

Finding our Voice....
Women As Leaders in Equality
Programme 2005 – 2007



Final Report
July 2007

Cáirde
Challenging ethnic minority health inequalities





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About Cairde

Cairde is a community development organisation working to tackle health inequalities among ethnic minority communities by improving ethnic minority access to health services and by building participation in health planning and delivery. Cairde's aim is to build the capacity of minority ethnic groups to act collectively in identifying the health and well-being concerns of their communities and engaging with statutory service providers and planners so that genuine processes of consultation and participation are initiated between ethnic minority communities and the policy system. Cairde provides a range of supports to individuals through its drop-in health information and advocacy centre, provides capacity-building and development supports to more than 20 ethnic minority led organizations, 10 ethnic minority women's groups and facilitates the Ethnic Minority Health Forum.



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About LYCS

Lourdes Youth and Community Services (LYCS) was established in 1984 and is an integrated community based education, training and development project which is concerned with giving participants of all ages the opportunity to become involved in their own development and development of the community and their country. LYCS is based in Dublin's North East Inner City and services the ICON designated area between O'Connell St., Dorset St., Ballybough, Amien St., and the River Liffey. LYCS provides training and education and social programmes for over 300 people each week through it's four areas of work: Adult Education Programme, Community Training Centre, Youth Programme and Childcare Programme. The Adult Education Programme provides informal and formal training and education in literacy, personal development, crafts and social analysis for over 100 men and women each week, most of whom have little or no history of formal education.

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Introduction

This poster publication is a tool-kit description of the Women As Leaders in Equality programme implemented by Cairde and Lourdes Youth and Community Services (LYCS), funded under the RAPID Strand of the Equality for Women measure, delivered through Pobal on behalf of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, from 2005 to 2007. It is written merely to set out what we did, and how we did it with the sole purpose of assisting others who may wish to carry out a similar programme elsewhere.

Other publications relating to this programme are:

- “Women As Leaders in Equality – Our Story”, March 2007 – a publication written by the women participating in the programme;
- “Women As Leaders in Equality Programme Evaluation”, March 2007 – an external evaluation of the programme undertaken from January to March 2007 by Niamh Gaynor.

Rationale

Dublin’s North East inner city covers an area of approximately 6.38 square kilometres. It is highly urbanised area that experiences extreme levels of disadvantage, exclusion, poverty, early-school-leaving, drug and alcohol abuse, lack of age-appropriate facilities, poor literacy levels, poor take-up of formal educational opportunities, high unemployment, crime and teenage pregnancy.

On a daily basis Cairde engages with minority ethnic women who experience poor access to housing, little or no access to information about services, poor access to education and training opportunities, language and cultural barriers to accessing services, poor mental health, parenting alone, daily experiences of racism and discrimination, and poverty.

LYCS’ daily experience confirms the reality of significant poverty and inequality among women. Additionally, women are often heads of household and they experience these issues while struggling to get a basic education through courses such as reading, writing and spelling, computer courses, personal development and other social skills such as assertiveness courses, cookery and pottery.

Within this context of high socio-economic disadvantage and poor community relations, Cairde and LYCS identified a need to develop a leadership programme for minority ethnic women and the Irish women in the North East inner city. There was a need for flexible and supported training which leads to a recognised qualification, and which would equip women with community development skills, an understanding of citizenship and governance, and anti-racism skills to take a lead role in addressing the inequalities experienced by minority ethnic women and Irish women. Cairde and LYCS believed that with appropriate training and support, women would be potential leaders within the community to lobby for social change at community level, potentially participating in local community fora and engaging with statutory service providers, thereby increasing community resources to address community issues.

