

national collective of
community based
women's
networks



National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks

Strategic Plan 2016 - 2020



AN ROINN DLÉ AGUS CIRT AGUS COMHIONANNAIS
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

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Introduction

Established in 2002, the National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks (NCCWN) is a national organisation that works directly with and represents the interests of women from communities in rural and urban settings throughout Ireland. The purpose of the organisation is to enable women experiencing disadvantage, to network and have a voice in national policy developments, consolidating 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 ethos, achieving full gender equality, particularly in relation to women experiencing disadvantage has consistently been the central goal of the NCCWN.

The NCCWN is comprised of 17 locally based women's projects. These projects evolved from projects funded under the Community Development Programme. Community education has been one of the core tools 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.

In September 2010, in the response to policy changes that saw the merger of the projects funded under the Community Development Programme with their Local Development Companies, NCCWN and its member groups successfully lobbied to remain outside these arrangements, with NCCWN being assigned responsibility for the targeting actions and strategies to advance women's equality using community development approaches to working with women in the 17 areas in which its constituent organisations worked. NCCWN was required to alter its structure from an organisation with a number of local member organisations throughout the country legally constituted in their own right, to a national structure with 17 constituent women's groups under the legal auspices of NCCWN with 46 employees. In January 2016, responsibility for funding and monitoring the work of NCCWN, was transferred from the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government to the Department of Justice and Equality. This work involves the delivery of a Women's Equality & Development Programme aimed at enhancing the social inclusion of women in communities and promoting equality for women.

Under that arrangement, each of the 17 NCCWN women's projects continues to provide a focal point for local women's groups and activities. The projects continue to be sustained by significant voluntary activity, through a local steering committee for each project and up to three, usually part-time staff, working as coordinators, development workers and administrators. This voluntary activity has been essential to sustaining the sector and represents significant value, resulting in substantial outcomes for women at a very low cost.

The NCCWN addresses a wide diversity of issues impacting on the most disadvantaged women in the country. 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.

The experience of the NCCWN projects is that investing in women's empowerment and community development has lasting impacts on the social and economic fabric of society, in sustaining and

building community cohesion and inclusion, and the achievement of equality at a societal level. The women's community development movement has played a pivotal role in Ireland and many countries across the world in highlighting the factors that have shaped the lives and experiences of women living in poverty and disadvantage.

Women's role in community development is transformative in its very nature. On the one hand, this has given visibility to and an analysis of women as marginalised, disempowered and oppressed; while on the other hand, it also made visible the critical role that women play as the mainstay of local communities through their involvement in community development activities. Often described as the 'unsung heroes of community action', women have become critical to community cohesion and inclusion, and the achievement of equality at a societal level in roles that are often invisible and under-valued. The focus of the NCCWN is on the empowerment of women and in building the capacity of women to contribute to benefitting the lives of their families and their local communities. The main activities include:

- Community development and community building;
- Pre-development and training support to provide a pathway to education and training;
- Bringing a 'gender lens' to mainstream community and local development initiatives family support and parenting, and childcare support;
- Addressing gender-based violence;
- Promoting women's equality, community leadership and empowerment;
- Promoting women's health and well-being;
- Awareness-raising on gender equality and women's human rights;
- Improving access to local services;
- Networking of women at local, regional, national and international levels.

The NCCWN and its seventeen member organisations have consolidated and built the organisation and are working collectively to have a positive impact on the community women's sector providing collective analysis, collective action and collective outcomes for women.

