

## **Social analysis**

The growing prosperity in Ireland over the last decade has substantially reduced unemployment and enabled targets in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy to be achieved. But the rising tide has not lifted all boats. There is significant evidence of the concentration of poverty arising from life cycles involving failure at school, low self confidence, early school leaving for low paid jobs, long periods of unemployment through life, dependent on public support for housing and welfare supplements and pensions.

As highlighted in Map 1, disadvantage is largely concentrated on the urban centres and in the Slieve Ardagh area with isolated pockets of concentration in rural DEDs which have small towns.

In the process of preparing a County Social Strategy, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs provided DED based data on live register figures in Autumn 2000 (Map 6).

Social inclusion is not simply a challenge for specific geographical areas in South Tipperary with high concentrations of public housing. It is also a challenge facing specific target groups such as disabled, travellers, elderly, asylum seekers, those living in rural areas with no access to cars, etc.

Part of the Government's reason for establishing County Development Boards was to address the challenge of co-ordination of services at the point of delivery to citizens.

In preparing a Social Inclusion Statement, the Social Inclusion Advisory Group suggested one of these three options):

A/ The South Tipperary County Development Board, will enhance the quality of life for present and future generations, by facilitating and promoting actions and initiatives, which contribute to the nurturing and sustainment of an inclusive society, in which all will have the means and opportunities to participate in and contribute fully to their communities.

B/ The South Tipperary County Development Board, will enhance the quality of life for present and future generations, by maximizing the benefits from national, regional and local social inclusion programmes and initiatives, and by ensuring that the integration and customisation of services meets the needs of all in our community.

C/ The South Tipperary County Development Board will maximize the benefits to our community, from national regional and local inclusion programmes and initiatives, ensuring that the integration and customisation of services meets the needs of all in our society. The board will ensure that all in our community have access to education training and employment opportunities and have an adequate income. The needs of those who are homeless, discriminated against, who are disaffected, suffer from substance abuse and/or low confidence and self esteem, and the educationally disadvantaged will be catered for.

The purpose of the County Social Strategy is to add value to the relationship between the citizen and service provision (public, local development, community, etc). The County Strategy for Social Development must primarily address the challenge of integration where citizens are experiencing multiple forms of exclusion.

In assisting the preparation of a County Strategy, the Social Inclusion Advisory Working Group decided to segment social inclusion into manageable areas before integrating the issues arising from the segments so as to inform the Strategy for Social Development. The nine segments included (design – Figure 4):

- Housing
- Unemployment and social cohesion
- Transport

- Health
- Adequate family income
- Education
- Youth
- Childcare
- Community development.

There was considerable crossover in the issues arising within the nine segments. The following recommendations emerged from the Social Inclusion Advisory Working Group:

- ❖ Holistic and Humane approach to Service delivery: To effectively tackle social inclusion the client has to be fully accommodated. Within services there has to be the willingness and flexibility to cater for the individuals personal circumstances and needs. Services should be client focused providing tailored services from the cradle to the grave and must treat the client with dignity. Integrated services involving a number of agencies, but based in and led by communities, were seen as the option best likely to deliver this strategy.
- ❖ Support for Development of the Community and Voluntary Sector: Community and voluntary groups need the necessary training resources and supports to enable them participate as equal partners in the CDB process. The meeting of these needs by state agencies should not compromise the community and voluntary groups' representation of their clients.
- ❖ Employment: There is a need to match the economic needs of the county with the social needs. Employment is seen as a key tool in tackling exclusion and marginalisation. Better data is needed to determine the true extent of unemployment and to best target the resources needed to enable people access to jobs and the workplace.
- ❖ Better Communication and Information Systems for review and participation: To ensure the success of the CDB and the county strategy, clear measurable targets and objectives need to be set and regularly monitored. A definitive audit of community infrastructure and facilities needs to be carried out to determine the baseline from which the strategy will work. Clear areas of responsibility need to be agreed and a review of participation by the different agencies needs to be built into the process with no self evaluation.
- ❖ Boundaries inter-agency and geographic: There is a need for agencies to overcome individual remit/patch mentalities and to break down agency territorial barriers. Geographical boundaries also need to be tackled to better serve the disadvantaged in our communities. People often end up travelling long distances to access services in designated areas, when the same services are available more locally.
- ❖ Resources Maximised and Targeted: Resources should be targeted and allocated on a needs basis. Duplication to be avoided.
- ❖ Improved access to agencies and services: Facilitation of linkages, with good data available locally enabling people to avail of services and opportunities.

In linking the output of the Social Inclusion Advisory Group with that of other groups, the County Development Board identified eight strategic themes including: a social inclusion theme (based on holistic approaches to multiple disadvantage); and a family lifestyle theme (based on enhancing the quality of life of citizens. Following further consultations and analysis, the social dimensions of these and other themes were combined and are presented in

the Social Development Innovation Programme. The Innovation Programme incorporates a diverse range of strategic options.

**Option 1.** Vertical approach to dealing with families via agencies. Traditional approach, which works reasonably well when families have single issue, based needs (such as ill-health, housing, etc.).

**Option 2.** Gap approach. (This approach is in current vogue and is generally resourced by a single agency operating on its own). Provision of services is based on participation of target groups and/or families and/or communities. A partnership approach is used with the target group organisations (eg, Youth Services, Centres for Independent living). The participation of families is increased by improving their capacity based on role models (eg community mothers). Community based family support services are encouraged (eg community resource centres).

**Option 3.** Local Development Approach. (This is a minor variation of option 2 but builds on the partnership approach which enables agencies to pool resources and deliver family or community initiatives in a more structured way. A Local Development Company provides the technical support so that initiatives are integrated (with other initiatives and with the target communities)

**Option 4.** Horizontal approach in dealing inter-sectorally with families suffering multiple deprivation and social exclusion. (This policy has been successfully tested in the Integrated Services Process Projects).

**Option 5.** Target Group approach. Target ‘holistically’ priority sectors/sub-sectors (eg elderly, disabled, Travelling community, etc) in specific sub-county areas.

**Option 6.** South Tipperary/regional approach/County Tipperary to targeting specific issues. (eg. County Childcare Committee, South Tipperary/Kilkenny/Carlow rural transport group plan, regional drugs task force strategy, County Citizens Information Plan)

Measures have been developed on many of these strategic options and doable actions have been identified.