

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



# 2014 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

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

**6. To be signed and dated by Chairperson.**

**Please insert here**



**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:**

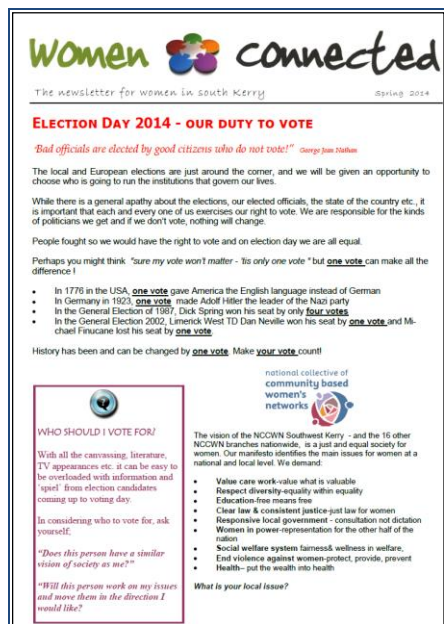
- The Women's Projects outreached to the most marginalised women in their areas and this resulted in 27,422 calls to women's Projects in 2014. The women were supported within the Projects or they were signposted to other services
- The Projects' are constantly updating and improving communications with women, local agencies and organisations occurred through methods outlined in the actions above and 12,891 newsletters were sent out to local communities from the Women's Projects in 2014
- 3596 women attended information days hosted by Women's Projects
- 6913 women were supported in accessing information
- 1972 referrals were made to other agencies/supports
- 1435 referrals received from other agencies/supports

***Qualitative examples are provided of the following Outcomes/ Impacts of Actions as outlined in 2014 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. 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.



## Newsletter for women

In recent years 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.

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.



Up-cycling in Leitrim



10 October 2014

**MINISTER 'Project can help empower women'**

**Women's group celebrates 30th anniversary**

**By Ian Buckley**

The co-ordinator of the project, Yvonne Gaudin, said the project has had a significant impact on those involved.

Over the past 30 years the project has developed from being a small women's group to becoming a community development group, incorporating the women's group programme of activities as one of its key areas of work.

The co-ordinator of the project, Yvonne Gaudin, said the project has had a significant impact on those involved.

Local women and Minister for Justice, Frances Fitzgerald, congratulated the women's group on its 30th anniversary.

Speaking from her own experiences, she explained how she became involved in politics through a similar group.

She said: "Women must also be empowered to take the first steps into public life creating a parliament and local councils better equipped to make decisions that reflect the needs and concerns of all citizens."

"This is where the value of organisations such as Ronanstown Women's CDP will really come in the form."

"We need more female representatives."

"We need the benefits of your experiences, your skills, your expertise."

**Caroline Nugent, Pádraig Flann, the Minister for Justice, Frances Fitzgerald, Yvonne Gaudin, Carol O'Shaughnessy, Rosamund Healy and Michelle Reynolds celebrate three decades of the women's group in Ronanstown**

### Celebrating 30 year Anniversary in Ronanstown

Throughout 2014, 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.

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.



**Breast Cancer Awareness**



**Craft Classes**

Projects worked collaboratively at local level to ensure access for disadvantaged women to community initiatives to impact positively on their lives. For example Limerick was Ireland's City of Culture 2014 and building on work carried out during 2013 our Limerick Project hosted information sessions on the City of Culture and worked with event organizers to ensure women from grassroots women's groups participated in events. The *Are You Dancing* project received funding from the City of Culture and was targeted at people from local communities who may not otherwise engage in cultural events. Women from all groups affiliated to the network were encouraged and supported to take part. The day was a huge success involving volunteers and organisations in the delivery.



**Are You Dancing?**

English language classes are run for women from new communities. 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 put together 'Remembering' an exhibition of personal items to remember the women and children who have died because of violence.



'Remembering' exhibition in Kerry

Clare project co-ordinator is chair of the Local Area Network addressing violence against women. In order to highlight the 16 Days of Action, the CLAN hosted the Mid-West launch of the SAFE Ireland, Man Up Campaign. It was launched in Ennis Library, by Senator Tony Mulcahy who shared his own personal experience of domestic violence, growing up. There were sixty people in attendance with at least ten members of the Garda in uniform and photographed by the Clare Champion with the Man Up t-shirts on.

Radio interviews were also done to promote and highlight the campaign.



Launch of 'Man Up' in Clare

In Waterford, as part of the Local Area Network on violence against women, funding was won 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 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. Projects are finding that statutory agencies such as the HSE, due to cutbacks in their own resources, are asking projects to 'fill the gaps' locally. Our Kerry project for example, continues to work with '**Bosom Buddies**' a group of women with mental illness, delivering craft classes and providing support. Social workers frequently refer women to projects – sometimes these are women from areas outside of the remit of the project e.g. Sligo women referred to our North Leitrim project illustrating the need in areas but lack of resources to expand our services.



***Members of 'Bosom Buddies' in Kerry with their craft work.***

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 counselling services, the Projects also provide a strong one-to-one support from their staff and volunteers.

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.
- Counselling for adults who were abused in childhood and counselling 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. EG

#### **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.
- 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 .

**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.**

**30,402 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 2014 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:**

- 3208 women participating in 437 informal courses
- 807 women participating in 72 accredited courses
- 2729 women attending 147 events held in relation to education, recreation and culture
- 210 childcare places were provided to support women to access education and training
- 511 women supported in identifying labour market routes

**Qualitative examples are provided of the following Outcomes/ Impacts of Actions as outlined in 2014 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

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 QQI components, Fetac modules in information technology, language and culture, retail sales, applied psychology and social studies. Non-accredited courses include craft courses, language classes, self-development, fitness and cookery.