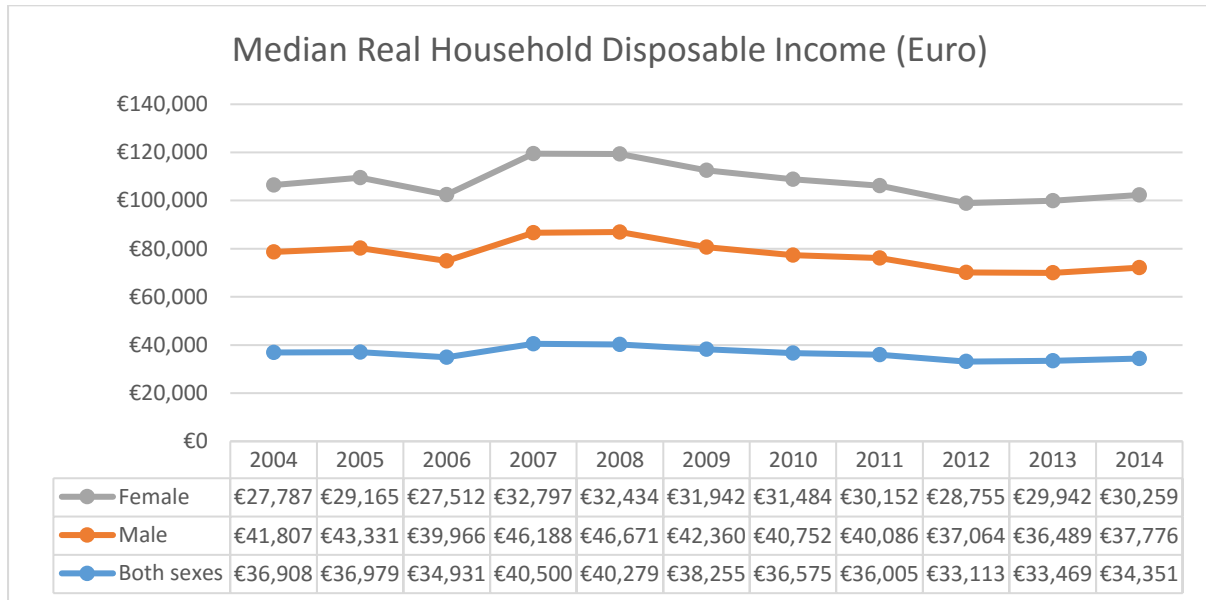
Context

NCCWN operates in a society where equality for women has yet to be realised.

Income & Poverty

Women’s income continues to be significantly less than that of men (see table 1). In 2014, there was a difference in the Median Real Household Disposable Income of €7,517 between households headed by a man and households headed by a woman.

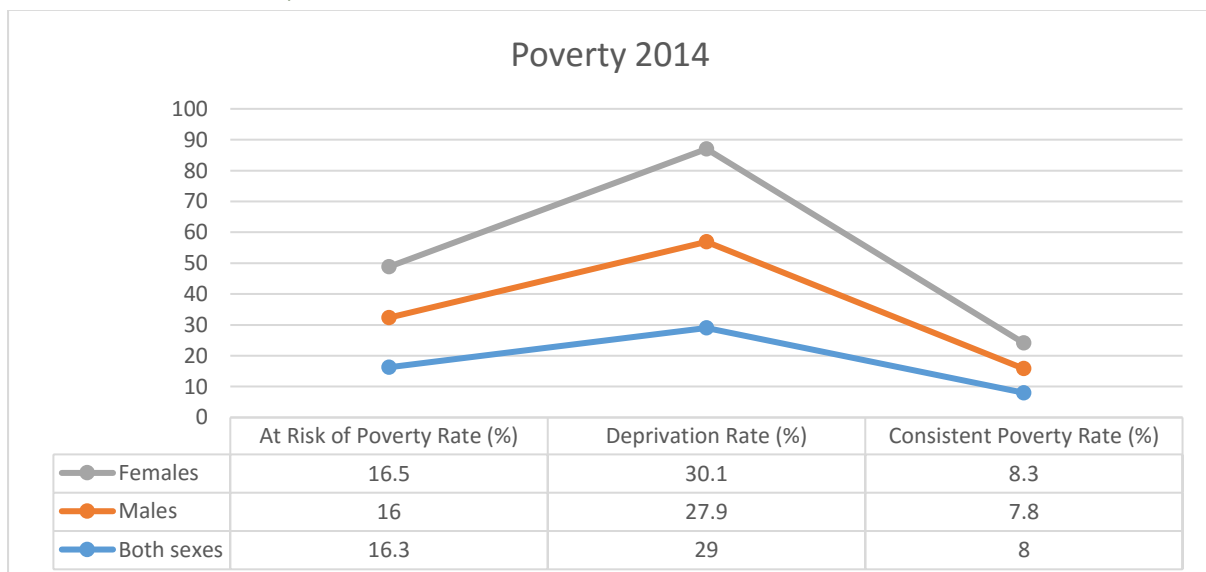
Table 1. Median Real Household Disposable Income (Euro) 2004-2014