The Model

We implemented a model of delivering community based education working across different cultures with women experiencing significant disadvantage. The key components of this model were as follows:

- We specifically targeted women experiencing disadvantage – this led to specifically taking into account the barriers to formal education and securing resources to address these barriers. It meant adopting different relationships with participants to ensure their ongoing participation, and developing a flexible approach to respond to the changing needs of women throughout the delivery of the programme.
- We provided intensive supports which facilitate women’s participation – this meant securing adequate resources to cover childcare costs, transport costs, provision of appropriate snacks and lunch etc. It meant providing these resources in a manner which meets the needs of participants, e.g. recognising informal family arrangements in terms of childcare. It meant providing language and literacy supports to women, which can be provided outside of the normal “class” time. It also meant developing trusting relationships with participants to enable them to confide in programme organisers if personal issues are preventing them from attending. These trusting relationships enabled programme organisers to support participants to resolve personal crises thereby supporting their ongoing participation in the programme.
- We developed an appropriate learning environment and learning tools – this recognized the fears of participants returning to education. Creative methodologies and learning tools were developed which recognized the life experience of participants, and used this to enhance their analysis and learning. Programme organisers moved into the role of facilitator, rather than teacher or tutor.
- We operated from a community development perspective – this meant adopting appropriate working methods and working principles among programme organisers which ensured that the empowerment of participants remained at the core of the programme.
- We had organisational capacity to adapt programme - in order to respond to women’s needs and ensure women’s ongoing development, we had to change the programme in the implementation phase in order to respond to both collective and individual needs which emerged within the programme. Programme organisers must have the capacity to assert this as an appropriate action with funding agencies.
- We had effective programme development and delivery – this meant investing time in good planning, needs-based programme development, skilled facilitation and ongoing review.
- We connected with local policy-influencing arenas – programme organisers linked participants with local structures which have a role in addressing issues which emerged, so that in the longer term women are supported to influence change in their life circumstances. This activism must be supported by programme organisers.

The Programme

Brief Outline

The Programme was a two-year programme comprised of 31 women; 16 minority ethnic women and 15 women from the North East inner city. The first year focused on building capacity of women by delivering FETAC accredited training. The second year focused on supporting the women to take action in highlighting issues of concern to women.

Aims & Objectives of the Programme

The overall aim was to develop the leadership capacity of minority ethnic women and women from the North East Inner City. The objectives set out were:

- To equip minority ethnic women and Irish women with knowledge and skills for effective leadership to address interconnected issues of poverty, social exclusion and racism in the North East Inner City.
- To improve employment prospects of minority ethnic women and Irish women by delivering a flexible training programme with FETAC accredited national awards.
- To raise the profile of the interconnected issues of poverty, social exclusion and racism within the community and develop appropriate local responses.
- To improve the capacity of ethnic minority women and Irish women to be a resource to the North East Inner City by becoming leaders in addressing racism and accommodating diversity.

Programme Design

Year 1 (November 2005 – June 2006): Training

In Year 1, the groups trained separately, responding to the different needs as identified by the two organisations. Cairde participants completed training in Community Development and Leadership, facilitated by CAN in partnership with Cairde. The training comprised four FETAC Level 5 modules: *Understanding Community Development*; *Group Work*; *Social Analysis*; and *Management Committee Skills*. LYCS participants completed training in Development Education, facilitated by an LYCS Development Education Local Worker, who designed the module completed. The training comprised a FETAC Level 4 module *Global and Local Development Awareness*.

Year 2 (September 2006 – March 2007): Action

In Year 2, participants worked together as one group. With a facilitator from CAFTA and an arts facilitator, the women worked to identify issues of common concern upon which they would like to act - the women prioritised the issues of inequality, health and education. Participants worked towards hosting a seminar in mid March at which they would set out their agenda for change. Through joint working, participants developed materials in visual form for presentation at the event; and also developed a publication setting out their experiences of working together and sharing their experiences of inequality. The event was attended by participants' families, members of their local communities, local community organisations, service providers, the media, and President Mary McAleese. Participants presented their work and the event received significant press coverage with participants being interviewed on RTE's *Nine O'Clock News*, *Today with Pat Kenny*, Independent News Network and articles in the Irish Independent and Evening Herald and photograph in the Northside People.

