterford Women's Centre
- **Westmeath** – Women's Community Projects Mullingar
- **Wexford** – Access 2000 Wexford

Projects	LCDP Staff	Staff position
Clare Women's Network Clare	Elaine Dalton Sarah Ferrigan	Coordinator Administrator
Donegal Women's Network Donegal	Finola Brennan Roisin Cannon	Coordinator Administrator
Southwest Kerry Women's Association Kerry	Mairead Lynch Cathy McKeefry Helen O'Sullivan	Coordinator Development Worker Administrator
Clondalkin Women's Network Dublin	Linda Greene Anne Doyle Sharon Geraghty	Coordinator Development Worker Administrator
Ronanstown Women's CDP Dublin	Vivienne Glanville Pauline Flynn Carmel Shanahan	Coordinator Development Worker Administrator
Rowlagh Women's Group Dublin	Bernie Beatley Marie Daly Olive Whelan	Coordinator Development Worker Administrator
Women Together Tallaght Dublin	Marie O'Donoghue Annette Ennis Sinead Greaney	Coordinator Development Worker Administrator
Southside Women's Action Network Dublin	Pauline Daly Sandra Walsh Nichola Kinsella	Coordinator Development Worker Administrator
North Leitrim Women's Network Leitrim	Assumpta Kelly Evelyn Wynne	Coordinator Administrator
Limerick Women's Network Limerick	Liz Price Edel Geraghty	Coordinator Development Worker
Claremorris Women's Group Mayo	Mary Carey Dorothy Campbell	Coordinator Administrator
Blayney Blades Monaghan	Olive Bolger Lorraine Cunningham Sheila Harte	Coordinator Development Worker Administrator
Dochas for Women Monaghan	Ursula McKenna Marie Ward	Coordinator Administrator
Roscommon Women's Network Roscommon	Nora Fahy Maria Harris	Coordinator Administrator
Waterford Women's Centre Waterford	Breda Murphy Kate Crotty Francesca Jordan	Coordinator Development Worker Administrator
Women's Community Project Mullingar Westmeath	Valerie McHugh Margaret Lovett Pauline Ross	Coordinator Development Worker Administrator
Access 2000 Wexford Wexford	Marian Donnegan Margaret Cullen Dagmar Brytusova	Coordinator Development Worker Administrator

6. To be signed and dated by Chairperson.

GOAL 1: Promote awareness, knowledge and uptake of a wide range of statutory, voluntary and community services

Goal Objectives:

1. *Raise awareness and knowledge of services in the local community*
2. *Develop and sustain strategies and mechanisms for improved access to local services*
3. *Develop and sustain strategies and mechanisms to better coordinate local services*

Actions as per 2013 Annual Operational Plan

1. Provide and maintain efficient, effective and non-judgemental drop-in/information centres for women.
2. Engage with and develop and strengthen relationships with local agencies/networks/fora; promoting and supporting them signposting and referring women to their services where appropriate.
3. Communicate with women, local agencies and organisations via newsletters, websites, social networks, media and making direct presentations.
4. Organise information days, seminars and workshops on issues relevant to women e.g. BreastCheck.
5. Provide direct support to women's groups in promoting their services/activities.
6. Organise and promote specific awareness raising activities for International Women's Day, Rural Women's Day and '16 Days of Action'.
7. Directly provide and promote counselling and 'listening ear' services to women.
8. Work with local agencies and organisations to develop and sustain integrated work-plans that reduce duplication, increase efficiency and meet the needs of our target groups.

Provide details of the progress made to date

Some of the key outputs under Goal 1 for the Women's LCDP Projects included:

- The Women's Projects outreached to the most marginalised women in their areas and this resulted in 24,887 calls to women's Projects in 2013. The women were supported within the Projects or they were signposted to other services
- The Projects' are constantly updating and improving communications with women, local agencies and organisations occurred through methods outlined in the actions above and 14,199 newsletters were sent out to local communities from the Women's Projects in 2013
- 3958 women attended information days hosted by Women's Projects
- 6687 women were supported in accessing information
- 1773 referrals were made to other agencies/supports
- 1308 referrals received from other agencies/supports

Qualitative examples are provided of the following Outcomes/ Impacts of Actions as outlined in 2013 Annual Operational Plan:

- Working as a nationally coordinated body to ensure a cost effective, efficient and integrated work plan.
- Increased capacity of the NCCWN from the ground up.
- Increased awareness of women's needs and an increased commitment to equality and inclusion.
- Increased awareness of the issues that affect women and the services available / gaps

in service provision.

- Information made more accessible to women.
- Improved well-being through being more aware of and being able to access health and welfare supports.
- A better informed community able to access supports available.

The seventeen women's Projects of the NCCWN are well placed in communities and engage with some of the most disadvantaged women in Irish society – many based in RAPID areas. They use a variety of methods to facilitate access to information and relevant support services through newsletters, drop-in information services, media/promotion engagement, websites and social media, one-to-one engagement, referrals and word of mouth. Project staff use their experience and skills to promote and raise awareness of services in their local areas by phone, email, posters, media and direct presentations to groups. Women's needs were assessed and where the need arose they were either facilitated within the Projects or referred to specialist agencies for advice on personal entitlements, career and employment, managing budgets and other relevant services.