EU SILC 2015

As Table 2 indicates, women are more likely to live in poverty and with deprivation than men. In 2012, the gender pay gap in Ireland was 14.4%¹ - female employees were paid 14.4% an hour less than male employees in Ireland.

Table 2. Poverty 2014



EU SILC 2015

¹ <http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-mip/mip2014/society/ssc/#d.en.101396>

According to the 2011 census of population, there were just over 215,300 families headed by lone parents with children, 87 per cent of which were lone mothers. Information from the EU SILC surveys indicate that households headed by a lone parent are consistently and significantly more likely to be living in poverty and with deprivation than the general population.

Domestic and sexual violence remains a serious concern for women. Of the 1,913 survivors of sexual violence who attended Rape Crisis Centres for counselling and support in 2014, 85% were female. 8,449 individual women received support from Domestic Violence Support Services in Ireland in 2012.

National Women's Strategy

The new *Programme for a Partnership Government* commits to developing a new National Women's Strategy. Until that becomes a reality, the NCCWN projects are operating under the current strategy, which is the Government's statement of priorities in relation to the advancement of women in Irish society for the period 2007-2016. Its vision is an Ireland where all women enjoy equality with men and can achieve their full potential, while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life. Three key themes are identified in the strategy:

- ▶ Equalising socio-economic opportunity for women;
- ▶ Ensuring the wellbeing of women;
- ▶ Engaging as equal and active citizens.

The strategy acknowledges that the themes are "not wholly discrete" and, taken together, they are a commitment on the part of the Government to address all aspects of national policy that impact upon women and to contribute to the achievement of true gender equality to the betterment of all members of society².

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Ireland will report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2017. Included in the list of issues that Ireland has been asked to consider in its report are how it intends to improve/address/provide:

- Availability of disaggregated data, information and statistics by gender;
- Raising awareness of women's rights and access to justice under the provisions of the Convention;
- The provision of information on steps taken to incorporate the provisions of the Convention into domestic law and to ensure the availability of effective remedies for all women, including disadvantaged groups of women in the State party;
- An outline of how the amalgamation of the Equality Authority and the Human Rights Commission strengthens the protection of women and girls particularly disadvantaged groups such as elderly women, migrant women and women with disabilities, from all forms of discrimination;
- An update on the Magdalene Laundries and compensation paid to the women involved, and an update on the Mother and Baby homes;
- An update on the National Women's Strategy;
- Actions and progress towards equality between women and men;
- Actions to address the persistence of stereotyping concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society entrenched in article 41.2 of the Constitution

² National Women's Strategy 2007-2016, p. i

- The situation pertaining to violence against women and measures put in place to protect women, particularly disadvantaged groups of women, women with disabilities, Traveller and migrant women.
- Updated information and measures to promote on the situation of women regarding their participation in public life, in particular, on State boards, senior positions in the Government, the judiciary and the diplomatic service, including an update on women's representation in politics following the introduction of the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012;
- The Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 - information on the framework that regulates the determination of risk to the life of the pregnant woman for her to procure an abortion; specific steps that a woman has to undergo in order to legally procure an abortion on this ground; legislative measures envisaged to revise the law in order to provide for abortion on other grounds including threat to the health of the pregnant woman, rape, incest and severe foetal impairment, and to remove punitive measures for women who undergo abortion;
- Disadvantaged women - the human rights situation of elderly women, including widows, migrant women, Traveller and Roma women, women with disabilities in respect of education, employment and access to health services as well as their protection from sexual violence and abuse.

