

‘Towards an Anti-Poverty Strategy for Clare’

Clare PPN published report - September 2022

National PPN Conference – Arklow 2023



**Coimisiún na hÉireann
um Chearta an Duine
agus Comhionannas**
Irish Human Rights and
Equality Commission

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Purpose of this workshop:

- To discuss a successful **collaborative** social inclusion project, led by Clare PPN member groups which helped to build the capacity of the PPN to influence policy at local and national levels.
- To discuss the background, funding, process and outcomes from the project in the hope that they can be useful to other PPNs.
- To discuss the remit and **power** of PPNs in regard to collective action.
- To answer any questions you might have and discuss any ideas or input from other groups.



Women's
Collective
Ireland
CLARE



CLARE
TRAVELLER
CDP



What motivated the project?

- At the outset of the Covid 19 Pandemic in Ireland groups in Clare including the PPN, Family Resource Centres, Clare Volunteer Centre and Clare Local Development Company came together to coordinate their responses to the new situation. Some of the immediate concerns were obviously for vulnerable people in the County.
- As we became part of the wider response in Clare our groups kept trying to raise the issues of poverty, isolation, institutional living, homelessness and food and fuel poverty etc. Invariably we were asked for **data** on these issues. We did not have this **data** and it appeared that actually no one did. Our organisations were aware from their work on the ground of people in such situations but in order to seek a policy or resource response we were being asked to provide evidence.



What motivated the project?


- This response mirrored some of the experiences our PPN groups and had already had in trying to influence policy- around issues to do with poverty; many key issues for our communities were designated 'national issues' and therefore removed off the table for discussion at local level.
- Our PPN secretariat decided to ascertain whether our social inclusion member groups had an interest in applying for a Human Rights and Equality Grant Fund from IHREC to do some research on poverty in Clare. (We are a CLG in our structure and so can apply for funding)
- Six organisations Clare PPN, Women's Collective Ireland Clare, Clare Immigrant Support Centre, Kilrush and Shannon Family Resource Centres, Clare Leader Forum DPO and later Clare Traveller CDP came on board to collaborate on the project which ended up being a participatory research project which aimed to begin the process of creating an anti-poverty strategy for Clare and to provide policy analysis and address the lack of data.



Step by Step:

- We put together a joint application for funding from IHREC which allowed Clare PPN to recruit a lead researcher, **Dr Conor McCabe** who commenced the work by compiling and presenting an ‘issues paper’ relating to Clare on Dec 10th 2021 at a webinar attended by policy makers and community groups.
- Following this Clare PPN staff recruited and trained **peer researchers** and Dr McCabe worked with them to develop a framework for consultation with groups effected by poverty in the county. Using the peer researchers a series of focus groups were held. Participants in these focus groups included Travellers, disabled people, women’s groups, LGBTQ+ people, older people’s groups, international protection applicants, carers and those experiencing homelessness as well as people from communities who experience socio economic or class-based exclusion.
- There were also a series of geographically based focus groups and one specifically for local Councillors.
- Following these focus groups – a detailed research phase including desktop & primary research and a series of more than 80 **parliamentary questions** to Ministers took place. ed were conducted to analyse the policy context of the issues raised in the focus groups and in an accompanying survey.

Step by Step:

- From the research, focus groups and policy analysis our researcher Dr McCabe compiled an extremely detailed report which you can read here [‘Towards an Anti-Poverty Strategy for Clare’ | Clare PPN](#)
- This report dealt with many of the issues from a structural and national level- the researcher worked back from the input from communities to find the policies which resulted in the outcomes they described.
- It demonstrated clearly that people’s socio –economic rights in Clare are unequally realised.
- **What next?** 

Getting the report noticed:

- ▶ We decided on a **national** launch in Buswells (beside Leinster House)
- ▶ The week the Dail returned from summer break
- ▶ We conducted a media campaign - press releases in advance to all national media outlets
- ▶ A press handout on the day for attendees
- ▶ We invited members of all parties and in particular Clare TDs and Senators
- ▶ IHREC helped us by sending the Chief Commissioner to launch the report.
- ▶ Received widespread national and local media coverage on radio, TV, Morning Ireland, news articles and reports and also commissioned opinion pieces. [Sarah Clancy: Government must invest in communities to build wealth \(irishtimes.com\)](https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/sarah-clancy-government-must-invest-in-communities-to-build-wealth-1.4585858)

Launch Day

This research was compiled into a ground-breaking report which was launched on September 20th 2022 in Buswells Hotel, Dublin by Sinead Gibney Chief Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and was also presented to Councillors and participants in Clare in webinars which took place on September 15th 2022.



Back home in Clare

- ▶ Councillors began to use the report's findings in their work and media
- ▶ Local media used the report when questioning visiting politicians (including the Taoiseach)
- ▶ Our council liaison organised a workshop on the report to which they invited members of their LCDC and Rural Development Forum and at which Dr Mc Cabe went through his findings.
- ▶ TDs raised the report in the Dail
- ▶ The report changed discussions regarding housing and vacancy in Clare, the provision of health services and also of poverty itself from something individual to something understood more structurally.

Some observations:

- ▶ Community groups are not obliged to work within or agree with government policies this gave our group freedom to come at this research with an open mind and agenda.
- ▶ If PPNs collaborate well internally they can build power to influence local agendas and they can do this within their local government remit or as we did here they can step past it to a national platform in order to influence the local.
- ▶ Using the democratic framework in a non party-political way should be a key tool for PPNs – for example the use of parliamentary questions in this project.
- ▶ Getting and maintaining accurate data is crucial for policy influence- PPNs are not really resourced for this and nor are Local Authorities.
- ▶ Socio –economic rights are a key lens for PPNs to use, they can help to reframe ‘scarcity’ politics which sees communities compete against each other.
- ▶ Independence of PPNs can be really valuable for local democracy

Observations 2

- ▶ Our project cost €17,000.
- ▶ We had no difficulty in securing participation – people really want to discuss these issues.
- ▶ Our researcher was highly skilled.
- ▶ Clare PPN staff supported the project throughout.
- ▶ Project has improved the status and reputation of Clare PPN- resulted in many invitations for us.
- ▶ Not everyone liked it/agreed with it.
- ▶ No challenges on the data, some on the analysis.
- ▶ There is more scope for PPNs to grow into these types of spaces but external resources are necessary for it
- ▶ Councillors felt themselves to also experience a lack of information and data.

What's next?

- Local Government, EU and National Election Cycles all forthcoming- we'll be able to use the research to help determine what we want from elected representatives.
- During the course of the project Clare County Council invited Clare PPN, the LCETB & Clare Local Development Company to join them in designing a project to be funded by Pobal/DRCD's Dormant Accounts Fund in relation to the participation of marginalised groups in the formation of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).
- On the basis of our work on this project we proposed that rather than targeting a particular marginalised group, we would instead seek to ensure that the plan enshrined socio economic rights and just transition within it. This project is nearly complete and we expect to both to see the results enshrined in the LECP and to produce a report building forward with suggestions around just transition and socio-economic rights in Clare in the next month.



**Questions?
Discussion?
Debate?**

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