Methodology

The methodology employed in the training sought to validate the knowledge of participants. It was underpinned by the principles of: participation, problem-posing, use of different tools of analysis, recognition of different forms of oppression and a belief in action for change. CAN,

LYCS, and CAFTA have particular expertise in using creative methodologies (video, artwork, story-telling, poetry, dance, song, photos etc.) in a manner which drew on participants wider skills. The use of experiential learning techniques as tools to capture learning and to deliver theoretical inputs moved significantly away from traditional academic approaches. The additional use of an artist in Year 2 further enhanced this approach.

Practical Arrangements

In the first year, the training was delivered one day per week at each location from November 2005 to May 2006. In the morning sessions, facilitators focused on the content of the FETAC modules. In the afternoon sessions, workshops were designed by the Project Co-ordinator and other Cairde and LYCS staff to link the morning theory to practice. This included external inputs, guest speakers, check-in sessions, assignment support, language support, and was flexible enough to respond to issues as they emerged from the participants. In the second year, the women worked together one day per week in a new venue called the Lab which was welcomed by all participants. The CAFTA facilitator worked with the group all day, and additional creative methodologies were employed through work with a visual arts worker who assisted the facilitator in drawing out the themes.

Inequality

“We are aware that it’s out there (discrimination). Just because you can (discriminate) doesn’t mean you do it.”

“We all have the possibility to discriminate inside us. But now we are more aware of discrimination, we realise that people are not so different.”

“In Somalia, the poor people are not bad. You put good things into their heads when you raise them. You might raise them poorly but with morals. Poor people are not bad people”.

“We can’t go home right now. When there is war, you can’t take your house with you. You just have to go. A house is no good to you then. They say when the war is over, they will give us back our land in Somalia. Then we can go home at New Year and celebrate Eid.”

Structures of the Programme

Partnership

The programme was a partnership between Cairde and LYCS. Both organisations come from a community development ethos and view community based training as a tool for social change. This allowed a successful working partnership to develop and ensured that all aspects of the programme were consistent with a community development approach. The planning of the programme was done collaboratively and regular meetings were held to ensure good communication and consistency in approach, grounded in responding to the needs of women.

The programme was a partnership between Irish women and minority ethnic women, responding to the changing demographics of the North East Inner City and the difficulties this has presented. In Year 1, the two groups of women trained separately to allow the groups to explore issues of concern to them. For most, it was the first opportunity to articulate their views on issues affecting them. A safe trusting environment was created within both groups. Through this process issues specific to the two groups were identified. Towards the end of Year 1 (May 2006), participants from both groups met for the first time by participating together in a workshop on women's human rights. The workshop highlighted the common experiences of inequality as experienced by both groups of women using human rights legislation as a tool in tackling women's inequality. The workshop was facilitated by the Women's Human Rights Alliance. In Year 2, the groups worked together allowing women to develop real collaborative relationships thereby breaking down barriers and learn more about their common experiences as women.

Management

Cáirde was the lead agency on the project, with LYCS as a partner. Cairde was responsible for the overall implementation of the project, the financial management of the project, the employment of the project co-ordinator and reporting to and liaising with Pobal. A project management team was established which comprised the Senior Project Manager of Cáirde, the Manager of the LYCS Adult Education Programme, and the Project Coordinator. The Project Co-ordinator was employed by Cairde; was based three days per week in Cairde and two days per week in LYCS. The project management team met monthly to review all aspects of the programme.

Advisory Group

The role of the advisory group was to provide guidance and support for the project and link issues emerging to relevant policy fora. The advisory group comprised:

- Cáirde
- LYCS
- City Wide Drugs Crisis Campaign
- National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism
- Banúlacht
- AkiDwa
- CAN
- Dublin Inner City Partnership
- 2 rolling representatives from the minority ethnic women
- 2 rolling representatives from the women from North inner city
- guest attendance of the DJELR Gender Equality Unit

Connecting with Community

A strategy was put in place to ensure women were connected with local groups and fora. Speakers were invited from different community or policy oriented groups, such as AkiDwa,

National Women's Council of Ireland, Migrants Rights Centre, Cairde, LYCS, Sunflower Recycling Project, Participation and Practice of Rights Project, New Communities Partnership among others. Participants also attended events and seminars to increase their awareness of the activities of other groups, such as a play about Rwanda, a field visit to An Cosán community project in Tallaght, attendance at Banúlacht conference to mark International Women's Day.