Other issues mentioned include Female Genital Mutilation, the trafficking of women, prostitution, women's education – particularly referencing stereotyping in education, the concentration of women in part-time and low paid work and the gender wage gap, rural women and measures to ensure their inclusion in rural development strategies,

Representation

The Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act was introduced in 2012. It provides for sanctions to non-compliant political parties by reducing State funding if they do not meet the requirement to have at least 30% women candidates for general elections. This initiative resulted in a record 35 seats for women candidates, bringing the proportion of women in the Dáil to 22 percent, up from 15 percent after the previous general election.

Representation on other structures remains a challenge. For example, women's representation on Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) ranges from as low as 6% (on the Waterford LCDC) to 53% (on the Kerry LCDC). The Kerry LCDC is the only LCDC where women's representation reached over 50%. Representation is below 30% in 18 of the 34 LCDCs and the average is only 32% (188 women of the 596 total membership).

Addressing women's disadvantage

Though there was a broad welcome for the transfer of the 17 NCCWN projects from the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) under the auspices of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government to the Department of Justice and Equality, it remains a concern that women experiencing disadvantage are not a named target of the SICAP programme. This is a particular concern given that the NCCWN projects do not provide comprehensive national coverage at this stage.

Strategic Plan 2016

Similar, to many organisations in the community sector, in recent years NCCWN projects have seen many cuts to funding and resources. The organisation has been severely challenged to continue to provide the vital services, supports and interventions that women experiencing poverty, inequality and social exclusion require and have a right to.

By consolidating and building the NCCWN network and strengthening collective ways of working, NCCWN is increasingly seeing the benefit of providing a united voice and platform. The NCCWN strategic plan 2016 - 2020 seeks to build on this work to provide a framework for how the evolution of NCCWN towards building a cohesive and coordinated base from which to develop its work with women and its' organisational development locally and nationally.

NCCWN Ethos, Vision, Mission and Strategy

Vision

Our vision is a just and equal society for all women

Mission

Our mission is to support the empowerment of and advocate for women who experience disadvantage and marginalisation, and to promote social justice, women's human rights and equality bringing about positive and sustainable changes to women's lives and society.

Strategy

NCCWN does this by using community development and feminist approaches, with an emphasis on policy informed by the direct experiences of women, and challenging structures, attitudes and behaviours that marginalise women. NCCWN has a strong focus on advocating for women to bring about positive and sustainable changes to women's lives and society

Approach and principles

The NCCWN works from two core approaches – a feminist approach and a community development approach both of which are intrinsically linked. These approaches underpin all aspects of NCCWNs work and organisational structure.

Core Values

The following values are at the core of NCCWN work:

- Feminism - the NCCWN is a feminist organisation that sees women as equal to men and promotes actions and strategies to realise this;
- Gender Equality – NCCWN plays a key role in challenging gender inequality (in particular through its local structures) and monitoring the impact of policies, actions and programmes on women and seeking change when required;
- Collective analysis, collective action and collective outcomes. The NCCWN was formed on the basis that working together secures better outcomes for women as a group rather than individuals;
- Equality, human rights, anti-discrimination and recognition of diversity – supporting and promoting the human rights of women and challenging discrimination, especially under the nine grounds incorporated in Irish equality legislation – race, religious belief, gender, age, family status, sexual orientation, membership of the Traveller community, disability, marital status;
- Participation – We work to promote the equal and meaningful participation of women in the decision making structures and processes that affect their lives;
- Social Justice – We work to promote the equal distribution of power and resources in society and to challenge unequal power relationships and the unequal distribution of resources that lead to poverty, social exclusion and inequality;
- Women's empowerment – NCCWN works in a way that supports 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;
- Solidarity – recognising women's experiences are not all shared and that some women encounter greater barriers and difficulties than others. The NCCWN is committed to recognising

those diverse experiences and taking action to overcome the challenges that face the most marginalised women.

