

## Social Development Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis

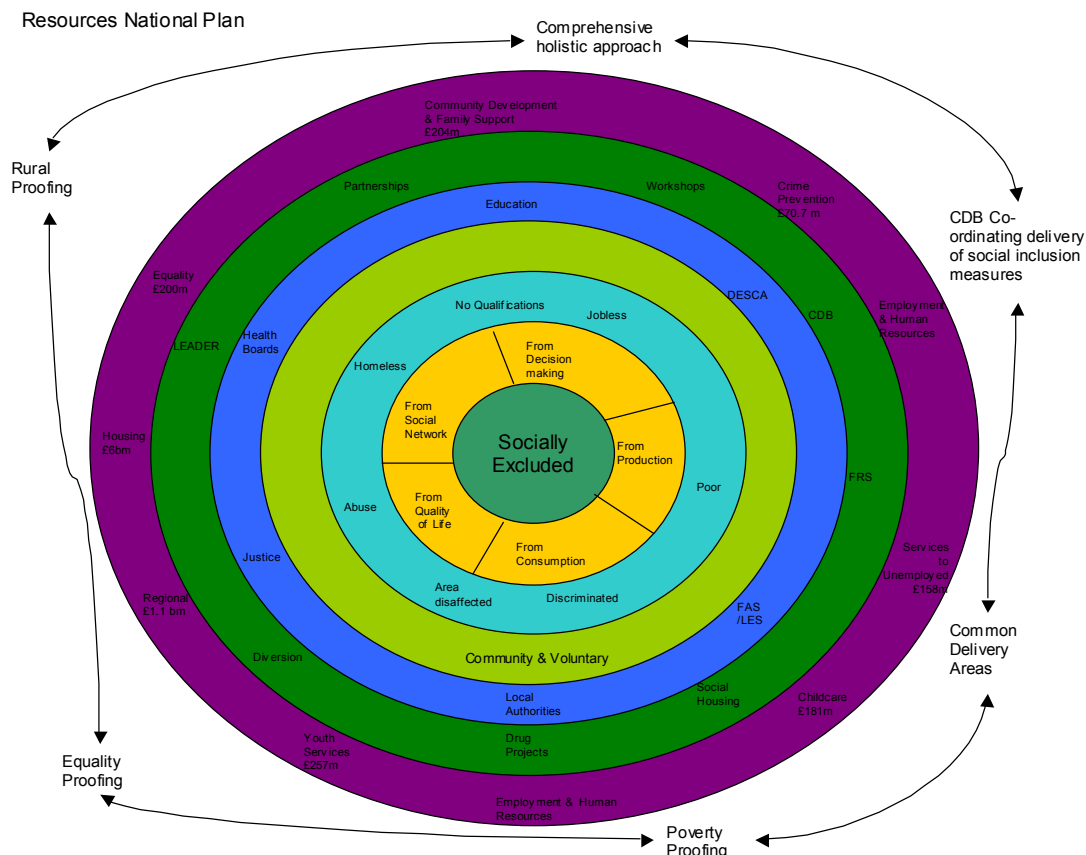
From a citizen perspective, the primary goals of social policy are to eliminate poverty and to create a secure and stable environment, which will enable members of the household to participate in economic, social and cultural activity and enjoy a good quality of life.

The socially excluded are defined in Partnership 2000 as those excluded from:

- **Production** (unemployed, those with no access to transport or child care, those without qualifications)
- **Consumption** (poor, those on low incomes)
- **A quality of life** (those without a home, those suffering from discrimination, those abusing substances)
- **Social networks** (those who are disaffected, those with low confidence and self esteem)
- **Decision-making** (those who are educationally disadvantaged).

Many people experience more than one type of exclusion. The most common feature of those socially excluded is that they will have left school early. Early school leavers are generally uncompetitive for jobs. Most early school leavers are faced with stark life choices. They remain unemployed or participate in employment schemes or take low paying jobs. Limited income also limits choices in terms of consumption and quality of life. The impact of limited income on self esteem and confidence limits engagements in social and community networks. Lack of confidence and self belief are inappropriate skills when it comes to influencing policies and decisions made outside the family home that impact of the lives of the socially excluded.

In Ireland, a large number of separate groups and specialist agencies deal with local development, physical planning, education, health, social services, industry, services and other sectors. These all report more or less 'vertically' to their parent Departments. The environment for a family experiencing a range of social exclusion is very complex as can be seen in Figure 2



The Government has supported a range of initiatives (many managed by the voluntary sector) to assist citizens in accessing information to deal with state services. The best known are the Citizens Information Centres (Clonmel CIC deals with 10,000 enquiries a year). These initiatives are additional to the information supports of the public bodies themselves. Map 3 highlights the distribution of the information supports/offices of key local bodies in South Tipperary.

International evidence shows the importance of the early years of life on the subsequent health, development and well being in childhood, adolescence and adult life. Research shows that early intervention services for children can produce a sustained improvement in children's health and education.

Investment in early intervention services for children and their families is an investment for health and economic development in the next generation

Reviews of strategies which have proven to be effective at improving the health of large numbers of children reveal that they target populations rather than individuals, have a high degree of community involvement, are broadly intersectoral and have a settings approach to the delivery of services.

The National Children's Strategy stated that the need for more community based play, leisure and cultural, opportunities were high on the list of issues raised by young people during their consultation process.

<b><u>Social strengths (+)</u></b>	<b><u>Social weaknesses (-)</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tradition of co-operation and voluntary endeavour in South Tipperary with strong networks in the community sector, disabled sector, etc</li> <li>• Significant public and voluntary sector investment in services and facilities</li> <li>• Friendliness and warmth of Tipperary people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High levels of unemployment in public housing estates</li> <li>• Insufficient integration among service providers in the county on most key social exclusion issues</li> <li>• No local Department of Education structure in which the issue of early school leaving can be seriously tackled</li> <li>• All parts of the County except Clonmel and Carrick on Suir excluded from the ADM Local development Programme</li> <li>• The potential of local Development companies (area based) is under-utilised in the County largely because they are delivering single theme programmes (LEADER, local development)</li> <li>• Uneven social and community infrastructure, community/youth centres, childcare, sports facilities etc.</li> <li>• Inadequate rural transport provision</li> <li>• Age profile of volunteers</li> </ul>
<b><u>Social opportunities (x)</u></b>	<b><u>i) Social threats</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional resource provision targeted at addressing blockages in the national Development Plan</li> <li>• Available labour force requiring a match with new jobs</li> <li>• Willingness of stakeholders to engage in integrated/holistic responses (eg County Childcare Committee)</li> <li>• Recognition of need to engage with more young people in the design/delivery of strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient consensus to target resources (both locally and nationally)</li> <li>• Insufficient acceptance of key socially excluded target groups among the wider community</li> <li>• Insufficient community acceptance of the social costs of alcohol abuse and accidents in order to change the culture of Irish society</li> <li>• Decline of volunteers</li> <li>• Decline of services to rural areas (if replacement jobs for losses in agriculture not found within short commuting time)</li> <li>• Lack of resources (addressing waste water and serviced land deficits) to attract private housing into town and village centres and help sustain services</li> </ul>