In addition to the Project Co-ordinator, Cairde's Women's Health Development Worker and LYCS' Community Integration Worker were assigned to the programme to provide individual support to the women. This support included linking women to community development activities at a community level. Cairde participants attended meetings of the New Communities Partnership and the Ethnic Minority Health Forum, and were involved in the development of the HSE National Intercultural Health Strategy. LYCS participants linked with the Local Drugs Task Force, LYCS AEP Advisory Committee, were active in lobbying for speed ramps outside a local school, and some provided literacy tutoring to women with reading difficulties.

Internal Review

Two formal internal review sessions were facilitated by an external facilitator at the end of the Year 1, and at the end of Year 2. At the end of Year 1 this allowed for flexibility to respond to the needs of women; and the programme was amended, changed or adapted to address issues as they emerged. At the end of the Programme it allowed for reflection on lessons learned. All those involved in the delivery of the programme participated in the internal review sessions.

External Evaluation

In January 2007, an external evaluator was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the programme. In February 2007, the evaluator interviewed programme participants, programme staff, programme tutors and members of the Advisory Group; and presented the report to Cairde and LYCS in mid March 2007. The external evaluation is available as a separate publication.

What I like about being a Woman

"...is having kids, being a mother."

"...Getting dickered up to go out, getting my hair done."

"I like being a mother. Playing the role of being a mother, I like the way the kids look up to me, I am important in somebody's life."

Globalisation

"We killed various myths about transmission of HIV. We learned how women are treated in different countries. We also learned about how the sex trade and the politics around it, how women are forced to come here to work in Dublin brothels and in other countries."

Development in the North East Inner City Community

"The central point to our community is the children. If the children grow up happy then the community will grow up happy."

"In the 80's when the drugs first come into this community, there was huge unemployment. People felt there was no future. Then Firestation came along and people began to educate themselves and felt that there was hope."

The Participants

Participant Recruitment

Cairde developed an information leaflet and an expression of interest form. In particular, Cairde targeted women who were active in existing ethnic minority women's groups and provided support to complete the expression of interest form. Information was distributed to wider ethnic minority community groups to target their women members. Once the Project Co-ordinator was recruited, an information session was organised where programme facilitators from CAN set out the programme content for women. 30 expression of interest forms were completed and all were invited to meet with Cairde and CAN to discuss their interest further.

LYCS advertised the programme through local community development organisations in the North East Inner City area; and in particular LYCS approached women who had been involved in previous training programmes in the centre already. Once the Project Co-ordinator was recruited, information was distributed again. The Project Co-ordinator attended LYCS' annual open day in September which sets out LYCS training for the year. She was able to meet with women and discuss the programme with them. In addition, she went to meet women individually through local networks.

All applicants were interviewed for the programme in October 2005. In particular, programme organizers were looking for women who were either involved in community groups, or were interested in working within their community. 31 participants were selected: 16 minority ethnic women from Nigeria, Russian, South Africa, Libya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Cameroon, Nigeria, Romania, Morocco and Ukraine; and 15 women from the North East inner city. The women from the North inner city shared similar socio-economic backgrounds and experiences, while the minority ethnic women comprised a very diverse group of women, and there was a varying degree of English among participants.