NCCWN seeks to promote the principles of community work in our activities, processes and policies. Community development is ***“A developmental activity comprised of both a task and a process. The task is social change³ 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”⁴***

Strategic Priorities

The four strategic priorities which form the basis of our work are:

Strategic Priority 1: Engagement

Strategic Priority 2: Participation

Strategic Priority 3: Equality and Policy

Strategic Priority 4: Organisational Development and Sustainability

³ In the context of community work, social change refers to the changes in policy and law, structures and institutions, individual attitudes and behaviour and societal ideologies that are required for a just and equal society to prevail. Community work is a developmental process, involving incremental change and social change itself is often incremental.

⁴ All Ireland Standards for Community Work – All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training – 2016
www.communityworkireland.ie

Strategic Priority 1. Engagement

Goal - To engage with women experiencing disadvantage through outreach and predevelopment work in order to reduce isolation, increase confidence, build relationships and facilitate the empowerment of women.

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Resources
<p>1.1. To identify and address the barriers that prevent women from reaching their full potential through outreach, networking, pre-development work and engagement.</p>	<p>Actions include using our collective knowledge and experience to support engagement and bring national coherence to local work while recognising the importance of flexibility depending on local needs and circumstances. This end we will;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the organisation can retain and develop our relevance, visibility and presence within the local areas in which we work; • Work together nationally to further develop strategies for outreach work and predevelopment work with women (providing opportunities for projects to share information, experiences, challenges and expertise); • Develop supports to overcome barriers for women and provide assistance and support to them, in accessing existing services; • Share our collective and wide ranging experiences of engaging with women and developing collective processes of engagement; 	<p>NCCWN Staff</p>	<p>Staff and Staff Time</p> <p>Website forum for projects</p> <p>Annual Staff Meetings</p> <p>Women at local level</p> <p>Advisory groups</p>

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share our collective and wide ranging experiences of undertaking needs assessment processes with women towards the development of best practice models. 		
<p>1.2. Use models of engagement which support, encourage and build the capacity of women to participate in all aspects of community life</p>	<p>Actions include working together nationally to provide supports to projects in;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specifically targeting and engaging with women experiencing marginalisation and social exclusion in our communities; Supporting the development of networking and support structures for women. 	<p>Staff</p>	<p>Staff time</p> <p>Website</p> <p>Annual staff meetings</p> <p>Regional meetings</p> <p>Women at local level</p> <p>Advisory groups</p>
<p>1.3. Build an effective communications strategy for engaging women in our communities</p>	<p>Actions include working together nationally to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a communications strategy to share information and best practice amongst projects on specific issues. Implement a system for ensuring clear, accessible and engaging communications with women 	<p>Staff</p>	<p>Website</p> <p>Feedback from board meetings</p> <p>Annual meetings</p> <p>Regional meetings</p> <p>Advisory groups</p>

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise regular feedback mechanisms and communications links from NCCWN nationally to local NCCWN women's projects and vice versa. 		Women at local level
1.4. To use a collective approach to marking key dates and engaging women in a range of campaigns	<p>Actions include working together nationally to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the global themes for International Women's Day, Rural Women's Day, the 16 days of Action against Violence against Women and Life Long Learning Week and organise activities locally and regionally to promote the engagement of women in days of international significance; Develop and implement a strong communications and outreach strategy, engaging, mobilising and building the participation of women to take part in international days of significance. 	<p>Staff</p> <p>Board</p> <p>Advisory Committees</p>	<p>Website</p> <p>Staff time</p> <p>National and international organisations</p> <p>Communications worker</p> <p>Women at local level</p> <p>Advisory groups</p> <p>Specific funding lines</p>

Anticipated Outcomes

- Greater engagement and social interaction of women in their local communities, reducing isolation and increasing physical and mental wellbeing.
- Dissemination of information to women who would then have a greater awareness of the options/choices available to them and their families and can be supported in identifying and establishing progression pathways to develop their potential.
- Groups and structures in place with increased capacity and sustainability and the potential for further development.