In Donegal, for example, articles highlighting services and issues of importance to women are submitted weekly to the county newspaper 'The Donegal Democrat'



With ongoing reductions in funding and resources, Projects are relying on social media and e-newsletters to communicate but in urban areas of high populations, Projects regularly leaflet drop in local estates.



3,400 leaflets distributed to women urban estates

Information Days and workshops on women's health issues, community education, personal development, exercise and healthy eating were held by all Projects in addition to awareness-raising for cancer screening services, violence against women and mental health supports.



Marie Keating cancer information day and mobile unit at NCCWN Ronanstown



Throughout 2013, all of our Projects hosted and supported awareness raising events including; International Women's Day, Rural Women's Day, 16 Days of Action on Violence Against Women. These events were also used to outreach to marginalised women and to raise awareness about services and supports available to them. The Projects provided ease of access to the first point of engagement (i.e. safe, non-judgmental drop-in centres, which enabled access to pre-developmental courses and simultaneously facilitated access to other services in the Projects and also local services and supports.

CASE STUDY: My Learners Story: Avril Hannifin 8th March 2013

"I first came to RCDP in 2004, where I attended a drop in on Friday mornings. Having moved to the area as a 19 year old with my 9-month-old baby, away from my family and friends, I had felt isolated and my life as a teenager had changed beyond measure. I was offered the chance to do a FETAC level 3 Personal Development and Preparation for work course and decided to return to education. It was a great opportunity for me and also for my daughter because RCDP also offered crèche facilities. While I was learning and developing social skills so too was my daughter Dionne.



Since then because of the encouragement and comfortable learning environment within RCDP, I have progressed in my studies. I developed creative skills in Photography, Craft and Community Arts projects. I relearned Irish, and was actually taught to understand what I was saying and why, I now voluntarily use culpa focal within my home. I learned to drive and achieved my full licence. I attained ECDL, which helps me to operate computers and write essays. I improved my life further in Communications and was challenged to communicate efficiently with others. I had been shy and lacked in self-confidence but with my new found voice I decided to attend the Community Participation Class. I learned many vital things about my community and decided to engage with Clondalkin Addiction Support Programme as part of my assignment. I found out how hard life is for those whom

are marginalized within our community and wanted to learn more and see what I could do to help. I created a project for living in a Diverse Society and learned alongside my mum, which helped us to understand each other better.

I participated in a Healthy Eating course, which in turn benefits my life style and Dionne's too. I have learned that in this day and age your health is your wealth, so even short courses have a big impact on your life. I completed the Women's Studies Certificate and learned more about Irish Society, History, Political issues and the Justice System, all subjects that had not been on my curriculum throughout secondary school. I am now on the fifth module of my Diploma in Women Gender and Social Justice. After becoming a mother I had never envisaged myself being able to go to college or receive accessible third level education RCDP has contributed so much to my progression. I am also currently learning Maths the subject which caused me angst in school so that I can help with homework and so Dionne will not detest the subject as much as I did. My return to education has impacted on my family and we all have a greater awareness and interest in adult education.

*When I mention RCDP, I do not mean the centre itself but **the wonderful people** inside of it. Vivienne has been tremendous in her efforts to assist and encourage participants to learn and empower themselves. Heather and Pauline provide a great BTEI and educational support. Carmel and Ann Marie have kept the project financially stable and running successfully. Michelle, Hannah and Caroline have welcomed everybody and provided friendly chat and yummy Tea- Breaks. I'm sure that Kim RCDP's newest recruit will learn a lot too. Denise, Janice and Lynn and the girls in the crèche do a brilliant job caring for and educating children within the community. Last but not least RCDP is made up of participants and I have enjoyed being in class with so numerous great women, many whom have provided inspiration and insight to me. I would like to thank everyone within RCDP who has helped me on my Journey; you have all made a big impact on my life and Dionne's life. I would not be the person I am today without all the help and support I have received in the past eight years."*

AVRIL finished her UCD Level 7 Diploma run in the project and is currently on Internship with the Marie Keating foundation.

At local level, Projects responded to rising needs as they were identified. In rural areas for example, there has been huge impact on communities of the ongoing economic crisis and mass emigration of not only, young people, but also, married men and fathers' of young families seeking employment abroad. Projects in these areas have seen an increase in social isolation among women putting them at risk of depression and mental illness. Projects have provided workshops on Facebook /Skype and other social media that allow women to communicate with their families abroad. They have facilitated informal classes in social pastimes such as knitting sewing etc. providing women with a safe space and outlet to share experiences, information and to support each other. Projects have also reported on the increasing pressures on low-cost counseling services as more women and young adults present to services often referred from the HSE, local GPs and schools.