Support for Participants

Some supports were provided directly to the participants, and other supports were factored into the programme; as follows:

- *Daily support:* The project co-ordinator provided daily and weekly support to individuals on an ongoing basis and in crises during the year, of which there were many personal and confidential issues. She checked in with participants weekly by phone.
- *Individual support:* In addition to the support set out above, Cairde's Women's Health Development Worker and LYCS' Community Integration Worker were also specifically assigned to the programme to provide ongoing individual support to the women to support them to address issues which arose for them during the programme. The types of issues which arose reflected the inequality they experienced on a daily basis and included accommodation problems, family conflict, financial difficulties, immigration insecurity, childcare difficulties, literacy and language difficulties, assignment concerns, lack of confidence and low self esteem, difficulties adjusting to learning, schools issues etc.
- *Childcare:* Where possible costs were provided towards the cost of childcare. The Project Co-ordinator sourced places for the women in various crèches nearby.
- *Transport:* Where applicable costs were provided towards the cost of transport.
- *Food:* Lunch was provided at the venues, taking into account the dietary needs (e.g. halal) and wants of the participants. In the first year snacks were made available at mid morning and appropriate lunches were provided for each of the groups in their respective venues with the support of other workers from LYCS and Cairde.

- *Language and literacy support:* Participants who were learning English were supported to work with those who shared a language; and for assignments, participants were encouraged to prepare their work in their preferred language, and were provided with translation afterwards to ensure their learning was captured rather than lost in poor English. In terms of literacy, a high level of support was provided for assignments in that tutors worked with participants and FETAC to produce more creative forms for participants' knowledge to be presented. FETAC proved quite flexible in this. One participant attended an Intensive Literacy Course with Larkin Reading and Writing Scheme. She also had one to one classes with a volunteer through LYCS.
- *Co-ordination:* Joint planning and review sessions were held weekly between programme co-ordinators and facilitators to review individuals' participation and progression, and to identify emerging issues which may need to be addressed. The management team met monthly to discuss programme implementation on an ongoing basis in terms of responding to the needs of women.
- *External Inputs:* External inputs were arranged to link participants to service providers and community organisations to increase their awareness of the sector; these included AkiDwA, the Migrant Rights Centre, the National Women's Council of Ireland, The Sunflower Recycling Project, the Participation and Practice of Rights Project, attending a play about Rwanda with Calypso, and visiting An Cosán, a community development project in Tallaght, meeting the Director of Women's Health at the Irish College of GPs as a response to a letter sent from the Irish women on health care provision for women in Dublin's North East Inner City.

Different Styles of Management in Community Groups

"The human takes something from every animal. There is an animal in all of us."

"A fox will look for its own needs. She will try and win as much as she can for her family. I think that it is good to have a fox-like character in every group. They can negotiate very well."

"I love January as I can wake up and have no list in my head."

"I enjoyed the visit to the theatre. That play stuck with me and the young Rwandan refugee girl's loneliness in London. We often assume that people have come to Ireland to take advantage. A play can make you look close at things. It can make you examine your views and the stereotypes that you buy into."

"In my country (South Africa), you rarely see the rich man going to prison. He has enough money to pay his way out. But the poor man does not have the money to pay the right person. May be it is the same here."

Violence Against Women

"I know a woman who was afraid to put a key in the lock of her house. She didn't know what was ahead of her."

"Before women in Ireland would say...he didn't do it to me. They'd say that they had fallen down the stairs. The silence is gone out of it, now."

Successes

Participants

16 women from minority ethnic communities and 15 women from Dublin's North East Inner City started the programme. Despite the difficulties in their lives, they came into the programme with open minds, willing to learn, share and experience something new together. They gave each other support, energy and respect which enabled women to take risks and engage with the programme. Feedback from participants indicated that they enjoyed the programme and felt it impacted on their lives in a significant way. Participants' views of themselves include the following:

- Have become less judgmental
- Have developed improved listening skills
- Have increased knowledge and understanding of culture
- Have an increased awareness of news media
- Can better analyse media representations
- Feel more assertive
- Have increased knowledge of rights and entitlements
- Are more actively involved in lobbying locally
- Feel better equipped to work in their own groups
- Feel more confident
- Know more about status and rights of immigrants
- Have greater understanding of the similarities in issues facing them despite their significant cultural differences.
- Are engaging in new conversations with friends and family around them

Adapting the Programme When Required

From the outset, issues in women's lives impacted on the delivery of the programme. These included poverty, low self esteem, low level of English, poor literacy skills, distance from formal training, difficulty adapting to creative learning tools, violence, lack of affordable childcare, lack of family/social support networks, and a range of other issues and crises which affected the women throughout the programme. Changes were made to the original project outline in order to respond to needs as they arose, thereby ensuring women could continue. Three examples are set out below.