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Resources

Strategic Priority 2. Participation

Goal - To facilitate progression of women experiencing disadvantage from engagement to active participation

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Resources
2.1. To mobilise women, raising their analysis and consciousness of the issues affecting them and build their capacity to represent the collective concerns of women especially those from marginalised communities	<p>NCCWN projects will work together nationally to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build an analysis amongst women of the barriers to women's participation at all levels and of strategies to enhance women's participation in key areas that affect their lives; • Develop a series of capacity building programmes for women to be rolled out locally (including for example feminism, racism equality and human rights) depending on local needs and resources; • Support the engagement and participation of young women by linking with local youth services, schools and other relevant structures. 	Staff	<p>Staff time</p> <p>Women at local level</p> <p>Advisory groups</p>
2.2 To build women's representation and participation in a range of relevant structures	<p>Actions include working together nationally to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a strategy to provide opportunities for women to represent their issues and concerns at local, regional and national levels; • Provide supports to women, women's groups and volunteers to participate on relevant decision making fora; 	Staff	<p>Staff time</p> <p>National organisations</p> <p>Local and regional networks</p>

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with relevant Government Departments to ensure that the voices of women experiencing poverty and social exclusion are represented. 		Women at local level Advisory groups National Board
2.3 Support the provision of needs based community education and training for women	To this end NCCWN will; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain our links with Aontas and build alliances with relevant organisations working to advance community education policy as it pertains to women; Share best practice in relation to women’s community education provision ensuring access to and quality outcomes from community education for women. 	Staff	Staff time Women at local level Advisory groups

Anticipated Outcomes

1. More women engaged in the ongoing work of NCCWN leading to a strengthened representative voice for NCCWN at local and national level
2. Increased capacity, self-esteem and confidence in women to participate more fully in society.
3. Greater access to relevant and quality training and education opportunities for women.
4. Increased ability on the part of women to broaden their skills and knowledge and levels of participation.
5. Increased awareness and capacity on the part of decision makers to meet the needs of women, particularly those experiencing social exclusion.

Strategic Priority 3. Policy & Equality⁵

Goal - To develop strategies to provide women with the support, skills and confidence to articulate and voice the issues that matter to them and support their representation at local, regional and national level

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Resources
3.1 To mobilise women, raising their consciousness of the issues affecting them and build their capacity to represent the collective concerns of women especially those from marginalised communities	<p>Actions include working together nationally to identify strategies to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop capacity building measures to support voicing women’s issues, concerns and interests locally and nationally; • Engage with key Government Departments, organisations, decision makers and stakeholders to build a commitment to naming and prioritising women’s representation locally and nationally. 	Staff	<p>Staff time</p> <p>Women at local level</p> <p>National board</p> <p>Advisory groups</p>
3.2 To develop a series of clear national NCCWN policy positions informed by the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek resources for the employment of a National Policy Co-ordinator; • Establish a Policy subgroup; 	NCCWN Board and National Co-ordinator	<p>Staff time</p> <p>Funding</p>

⁵ Key policy areas: Gender Equality, Human Rights, Community Development, Women’s Community Education, Social Care, Childcare, Women’s Health and reproductive rights, Equality & Inclusion, Violence against Women, Human trafficking

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Resources
<p>direct experiences of women living in the most marginalised communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue on-going consultations with women in our communities every 3 years; • Work with relevant organisations and agencies to identify and address the needs of women and challenge barriers to women’s participation in education, employment and a range of other areas; • Establish a series of policy goals and policy submissions to relevant Government Departments with a particular focus on; Pre budget submissions; Submissions to the Departments of; Social protection, Community, Environment and Local Government, Education, Health and Justice & Equality; • Gender proofing/budgeting in relation to women experiencing disadvantage. 	<p>Staff</p>	<p>Women at local level</p> <p>Advisory groups</p>
<p>3.3 To represent the concerns of the women we work with in relevant national policy fora</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek representation on key national fora such as the Community and Voluntary Pillar (through the Community Platform), the National Steering Committee on Violence against Women (through the National Observatory on Violence against Women). 	<p>National Co-ordinator</p> <p>Staff</p>	<p>Staff time</p>
<p>3.1 To communicate our policy messages and goals effectively to the wider public (media and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek resources for the employment of a National Communications Co-ordinator; • Ensure a clear focus on policy in all communications and develop a media plan in relation to all aspects of our work 	<p>National Co-ordinator and Board</p> <p>Staff</p>	<p>Funding</p> <p>Staff time</p>