Projects worked collaboratively at local level to ensure access for disadvantaged women to community initiatives to impact positively on their lives. For example, Limerick won its bid to be Irish City of Culture 2014 and during 2013 our Limerick Project work hard to ensure that women from disadvantaged communities were involved in the City of Culture initiative. They held an information day attended by women, women's groups and arts practitioners which led to a new structure 'Creative Communities' being formed and launched by Minister Jimmy Deenihan. It is hoped that by building a sustainable structure, the group will have the capacity to continue long after 2014 and that disadvantaged women in Limerick will engage with and become involved in future community arts programmes for the city.

In Claremorris, English language classes are run for the large numbers of women working in the local mushroom industry. These classes help the women to integrate into the community, access other services and to support their children with schoolwork.

Violence against women and children continues to rise and our Projects work tirelessly in raising awareness on the subject and promoting existing services to women and girls. Their work is needed now more than ever especially with ongoing cuts to local area networks. As part of the 16 Days of Action, Southwest Kerry produced an inspirational calendar that detailed the numbers of local services on each page. The calendar was launched by Senator Marie Moloney at a seminar entitled '*Is She Being Abused*'





16 Days of Action in Leitrim

In Leitrim, the women's project collaborated with the family resource centre at the other side of the county to launch balloons in the two places at the same time.

Our Waterford project, as part of the Local Area Network on Violence against women, leveraged funding to reprint their 'Enough is Enough' booklet, a safety and empowerment guide for women living with domestic abuse. They also negotiated with the HSE Primary Health Teams in Waterford City and County to make presentations at each team meeting to GP's and other health professionals. This is recognised as key to highlighting the services and support available to women locally.

Our Clare project held a 'One Billion Rising' event – an evening of song and dance to raise awareness. The local refuge and rape crisis centre along with local gardai spoke at the event – encouraging women to come forward and giving them information on the supports and services available to them locally.



Clare Women's Network 'Africa Day' 2103

Our Projects are part of active local systems of information sharing and referrals. Where the need has been identified, many Projects provide in-house counseling services or refer women to relevant agencies such as MABS, Citizen's Information Services, St. Vincent de Paul etc. Year on year the number of referrals from statutory and community agencies to our Projects is increasing. In southwest Kerry for example the HSE due to cutbacks in its own resources asked our project to work with a group of women with mental illness. A new group called 'Bosom Buddies' was formed and meets every two weeks facilitated and supported by our project.



Members of 'Bosom Buddies' in Kerry on daytrip to Kells Gardens

The need for the low-cost counseling services offered by NCCWN women's Projects is on the increase. As women avail of education and training courses, they present with a myriad of issues affecting their ability to pursue goals and access opportunities. These issues can include literacy problems, mental health, bereavement, eating disorders, abuse and family problems. In addition to providing professional counseling services, the Projects also provide a strong one-to-one support from their staff and volunteers.

Case Study: Anna from Monaghan

"Following the death of my mother, I found myself struggling to overcome my grief for a long time afterwards. Luckily I had somewhere to turn and the 'Blades' were able to put me in touch with an excellent bereavement counselor who guided me through the dark times. I also attended the regular group meetings where inspirational speakers were presented by the 'Blades' during a series of encouraging motivational lectures.

Without the 'Blayney Blades', I know I would not be who I am today. They not only helped me, but my family also benefitted from their work as I was better able to care for my children and domestic affairs after becoming involved in the group."

Our Projects reported a range of methods of providing counseling and support services including:

- Securing funding from the Family Support Agency for relationship counseling and family therapy services in their area.
- Counseling for adults who were abused in childhood and counseling around alcohol and substance misuse in association with the HSE.
- Enabling organisations such as MABs, CIS, Community Gardai, VECs and domestic violence services to hold outreach clinics in Projects.
- Space and supports provided for support groups such as 'Living with Addiction' (for family members of addicts, ELLA (Lesbian & Bi-sexual women), GROW (overcoming mental health problems)
- Operating positive mental health support groups such as 'Mind Matters'

- Supporting women and local residents to participate in contribute to and lead local community groups and committees. For example, community women in Limerick are now part of the Creative Communities initiative for Irish City of Culture 2014. Also as a result of capacity building initiatives over a number of years we identified a group of women who are willing to engage with the Limerick Regeneration Agency at a local level and with be working with them supporting them to influence future planning in their own areas.

Provide details of areas where progress has not been made

- No formal mechanism for collecting accurate information regarding the real number of women engaging with the LCDP under this goal. Heavy reliance on manual recording by staff working on the ground which we fear may lead to under recording of data. Resources needed for production of baseline gender specific data and information relating to the changing needs of women in order to effectively plan, measure and evaluate our work
- Continuing increase in women needing to access our services and supports. All Projects have a reduced capacity in responding to issues of social inclusion especially outreach work, due to a reduction in funds, working hours and also the reduced capacity of other agencies with whom, they would have had collaborative working relationships.
- Projects have reported increase in need for supports via the Mind Matters Support group and other avenues and mechanisms to support women's positive mental health and not being able to establish some planned support groups/centre i.e. an alcohol/drug advice support centre. Lack of funding and human resources were cited as the main reasons.
- Unable to provide groups with space because of office downsizing, due to funding cuts.
- No time to go out to rural health centres to ensure rural women /isolated women not on our database get relevant information and are aware of opportunities.
- Lack of funding sources locally – becoming more difficult to lever in funding at local level – essential that the work with women is recognised within the new aligned structures.