Time

- Many of the women indicated at the start that more than one day per week would not be possible, due to family commitments. Therefore, the FETAC training in Year 1 was prioritised, and so a work placement aspect of the programme was not implemented. Instead, community workers and activists from local community development projects, networks and groups were invited to give inputs to the groups increase awareness of the activities of other projects in the local community.
- It had been intended that participants complete some course work outside the time allocated to attending the training itself. This had originally included two residential weekends. However, participants were unable to find time outside the actual "class" time to complete assignments or further research, again due to family commitments. Therefore, amendments had to be made so that all work related to the programme took place within that one day per week period. This impacted on the pace of delivering the FETAC modules, with the Cairde group completing fewer modules than had originally been anticipated.

Language

Literacy and English language difficulties presented themselves early on in the programme, and so creative tools were used to accommodate difficulties.

Accredited Training

From the outset, the potential of accredited training was very attractive to both minority ethnic women and Irish women. However, the completion of accredited training proved exceptionally difficult for some participants. Due to time constraints on the participants, many women were not in a position to carry out work or research outside the “class” time. For those far removed from formal training, the reality of completing assignments caused significant stress and anxiety. Early in Year 1, it became the priority to “get the assignment done”, often at the expense of digesting the learning. This was causing stress and anxiety, and attendance was beginning to be sporadic. A discussion was facilitated with participants to address the issue. It was agreed that the most important aspect of the programme for participants was to improve their knowledge and understanding of community development and social analysis. It was agreed that those who wanted to submit for FETAC accreditation would be facilitated to do so and given all the necessary supports; and that those who did not want to complete assignments, could make that decision for themselves. The impact of this was that stress and anxiety was reduced, attendance returned to nearly full attendance, women were free to engage in the learning process without the fear of assignments or accreditation and ultimately fewer modules than originally intended were completed by the Cairde group.

Facilitation of women’s progression

The programme successfully provided participants with progression in terms of learning, personal development, access to further education and increased community activism. They have developed new skills and challenged their own attitudes. Women were supported to link into a variety of local decision-making fora, and women have developed an interest and understanding of how participating in such fora can contribute to change. With ongoing support, women are now in a position to further their participation in structures at a local level.

Learning Environment and Tools

Feedback from participants indicates that the methodologies adopted were a significant factor in supporting them to participate in the programme. Significant barriers were overcome in facilitating participation; creative methods introduced, explored, adopted, refined and reviewed enabling participants to discover their own knowledge and learning and contribute this to the wider group.

Supports

Considerable supports were put in place which enabled participants to continue with the programme. Supports ranged from financial contributions to childcare, transport, food etc. to emotional and personal support with daily issues. These were enabling factors as identified by women which meant they could stay in the programme.

Partnership and Collaboration

All organisations involved in the project operate from a community development perspective which led to a good working partnership. This contributed to smooth management, ongoing review and the successful implementation of the project. Issues which arose in implementation were responded to effectively and the similar ethos of the organisations meant that the central goal of empowering women remained at the core of the project.

Working with Difference and Disadvantage

This was not a homogenous group, in that there were differences in experiences between the Irish women and the minority ethnic women, and also differences in experiences among the minority ethnic women. Participants (Irish and minority ethnic women) came from different educational backgrounds; different socio-economic backgrounds; different nationalities; different religious and ethnic groups; different languages; some from different parts of the city; spoke different languages and came from communities with different gender roles for women. In addition to diversity within the group, the women lived with poverty and inequality in their day to day lives. Unemployment, poor or insecure accommodation, racism, discrimination, uncertainty about immigration status, money problems, family conflict, childcare difficulties, and stress were ongoing and unrelenting for the women throughout the two years. These pressures made it an ongoing challenge for women to commit to the programme. Through good planning, needs-based programme development, skilled facilitation, provision of appropriate supports, the development of appropriate working methods and working principles, and ongoing review with a capacity to be flexible, the programme was able to work effectively with the group and meet the needs of such a diverse group of women.