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Resources
	for our issues through opinion pieces, letters to editors and articles in print media (locally and nationally).		locally and nationally

Anticipated Outcomes

1. Increased awareness about women's issues in society and relevant policies
2. Development of policy positions with NCCWN staff, volunteers and the women we work with
3. A strong unified voice of women directly experiencing poverty and social exclusion in relation to policy matters
4. Strong media presence and profile for NCCWN
5. A clear mandate for NCCWN representatives
6. Women's voices heard locally, regionally and nationally
7. Stronger and more effective policies in relation to women's equality

4 Organisational Development & Sustainability

Goal - To develop the NCCWN to be able to fulfil its objectives and to ensure the sustainability of the organisation.

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Resources
4.1 To ensure the highest levels of governance and accountability	<p>To this end NCCWN will;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the NCCWN Board by ongoing capacity building and upskilling; • Co-opt women with relevant expertise and skills; • Maintain and develop our financial and governance systems and policies to ensure that the organisation fulfils all financial, employment and governance obligations and duties. 	<p>NCCWN Board</p> <p>Board Finance and Employment Sub group</p>	<p>Women at local level</p> <p>Advisory groups</p> <p>Staff time</p> <p>Voluntary time (Board members)</p>
4.2 To ensure the sustainability of NCCWN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to lobby for increased resources, including funding of the posts outlined above and programme development at local/national level; 	<p>Staff</p>	<p>Staff time</p>

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Resources
4.3 To develop and consolidate the collective approach of the NCCWN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a collective NCCWN brand, reflective of the organisations vision & mission; • Co-ordinate local action at national level and promote and brand these actions under the banner of NCCWN; • Relaunch NCCWN at national level to develop a national profile under the new funding stream and Department. 	Staff	Staff time Media contacts Website

Appendix 1

NCCWN - Key Areas of Work



Women's Community Education

NCCWN recognise educational disadvantage as a significant barrier to women in reaching their full potential. Women's Community Education offers women an opportunity to gain new skills, enhance existing skills and build confidence through a participatory, women centred approach to learning. Community education is therefore a key area of work for NCCWN member organisations as we work to ensure that disadvantaged women are supported to achieve their potential. Elements of this area of work include:

Elements of this area of work include:

- Lifelong learning from pre-development to 3rd level
- Capacity Building Education
- Community development programmes, including accredited and non-accredited programmes.
- Promotion of women's progression to education/volunteering/employment
- Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), including accredited training and education opportunities in the community, targeting women with low initial levels of formal education.
- FETAC accredited programmes

Women's Participation

NCCWN recognises that many barriers exist that prevent women from fully participating in their communities. We recognize that the women we work with need to be supported to challenge the systemic barriers that limit their opportunities and prevent their participation. Women's empowerment, capacity building and confidence raising programmes at local level aim to equip women with the skills and confidence to fully and actively participate in their community. Elements of this area of work include:

- NCCWN Engagement/Pre-development work/Outreach: Involving; the provision of drop in services for women, the development of outreach strategies in line with the needs of the local communities e.g. recognising rural isolation, the provision of information, advice and guidance services, provision of support with access to services (eg form filling), referrals to other specialist organisations, clear communication to our local communities through the production and dissemination of project brochures and engagement in social media.
- Community Arts programmes and Creative Ways of Engaging: We develop and facilitate drama groups, art classes, book clubs, reading circles, cultural trips, film clubs.
- NCCWN Women Community Participation: We run volunteer involvement programmes, active citizen awareness programmes, women and leadership programmes. We support new and existing women's groups and support volunteers to develop the skills to participate on local committees and community Boards of Managements.
- Programmes that have the potential to lead to Women's empowerment programmes

Supports for Women

NCCWN Projects across the country provide a wide range of practical supports to enable women's participation.