List partners or collaborators who assisted in the delivery of Goal 1

Citizen's Information Centres, Vocational Committees, Health Service Executive, Department of Social Protection, Community and Voluntary Organisations, other LDCs, CDPs and FRCs, local media, social services, Local Area Networks Against Violence Against LANs) Rape Crisis Centres, Carers' Association, Centre for Independent Living, Local Counseling Services, Irish Wheelchair Association, MABS, St Vincent De Paul, City/County Councils, Volunteer Centres, National Women's Council, Disability Equality Support Agency

How many females benefited/engaged with the LCDP under Goal 1.

25,592 women engaged with the Women's LCDP under Goal 1

What was the percentage of time spent by the LCDP funded staff promoting Goal 1?

17% of LCDP staff time spent promoting Goal 1

GOAL 2: Increase access to formal and informal educational, recreational and cultural activities and resources*Goal Objectives:*

1. *Work with providers to improve access to a wide range of opportunities*
2. *Increase awareness and support access to develop opportunities for learning and development*

Actions as per 2013 Annual Operational Plan

1. Provide range of non-accredited pre-development/core skills courses to women that will act as a catalyst for further education and training.
2. Deliver range of accredited courses such as FETAC and BTEI.
3. Work closely with VECs and existing providers to promote and remove barriers to existing courses.
4. Deliver outreach learning/recreational activities to women.
5. Maintain in-house IT suites to deliver IT courses.
6. Maintain library of resources/information to support women in training and education.
7. Source funding for events for women and support women to source funding for their own groups.
8. Organise and promote events for women e.g. International Women's Day, Rural Women's Day.
9. Work closely with NALA and Aontas etc. to ensure women's needs are being met.
10. Actively participate in local education fora to ensure that women's needs are being met.

Provide details of the progress made to date**Some of the key outputs under Goal 2 for the Women's LCDP Projects included:**

- 4305 women participating in 191 informal courses
- 837 women participating in 88 accredited courses
- 1931 women attending 77 events held in relation to education, recreation and culture
- 350 referrals were made to support women's access to education and training
- 477 referrals were received in relation to women's community education and training
- 215 childcare places were provided to support women to access education and training
- 652 women supported in identifying labour market routes

Qualitative examples are provided of the following Outcomes/ Impacts of Actions as outlined in 2013 Annual Operational Plan:

- Increased participation in social and cultural life of communities leading to stronger more dynamic communities.
- Reduction in sense of isolation and improved well-being due to being able to participate in activities and socialise with others.
- Increased appreciation of own and other cultures leading to a more inclusive society.
- Informal unaccredited courses/workshops are the first step for many women who have had a negative educational experience. Early engagement with women participating in these events builds their confidence and encourages them to take part in further courses which may eventually lead to accredited courses.
- Increased skills and knowledge and a love of lifelong learning.
- Improved health/emotional well-being

The Projects play a key role in both providing and facilitating access for disadvantaged women to formal and informal educational, recreational and cultural activities. It is known that low levels of educational attainment, low income and other socio-economic factors impact significantly on the lives of disadvantaged communities. Education empowers people to participate fully in their communities and is key to social inclusion work. Community education is the tool that many of the women's Projects use. Often as the only provider of education and training specifically designed to cater for disadvantaged women and recognising their role as primary carer, we plan, promote and deliver a range of accredited and non-accredited education programmes for women in response to identified needs.

A range of accredited courses are offered from FETAC modules in Spanish language and culture, retail sales, applied psychology and social studies. Non-accredited courses include craft courses, language classes, self-development, fitness and cookery.

Case Study from SWAN project Dublin

My name is Wendy and I started doing courses with SWAN in January 2013. I had previous qualifications in childcare but I needed to update my qualifications to include an older age group and working in within a community as I am now working with Youth groups within my community. I found SWAN offered a wide range of courses that I could access even though I am a Mother of two children and work part time. The times and location of the courses provided were designed to suit the needs of the people who wanted to do these courses.

I have already completed modules in Social Studies, Psychology and Young People in society through the SWAN network and I have enrolled in more modules so that I can eventually gain a major award in Social studies. When I have this award I will be qualified to work in many more different areas including youth work. I have met some amazing people while doing these courses and my confidence in meeting new people and doing assignments has grown while engaging in these courses.

My experience with Swan has been an enjoyable one and I find all the staff and tutors really helpful and understanding and easy to talk to.

However, our experience working with disadvantaged women shows that there are a number of pre-developmental steps often needed to support women before they are in a position to access or avail of learning opportunities. We sourced funding to deliver a range of capacity building and tailored learning activities, often involving extensive outreach work in hard to reach communities. We worked on a one to one basis with women, supporting and encouraging them to access progression learning routes which may lead to accredited training at a future stage.