High level of media coverage of the event organised by women

Women organised an event in the local community on March 12th to highlight the issues affecting them. They identified health, education and inequality as the three core issues affecting them. President Mary McAleese attended the event. Five of the women were interviewed on radio, television and news papers. The event was featured on Today with Pat Kenny, RTE's Nine O'Clock News, Irish Independent, and local radio station through Independent Network News.

Gender Roles

“Women are less valued. You are housewife...a woman who is not intelligent enough to get a job. You are labelled.”

“As a woman, you can feel less valued, pigeon-holed, seen as not intelligent enough to do other jobs.”

“Women’s role in Ireland is undervalued. They have a lack of confidence, lower self esteem. Yet we keep on doing the work day in day out and because you are not getting recognition for it, you feel tired and taken for granted.”

“It all goes to growing up...making the husband a cup of tea, cleaning up the house, tidying their rooms and getting the boys clothes ready. So the boys learn when they are young that women do the work and dad is the power.”

“Men get acknowledged for their work, they have roles with nice names. Like the head of the family is always a male yet women do the cooking, listening, planning, budgeting, saving, feeding and educating in the family.”

Challenges

Responding to Participants' Needs

Individual Support: Given the level of support required and the complexity of individual experience, it was an ongoing challenge to provide adequate and appropriate support to women in the programme. It was not funded within the programme grant and additional staff resources had to be committed by both organisations in order to ensure the support needs of women were being met.

Childcare: Childcare funds did not cover the full costs incurred by women, nor did the funding arrangements acknowledge the informal arrangements that participants had with family and friends. This made finding suitable and affordable childcare arrangements particularly difficult.

Mentoring: The programme had hoped to identify mentors at a local level to support the women on an ongoing basis in terms of their ongoing progression. This was not possible and was a loss to the programme.

Working with Difference: Participants had different educational backgrounds with a hugely varied experience of education. The group was also a very diverse group as set out above. Facilitators endeavoured to meet the needs of all participants, which was an ongoing challenge.

Joint working: The groups worked separately in Year 1 focusing on different FETAC modules. For a variety of reasons, including time and group development, the two groups met for the first time towards the end of the first year facilitating a joint workshop on women's human rights. The groups then came together as one group for the activities in the second year. Programme organisers suggest that it *may* have been worthwhile to bring the two groups together earlier in the programme.

Accreditation: Providing an opportunity for accreditation changes the dynamic of a learning space, both positively and negatively. For some, accreditation provides an opportunity to have their work recognised. For others, it is a barrier in their first step back into education. Managing participants' anxieties and expectations was an ongoing element of the programme, and programme organisers had to maintain a significant degree of flexibility in order to meet participants' individual needs and wants.

Evaluation

Completing an external evaluation at the final stages of the programme didn't provide programme organisers with a degree of in-depth learning and analysis about implementing a programme of this nature. This was a missed opportunity. Evaluation should be used as a tool for learning. Programme organisers feel the evaluation should have commenced at the beginning of the programme, and should have been underpinned by a community development perspective.

Pobal

Our interaction with Pobal posed some challenges.

- In the first instance the announcement of funded projects was delayed by a number of months in 2005, and this delay could not be rectified in the training calendar. This was a major source disappointment for programme organisers and made it a particular challenge to achieve all of the objectives of the programme in a significantly reduced training time period.
- The relationship with Pobal was primarily an administrative one in terms of financial monitoring, rather than policy development and support. We understood our role as local partners of Pobal in working towards achieving the goals of the equality for women measure. However, our relationship with Pobal was merely that of recipient of a grant. This would not be the norm with other agencies funding our work, with whom we engage in policy development and partnership working. Cairde and LYCS would have welcomed Pobal to be more active in networking among funded projects designed in a way which enables projects all over the country to contribute to uncovering the barriers facing

women, share our learning and contribute to developing national responses to these local experiences on an ongoing basis throughout the programme.