NCCWN Projects provide a trusted and safe local space that provides an accessible bridging mechanism to front line or appropriate services. NCCWN identifies social care including childcare as an issue for all women particularly those experiencing barriers returning to education and employment. Some of our Projects offer childcare provision to women returning to education. Others support access to affordable community childcare places to enable women to realise their full potential as defined by themselves. They also help to support women to overcome the barriers which prevent them from progressing in education and improving their earning potential. They support women to recognise the strong link between educational attainment and earning capacity and therefore between educational disadvantage and social exclusion. Elements of this area of work include:

- Provision of and/or support access to quality, affordable childcare services
- Maintaining seats on County Childcare Committee and HSC
- Provide women with information on a range of issues including social care supports, domestic violence services, community education opportunities, women's human rights etc.
- Provision of learner supports and access to information
- Provision of referral and signposting services
- Mentoring
- Listening ear services
- Social media training, mentoring, skills for work & further education support,
- Fostering solidarity
- Advocating for social care supports, i.e. personal assistant, elder care, to enable women to participate in education, training and public life.

Health and Wellbeing

"Ensuring the Wellbeing of Women A sense of personal wellbeing is usually achieved through a combination of good physical and mental health; access to health and social services, where required; a

sense of fulfilment, through employment, family and relationships and usually enhanced by a good work-life balance; wellbeing for some is also underpinned by a sense of security and protection. In order to reflect the importance of the social environment, the Government has adopted the WHO definition of health, which relies on the social model: Health is a state of complete, physical, mental and social wellbeing". (The National Women's Strategy 2007-2016)

NCCWN has a holistic approach to the women and communities in which they work. To look after the wellbeing of one woman has a knock on effect on the whole family and community. Elements of this work include;

- Establishing a Wellbeing Statement for women.
- Development and implementation of women's health and well-being programmes including women's positive mental health programmes.
- Health screening programmes e.g. breast check/cervical screening
- Promoting and raising awareness of women's health programmes and events e.g. "Mental Health Awareness Week".

Inclusion and Diversity

NCCWN is committed to and takes action to ensure the recognition of women's diversity.

Elements of this work include;

- Campaigns and workshops on women's diversity, sexuality, poverty, etc.
- Provision of a range of targeted courses, programmes and initiatives to support inter-culturalism and ethnic diversity, disability and community diversity within the projects. Example: ESOL programmes, living in a diverse society programmes/courses.
- Feed-back/ evaluation sessions with participants to identify issues and voice the concerns of our Women's Community and represent these concerns
- Provision of "Local to Global-Grassroots Women Sustaining the Women's Movement" training
- Development of consciousness raising programmes and of Human rights and feminist programmes which promote Inclusion and diversity

Women's Equality

NCCWN aims, through our work at grassroots level with individual women and women's groups, to promote women's equality and challenge inequalities and discrimination in relation to Gender, Racism, and Sexual Diversity & Disability. Elements of this work include:

- Delivering programmes which promote a feminist analysis
- Organising International Women's Day events
- Organising events during the year on equality, health and poverty
- Working on gender proofing policies, practice and interaction.
- Organising equality information workshops
- Running equality training and feeding into policy development from a feminist perspective
- Supporting women's voices to be heard in policy and decision making fora
- Supporting women's access to financial security.

NCCWN identifies that the issue of Violence against Women is a pervasive issue in society which affects women, families and the local community. We provide opportunities to raise awareness and support communities to participate and develop local responses. Elements of this work include:

- Provision by and/or support access to domestic violence information and support services
- Linking with Women's Aid or local domestic violence services in relation to referrals, outreach and training

- Providing information and literature on domestic violence
- Organising awareness raising campaigns on this issue
- Organising events including those to mark the 16 Days of Action Opposing Violence against Women
- Working with relevant organisations on the issue of trafficking of women
- Working on safety issues with women, safe homes, safe streets, and safe environments.