An example of one of the predevelopment courses carried out in 2013 is the **'Nurture Your Own Wellbeing'** workshops in Donegal. The workshops were delivered outreach in four areas, Ballyshannon, Glencolmcille, Donegal Town and Ballybofey and were specifically designed to creatively engage with participants and to share information on practical ways of improving one's own mental health and wellbeing.

In Donegal town and Glencolmcille the women who participated are planning on forming two new women's groups and exploring further education and development opportunities.

This type of work can act as a catalyst to further education and development opportunities and can be further highlighted by the extract below taken from Monaghan's Northern Standard newspaper reporting on our 'Blaney Blades' project's FETAC graduation ceremony.

Tara Lynch who graduated on the evening spoke of the opportunities now available to her following her completion of the Moving On project. She went on to say she could not have achieved her accreditation without the support she received from the Co-ordinator Mary and the staff of Blaney. Tara went on to say the of magic in some of the rooms was very inspirational to her. Tara has now progressed to Monaghan institute of Further Education and Training (MIFFIT) and we wish her all the very best in her studies.



Group of Graduates from the Moving-On Programme, pictured at the Annual Graduation Ceremony held in the Ionas, Arts Community & Resource Centre Castleblayney last weekend. Back row from left; Bridget Edwards, Magheraclone, Catherine Quinn, Latton, Janet Duffy, Larragh Hill, Cather McWinney, Carrickmacross, Elmar Marron, Carrickmacross and Patricia Shalvey, Ballybay. Front row from left; Mary Diner, Castleblayney, Stephanie Hughes McGinn, Castleblayney, Kay O'Muir, Castleblayney, Lindsay McManus, Bree, Anita Mallon, Blaney, Tara Lynch, Castleblayney and M Smith, Cootehill Moving On Programme Co-ordinator. © Jimmy Walsh *



Blaney Blades staff members at the Moving-On Annual Graduation Ceremony, held in the Ionas, Arts Community & Resource Centre Castleblayney last weekend. From left; Olive Bolger, Blades Co-ordinator.

As Projects working on the ground we are in a position to identify the training needs of women and are often able to deliver that training ourselves (for example, some of our Projects have successfully secured funding to provide access to up to date high quality IT Computer Suites on the premises) or signpost them to existing services.

In Castlerea, Co. Roscommon for example, our Roscommon project launched its local training and resource service offering FETAC Level 3 in Computer Applications, FETAC Level 4 in Employment Skills and FETAC Level 5 in Information Processing.



Our Mullingar Project collaborated with FAS to deliver two different courses in Business Studies at FETAC Level 5. The Project also delivered a FETAC Level 5 in Community and Healthcare

Some Projects in engaging with women and encouraging them to get involved in their communities develop their own courses such as Clondalkin's Community Participation workshops which due to its success led them to develop a further course in Community Activism.

By actively participating in local social inclusion and education and training networks, we were able to highlight the needs of local disadvantaged women and promote the activities and services that local education and training organisations have to offer. The women we work with often have a fear of engaging in formal education programmes due to earlier negative experiences in formal education. We are in a position to work at a personal level with these women, encouraging them to access the services available to them. When women attend social/cultural events at a local level such as Rural Women's Day, International Women's Day etc., project workers use these events as early engagement opportunities, networking with women, building relationships and highlighting supports and services.

Our Limerick Project commenced working with one local woman in 2009. She participated in a range of capacity building courses including *Training for Transformation* and *Work Matters*. She progressed to join the Advisory Group and continued to upskill as a result of her participation. She represented the Women's Network on a range of different structures including the Limerick Community Forum. Earlier this year she commenced gainful employment in a Community Organisation. Her experience, training and knowledge of women's issues all contributed to her securing this employment. This again is an example of the time it can take working with disadvantaged women, progressing them along a path to training, development and employment. This path is sometimes 'one foot forward, two backwards' and involves time and one-to one supports which our Projects are able to offer being rooted in local communities.

At a national level we maintain our relationship with Aontas and local Projects work with NALA and their local VECs to provide relevant courses for women. VECs are supported to hold outreach clinics in local projects, where that need has been identified.

One of the main barriers to the accessing of training, educational and employment opportunities is childcare. We support the women we work with to access affordable childcare through provision of places at childcare facilities attached to our Projects or by signposting women to community childcare in their areas. By providing childcare places for women who wish to participate in courses or training we have improved access to these opportunities for many disadvantaged women.

Many Projects offer in-house Childcare Service to support children and their parents be they at working or participating in development courses. A woman accessing services in the Waterford Project's Childcare Service says *"Having our daughter at the Women's Centre Childcare Service is a big support for my husband and me. My husband works full-time and I attend full-time college. Women's Centre gives us support on daily basis. Staff from the Women's Centre are reliable, friendly and have understanding attitude. They make us feeling that our child is in a good place whereas we are at work/ college. Also, they understand our personal situation and every time when we need to leave our child in the crèche for longer hours or for an extra day that is no problem for them. They are flexible and they are always happy to help us!*

Another in Ronanstown says:

"I am one of many students to have recently finished the diploma course in the women's studies group in NCCWN Ronanstown. The course was held within the community which made it very accessible. I found while studying there was a lot of support systems that I availed of such as study groups typing services and one to one advise sessions for help with assignments, most of all there was a crèche provided within the local area that I used and found it to be excellent and of high standard of childcare. This was a fundamental part in my achievement for gaining my diploma because without the support of the crèche I would have struggled to receive a higher education during my studies. I have become employed and feel confident for my future."