Structures

Advisory Group: The role of the advisory group was to advise on policy issues emerging from the project and identify appropriate policy influencing arenas, locally and nationally. However, in implementing the project, programme organisers did not prioritise this aspect of the programme enough, and we recognise how valuable it could have been to benefit from the networks, analysis and expertise of the advisory group, and an opportunity was missed.

Participating in Leadership Training

“Sometimes I went home with the headache from the learning.”

“I find it very difficult with the language.”

“I tell myself everyday that I can do it. I will do it. I will do the programme.”

“It is 11 since I have been in education. I haven’t thought with my head for a long time. Some people with more knowledge (than me) in the programme pull me up. The group helped me a lot.”

“It is interesting to see how much information everybody has. The course helps to extract the information from everybody’s head.”

“I don’t know where the course is taking me, I don’t know if I will get a job or go onto further education. I’m still climbing.”

Meeting each other for the First Time

“It was exciting as we had learnt about the other group for seven months and then we finally met them. At the beginning, it felt a little strange as it was also difficult to remember all the new sounding names. We were not used to these names I did not feel any racism or difference. I felt safe and welcome and happy. I felt comfortable and close. They understood our problems.”

“I learnt that the other group had the same issues and feeling as us i.e. childcare, violence, accommodation, employment, poverty, husbands, even dieting.”

“There was a feeling of coming together but also not knowing what to expect. Would we be able to understand each other?”

Outcomes

- Of the 31 women who started the programme in October 2005, 22 women received FETAC certification. 11 minority ethnic women received an Irish recognised certificate which will improve their level of integration in terms of employment prospects and their involvement in local community activism. 11 Irish women received certification in Local and Global Awareness and this will facilitate greater understanding of the demographic changes they are experiencing in their own community.
- 15 participants completed the programme to March 2007 and are continuing in a follow-up policy project in the local community focusing on health and education from September to December 2007. Of the 14 who left the programme before it ended, 5 women left to pursue further education; 3 women left to take up employment; 2 women had babies; 4 women felt they could not continue because of difficulties in their circumstances.
- There is increased awareness of issues affecting Irish women and minority ethnic women at local community level due to public event on March 12th 2007 targeting other local community organisations and state agencies, and this has developed momentum from which to build future partnerships with local agencies on the issues of health, education and inequality.
- There is increased women's participation in local structures such as ICON Health Action Forum, Ethnic Minority Health Forum, New Communities Partnership, LYCS AEP Advisory Group, and this will increase the profile of women's issues in policy influencing arenas.
- Additional resources have been secured to support further work on health and education with the women. This will allow for further links be made with local organisations and state agencies in these areas. Both organisations have incorporated the issues into their own policy agenda and both organisations continue to work with the women in terms of their own progression routes, paying particular attention to supporting women to link with local decision-making structures.

Collective Action

“In Somalia, if you shout alone it stays in the house, if it's in the neighbourhood everybody hears you. It is important for everybody to hear the problem.”

“I have learned how to listen. Before I listened to people that I found interesting only. Now I realise that you need to listen to something if you agree with it or don't. You must listen to all sides.”

Power

“When you think of power, there is good and bad. Someone always has to be the underdog. Power is never balanced.”

“Power can depend on the side of the table you sit on. Sometimes you feel deflated going into Dublin City Council to talk about your home because they have all power.”



National Development Plan 2007 - 2013



AN BOIOLA Dlí AGUS Síol' COMHIONANNAS AGUS AINCHÓIBLÍHE Dlí
DEPARTEMENT OF JUSTICE' ÉÓLÓGÍLLA AID G'W. BEFOKW