Our Mullingar Project collaborated with other statutory providers to deliver thirty two Fetac accredited courses ranging from communications to child development, to care assisting.



Self-development course participants



Diploma graduates

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 and often the first step in this process is accessing information or joining a women's group. 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.

This type of work can act as a catalyst to further education and development opportunities

*Marie joined a new women's group. She lives alone and has struggled with issues of grief and isolation. She took part in the pre-development work, completing several courses with the network. As part of the Leadership training she agreed to take on a more active role with the group.*

*This involved taking on the role of liaison person between the group and the staff of the network, providing the group with details of upcoming events, campaigns and other relevant pieces of information and feeding back to project staff on issues such as recruitment of new members.*

*"The group helps me to get out and meet more people, I live on my own and it's a way of making sure I'm meeting people".*

*Although nervous at first about taking on the new role in the group she is now beginning to enjoy it. The benefits for her include increased assertiveness within her family and improved communication generally.*

*"I just say now, (to family) You use the car as much as me, so you need to pay for half of the repairs, or No, I can't babysit on Saturday, I will do it on Thursday instead. I wouldn't have done that before, I would have just kept quiet. "*

*In talking about further progression in the future;*

*"Hopefully I will take on new things, I would be very nervous of talking in front of strangers but maybe I could do it, I wouldn't have thought that before I joined this group"*

**Case study – Limerick Project**

*"When I started in the Women's Centre it was the first time in my life that I did any kind of course and I was so scared, but I needn't have been. I had isolated myself and doing a course would mean mixing with other people, which scared me, but the way the course was run took away all the fear. I often think of all the years I wasted not getting out of the house and doing something, and now thanks to this course I am already looking ahead because I have learned so much and I have already enrolled in a social care course*

**Case study - Participant in Waterford Project**

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 Roscommon our project trained its own staff to look after their own dedicated IT suite and delivered FETAC courses in Retail Sales and IT.

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.

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 whether they are working or participating in development courses.

Some of our Projects offer crèche, preschool and afterschool services. These childcare services are of immense support to women availing of education and training programmes within the service itself and also women who are participating other courses/training and part-time employment.

**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 fora

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

**6,964 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 2014 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:**

- 294 work placements supported
- 140 training courses were held
- 1567 women were trained or signposted to training
- 159 women supported into self-employment
- 2216 helped with CV preparation/mock interviews etc.

##### **Qualitative examples are provided of the following Outcomes/ Impacts of Actions as outlined in 2014 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. 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/Tus placements for marginalised women. 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) and through providing work experience and training in social enterprises such as Waterford's internal cafe and Roscommon's charity shop. Sometimes our training courses give women the confidence and courage to take advantage of the job opportunities that may come their way.

#### **Case study**

Referred Clare Women's Network by Clare Supported Employment, M is almost completely blind and had been in supported employment on a community radio station in a very isolated part of west Clare. The station which employs thirty people had been going through some difficulties at both an organizational and funding level. The woman shared with us that in her time in the radio station she had watched six male managers come and go. She said the Leadership Course gave her the courage to put herself forward and apply for the position of Manager of the Radio Station, her application was successful and she now oversees the entire station, staff and is getting it back on solid ground. She is doing so through a number of new initiatives including creating partners within the community. She has requested the Clare Women's Network to be a collaborator of the work carried out which is a great opportunity for CWN to highlight difficult and important issues in rural Clare and creates much more scope for us to liaise in rural areas.

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

#### **Provide details of areas where progress has not been made**

- Need to develop mechanism 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?**

**2216 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 2014 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:**

- 199 women on boards/committees
- 416 women attending community meetings
- 125 key planning and policy structures, networks and committees that contain women
- 172 women's groups directly supported

**Qualitative examples are provided of the following Outcomes/ Impacts of Actions as outlined in 2014 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 2014, the NCCWN continued to support the Women's Projects to absorb further cuts 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. Alignment and the restructuring of local government has meant changes in many of the areas in which we work, however some project staff have been elected onto the new Local Community Development Committee in their area.

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.

Our projects engaged with grass roots women on the upcoming local elections, offering voter training and developing a manifesto which women could use when talking to local political candidates.

Much of 2014 was spent lobbying against the threatened closure of our projects due to the end of the *Local Community Development Programme*. As a national organisation we were excluded from making an application to tender for the new *Social Inclusion Community*



*Activation Programme* – and as disadvantaged women were not named as a target group under SICAP there was no incentive for local partners to include NCCWN in their work. Each of our 17 projects lobbied tirelessly to maintain their services and funding, organising meetings with local TDs, senators and councillors. We gathered letters of support from the women using our projects and from our wider communities, had an online petition and made an Oireachtas presentation. We submitted numerous Parliamentary Questions to Minister Alan Kelly regarding the future of the NCCWN and the ring-fencing of funding for our organisation. At the present time we are in negotiations with the Department who have assured us they are working on finding a ‘workable solution’ for the NCCWN.



**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 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 measurable way, concrete qualitative and quantitative evidence that we are outreaching to women that statutory agencies are unable to engage. We need to develop mechanisms for accurately reflecting our work with women as the template requires
- NCCWN Projects continued to struggle to absorb cuts while still maintaining frontline services and supports at a severely reduced capacity. 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 continue to be 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?**

**1,638 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**