Our Mullingar Project offers crèche, preschool and afterschool services to over 120 children. The childcare service is of immense support to women availing of education and training programmes within the service. In addition to this, the service also facilitates participants from other educational establishments such as VTOS, LTI etc. It is also used by children from families in crises referred by the HSE.

Provide details of areas where progress has not been made

- Need to develop mechanism for accurately counting the number of females we engage with as the template requires
- The current economic situation and lack of available funds means we cannot organise as many events / informal training courses as we would like, especially outreach activities. Many women in the rural areas cannot afford to travel to the towns to attend courses/events which may result in missing opportunities for engaging with these women.
- Limited Childcare funding and places in line with a large demand for the service.
- Cost for University modules due to rising fees
- Lack of access to funding to deliver high quality education courses

List partners or collaborators who assisted in the delivery of Goal 2

Solas, Equality for Women Measure, Vocational Education Committees, Institutes of Technology, Schools, Colleges, Universities, Learning Networks, Aontas, Local Development Companies, Community Networks, Youth Services, Foroige, Sports Partnerships, Department of Health & Children, HSE, Education for a

How many females benefited/engaged with the LCDP under Goal 2?

7,111 women engaged with the Women's LCDP under Goal 2

What was the percentage of time spent by the LCDP funded staff promoting Goal 2?

43% of LCDP staff time spent promoting Goal 2

GOAL 3: Increase people's work readiness and employment prospects

Goal Objectives:

- 1. Develop and sustain a range of services to support, prepare, and assist people to enter the labour market.*
- 2. Develop and sustain strategies with local enterprises to increase local employment prospects*
- 3. Develop and sustain strategies to increase local self employment prospects*

Actions as per 2013 Annual Operational Plan

1. Signpost women to suitable training and education opportunities that will increase their work readiness.
2. Support women in accessing existing services to help them enter the labour market.
3. Deliver accredited courses/training to improve women's employment prospects.
4. Deliver non accredited courses/training to improve women's employment prospects.
5. Provide space for Local Employment Services, Jobs Clubs
6. Provide childcare places for women to attend courses/training
7. Provide work experience opportunities for students, Community Employment workers and volunteers.
8. Work collaboratively with Aontas/FAS/VECs/NALA regarding most appropriate opportunities for up-skilling/retraining women.
9. Develop the skills of volunteers that could increase their employability.
10. Work with local business fora/women in business networks to support women into self-employment and avail of supports/services available to them.
11. Seek funding to deliver courses that will increase women's work readiness and employment prospects.

Provide details of the progress made to date

Some of the key outputs under Goal 3 for the Women's LCDP Projects included:

- 260 work placements supported
- 170 training courses were held
- 1646 women were trained or signposted to training
- 202 childcare places were provided to support women to attend training and/or employment
- 188 women supported into self-employment
- 492 helped with CV preparation/mock interviews etc.

Qualitative examples are provided of the following Outcomes/ Impacts of Actions as outlined in 2013 Annual Operational Plan:

- Valuable work experience gained by women that enhances their employability
- Opportunities for women unable to access other services, can access supports with training, job preparation etc. in a safe non-judgemental place.
- Women are empowered to take the next step in retraining/ entering the labour market.
- Women availing of access to available supports for self-employment.

At every opportunity we have encouraged and supported women into training and education opportunities that may improve their employment prospects and Project staff worked hard to prioritise the complex needs of women, particularly those most distanced from the labour market. We held information evenings with women and the local training and employment service providers (i.e LEADER/Skillsnet officers) to encourage women to avail of existing services in their area. Throughout the country, we provided work experience opportunities and CE placements for marginalised women. For example, our Mullingar Project, in partnership with FAS, host a Community Employment Scheme which expanded in 2013 to include 81 participants. We supported women in job readiness through: C.V. preparation, provision of training spaces for relevant services to engage and signposted them to local employment services. We provided training and employment opportunities through running programmes such as BTEI, EWM and Local Training Initiatives (LTI).

In Clare, a woman with disabilities who to date has had little opportunity for gainful employment within the community sector, completed work experience in the project and helped to the project to develop a programme of events for women with disabilities. She says the work experience *“has enabled me to have a great opportunity to work with women....an opportunity which I may not have otherwise had. It’s helped me identify an area which I am very passionate about and wish to pursue. It has been an invaluable learning curve”*

In Mullingar, an Equality for Women project entitled CALM (Carers Advanced Learning Mullingar) aims to promote the advancement of women into non-clinical healthcare and supervisory management positions through the provision of a Certificate in Supervisory Management Skills for the health services, FETAC Level 6 major award.

Another woman on TUS placement in our Ronanstown project says *“I have gained confidence and learned new skills. I enrolled in a hair and beauty course in Collinstown College for next year. I would never have had the confidence to go for it had I not been on placement”*

In Kerry we continued to strengthen the Business Women’s network, offering mentoring, workshops in Facebook and Linked in, support and networking opportunities to self-employed women.

Our Limerick project developed a ten week course entitled ‘Work Matters’ which was approved and funded by the Department of Social Protection. The course covered such topics as; barriers to returning to work, individual needs and plans and confidence building for long-term unemployed.

In order to provide access to information and supports, some of our Projects offer space for LES offices and self-employed holistic therapists.

In 2013, some of our Projects have also begun developing social enterprises, including looking at delivering social enterprise development modules to their participants.

Provide details of areas where progress has not been made

- Need to further develop mechanisms for accurately counting the number of women we engage with as the template requires
- The constant struggles to secure funding for non-accredited and accredited programmes.
- Some Projects have been unable to source funding for programmes specifically aimed at supporting women into self-employment. However, participants in Projects are supported and signposted to supports to set up their own businesses.

- Problems giving time to volunteers and had so many people looking to volunteer but this needs time supervision and on-site training and due to cuts in staff hours this has been restricted.
- Have been unable to give as much one to one support and encouragement to women with ideas due to time constraint. This area of work is vital in our economy at the minute and is the most time consuming as many hours of support encouragement are needed for women who want to go back to work or have some cottage business ideas we need to be resourced to do this primary first step work
- Lack of collaborators to form effective partnerships relating to employment issues for women who are disadvantaged. This could be addressed by developing local networks of agencies, business, social welfare and community organisations to address collectively the issues around unemployment for disadvantaged women, avoid duplication of services and create targeted approaches.
- In a rural area with little or no employment opportunities, we have made little progress in improving women's employment prospects.
- Some of our Projects do not run programmes specifically aimed at supporting women into self-employment. However, Projects have reported that past participants in programmes have set up their own business
- Lack of available funding for the delivery of third level programmes for disadvantage women due to the restrictive criteria of funding programmes.

List partners or collaborators who assisted in the delivery of Goal 3

SOLAS/FAS, Local Employment service, VECs, FETAC, City/County Enterprise Boards, City/County Councils, NALA, Adult Guidance Service, RAPID, Department of Social Protection, HSE, European Social Fund, Women Into Business Networks, LDCs, Community Organisations, local business and industry, Charities.

How many females benefited/engaged with the LCDP under Goal 3?

2260 women engaged with the Women's LCDP under Goal 3

What was the percentage of time spent by the LCDP funded staff promoting Goal 3?

30% of LCDP staff time spent promoting Goal 3

GOAL 4: Promote engagement with policy, practice, and decision making processes on matters affecting local communities

Goal Objectives:

1. *Promote dialogue between funders, providers and local communities*
2. *Develop and sustain opportunities for communities of place and interest to identify issues and voice concerns*

Actions as per 2013 Annual Operational Plan

1. Actively participate and represent women in local, county, regional and national fora.
2. Continue to promote women's equality and inclusion on these fora.
3. Develop and maintain web-sites/blogs new social media that give women space to identify issues and voice concerns
4. Support voluntary advisory committees in planning and evaluating local work and feeding into the national strategic plan.
5. Support NCCWN regional structures to continue to build capacity and facilitate collaborative working and networking of members to build the organisation and plan for the future.
6. Develop and implement PR/Communication/Awareness raising strategies for NCCWN and its members.
7. Continue to facilitate the networking of local women's groups, building their capacity for voicing their concerns and participating in local decision-making structures
8. Engage in policy analysis and development with regards issues and structures that impact on women's lives.
9. Identify and promote gender equality in all our actions.
10. Use feminist processes in order to engage with marginalised women

Provide details of the progress made to date

Some of the key outputs under Goal 4 for the Women's LCDP Projects included:

- 185 women on boards/committees
- 575 women attending community meetings
- 129 key planning and policy structures, networks and committees that contain women
- 177 women's groups directly supported

Qualitative examples are provided of the following Outcomes/ Impacts of Actions as outlined in 2013 Annual Operational Plan:

- Participation in structures and processes for dialogue between policy makers, providers and local communities.
- Greater engagement in priority policy and decision-making processes by members of identified disadvantaged communities.
- Improved understanding of local women's concerns and priorities by policy makers and service providers.
- Women represented at local, regional and national decision-making level.
- Increased awareness of gender inequalities.

Throughout 2013, the NCCWN continued to support the Women's Projects to absorb a 9% cut to the LCDP funding while still trying to prioritise key front line services and supports to minimise the negative impacts on disadvantaged women at local level. The Projects have been successful in reaching out to women in disadvantaged communities, many of whom experience multiple disadvantages. Mainstream organisations are often not able to engage with the most disadvantaged women and as a result Women's Projects undertake a significant amount of ground work and pre-development work before women are able to access mainstream services. Some of the advantages recognized by our Projects include:

- Outreach and Pre-development is crucial in enabling access to education, training and work opportunities.
- NCCWN Women's Projects play a critical role in raising awareness of gender equality through engagement with local development companies, rural development agencies and other local, regional and national bodies tasked with community and local development.
- The Women's LCDP structure provides an opportunity for greater visibility for women in poverty and living in disadvantaged communities
- Women's Projects provide opportunities for greater influence and synergies with the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) at a local level, and particularly in ensuring that gender equality is mainstreamed across the LCDP and through the work of local development companies.
- The current model has highlighted the importance of giving specific attention to policy in addressing the impact of the economic crisis on women experiencing disadvantage. A major strength of NCCWN is the way in which it effectively connects women at the local level to a strategic role at the national level, and in turn links national priorities to the local level.

Regional structures are up and running and mechanisms have been developed to feed into and support the NCCWN nationally, regionally and locally to meet strategic priorities and respond to the changing economic and social environment facing women experiencing disadvantage. Mechanisms have also been put in place to support the regions to feed into national management, policy and decision making structures. Further regional meetings have taken place in each of the six regions – feedback from the regions indicated that the NCCWN members are finding the structures useful in building capacity at regional level and sharing best practice, experience and expertise. Regional networking events have also taken place and the six regional lead project coordinators meet to sustain support structures and further develop the regional work.

NCCWN staff represented women's affairs at local level and participated in decision making structures. NCCWN staff and advisory committee members sat on a number of boards and committees including LDC Boards, RAPID AITs, Community & Voluntary Forum, Youth Forum, local education networks. NCCWN Projects work collaboratively in their area to ensure that they resource individuals and communities that are most socially excluded to access participate and become involved with policy, practice and decision-making processes on matters affecting them and their local community.

For example, in Limerick, as a result of many years capacity building, women have become involved in a local residents group and are engaging with Limerick Regeneration Agency at a local level. Our project has secured funding to hold further training sessions with them on how to influence decision making in their community.

Our Clare project through its work with Clare Active Citizen Network collaborated with

University of Limerick and Ennis Town Council in consulting with women for their inputs into the Ennis 2020 plan. They also participated in research carried out by UL school of medicine to develop a consultation process with communities, consulting with women on the delivery of primary health care to communities.

As part of the 50:50 Northwest group our Donegal and Leitrim projects met with female politicians and examined women's role in politics, the 2014 local elections etc.

Similarly in Ronanstown, as part of their women's studies course, women met with local councillors, sat in on a council meeting and attended a Q & A session in the Dail.



Ronanstown Women's Studies Group

We worked with local development companies and other local organisations to develop and sustain integrated work-plans that reduced duplication, increased efficiency and meet the needs of disadvantaged women. We then submitted our operational plans to local county development boards. For example, in Roscommon our project worked closely with Roscommon Leader Partnership (RLP) and County Development Board in preparing 2013 LCDP work plans and actions. Our local coordinator co-presented the 2013 work-plans at the SIM meeting in association with RLP.

Provide details of areas where progress has not been made

- The NCCWN are concerned about how the only measurement of the LCDP work that appeared to be recognised is that recorded through IRIS. We are looking to further develop mechanisms to support the measuring and gathering evidence of the impact of the work on marginalised women at local level and to record, in a recognisable and measureable way, concrete qualitative and quantitative evidence that we are outreaching to women that statutory agencies are unable to engage. We need to further develop mechanisms for accurately reflecting our work with women as the template requires
- We are also concerned about how Project's reports were required to be submitted locally as an addendum to the local LDC's reports – the impact of this was that the work of the Women's Projects became more invisible at local level. However, Department officials have said they would discuss this further with us as part of feeding into the alignment process.
- NCCWN Projects continued to struggle to absorb the cuts while still maintaining frontline services and supports at a severely reduced capacity. In 2013, the work with women was in more demand than ever, when supports for women and children were being eroded, we needed to sustain what we had. We were under-resourced and yet still managed to continue to work with some of the most disadvantaged women across 17 communities throughout Ireland for a fraction of the cost of other LDCs.
- Many of the Social Inclusion Measures Committees and other local structures where

marginalised women are represented were postponed while new structures are being developed. Both this, and funding and time constraints made it more difficult to ensure appropriate representation of disadvantaged women on local policy and decision-making structures. Therefore, it is essential that the work with women is recognised within the new aligned structures

- Reduction in working hours, lack of funding and the recession all combined to make networking of women's groups harder and harder.
- Implementation of National Strategy for Women monitoring committee – not currently in place

List partners or collaborators who assisted in the delivery of Goal 4

City/County Development Boards, Local Development Companies, City/County Councils, VECs, FRCs, Department of Social Protection, NWCI, SIMs, RAPID, media, Community and Voluntary Fora, etc.

How many females benefited/engaged with the LCDP under Goal 4?

1,626 women engaged with the Women's LCDP under Goal 4

What was the percentage of time spent by the LCDP funded staff promoting Goal 4?

10% of LCDP staff time spent promoting Goal 4