

INVOLVE

**A PROJECT PROMOTING
WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION
IN DECISION-MAKING IN
BLANCHARDSTOWN**

FINAL REPORT & EVALUATION

Sharon Foley

May 2007



Promoting opportunity & influencing decision-making

Supported by Blanchardstown Area Partnership

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“Women are still marginalised in public and political life. Fewer than 6 per cent of civil servants at secretary general level are female, while women constitute 81 per cent of clerical grade staff. In the health service, women constitute 80 per cent of staff, but just 30 per cent of consultants. Women's participation in decision-making is a basic human right. The UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) states that it is the role and responsibility of governments to use all appropriate measures to ensure women's equal participation in political and public decision-making”.

Joanna McMinn, Director, Women's Council of Ireland, reproduced from article in Irish Times, March 8th 2007 to mark International Women's Day

Acknowledgements

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Sharon Foley

One2one Solutions, May 2007





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Message from the Chairperson, INVOLVE Project

We would like to thank a number of people for their contribution to the project:

- The funders of the project – Blanchardstown Area Partnership, Fingal County Council, County Dublin VEC Adult Education Service D15, IBM, Local Employment Service, Blakestown CDP, Corduff CDP, Greater Blanchardstown Development Project and Mountview Family Resource Centre
- The Co-ordinator of the Project, Iris Lyle who successfully steered us all through the many achievements and challenges of this ambitious project with the support of Grace Ibikunle and Irene McDonnell, administrative support.
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- Michael Mooney, Taxi Service.

Ms Gay Hogan

Chairperson

On behalf of the Steering Group:

Mary Burke [Nova Fariss]	Health Service Executive
Moira Hyland Doyle	Neighborhood Youth Project
Monica Shannon	Corduff CDP
Margaret McLoughlin [Eileen Nash]	Mountview Family Resource Centre
Terry McCabe [Lillian Harris]	Blanchardstown Area Partnership
Helen Purcell	Blanchardstown Partnership
Susan Fox	Blakestown CDP
Valerie McAllorum [Louise Edmonds]	Fingal County Council
Gay Hogan	County Dublin VEC
Iris Lyle	Project Co-ordinator



Executive Summary

The Equality for Women Measure (EWM) is a positive action programme for women, funded under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 through the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. In 2004, €7 million was earmarked to fund projects which address the needs of women living in designated RAPID (Revitalising Areas through Planning, Investment and Development) areas. The INVOLVE project was funded under this EQM under strand C of the programme (Participation of greater numbers of women in decision-making in the workplace and in local authority/agency planning and development structures). The INVOLVE project aimed at encouraging the participation of greater numbers of women from the RAPID areas within Dublin 15 structures.

The project was led by the Blanchardstown Area Partnership (BAP) working with RAPID, the community development projects in the area, HSE, Fingal local authority, Co. Dublin VEC (Adult Education) and Blanchardstown Neighbourhood Youth Project.

INVOLVE is match funded by Blanchardstown Area Partnership, Fingal County Council, County Dublin VEC Adult Education Service Dublin 15, IBM, LES (Local Employment Service), Blakestown Community Development Project, Corduff Community Development Project, Greater Blanchardstown Development Project, and Mountview Family Resource Centre.

The project began in 2006 and three programme strands were developed;

1. **Vocal Women Leadership Training Programme** – women from the Greater Blanchardstown area were training in leadership and personal development using creative methodologies.
2. Commissioning and publication of a research report '*Pathways to Power: Women influencing decision-making in Blanchardstown*' by Maureen Bassett & Mary Quinlan, October 2006'.
3. **Organisational Training** on Gender Equality and Women's Participation in Decision-Making for key local organisations in the community and statutory sectors

The overall project was evaluated and the outcomes demonstrate that creative methodologies are a valid and powerful means to engage with disadvantaged women and facilitate their development and leadership potential. The women who were trained on the course are now participating in public presentations of their work and the Vocal Women's Group is beginning to evolve as a key driver in the development of a women's network in the Blanchardstown area. The research report shows that

- Women are involved in organisations but not at a more senior or influential level.
- There is a need for an infrastructure for women's groups to be in place.
- A gender analysis approach is still required to understand and react effectively to social exclusion.
- There is a strong need for capacity building for women and organisations

Ongoing barriers to women's participation include a lack of childcare to facilitate both short and long term training and employment initiatives, a low level of engagement by statutory agencies in looking at the issue of women's participation and the need for ongoing and targeted initiatives to develop the potential of women to engage fully in decision making structure.



chapter one

introduction and background

Gender imbalance continues to be a feature of Irish society, with under-representation of women being a feature of socio-economic life. The INVOLVE project was established to develop a mechanism to enable more women to participate in decision making structures in the Blanchardstown area.

1.1 Equality for Women measure

The Equality for Women Measure (EWM) is a positive action programme for women, funded under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 through the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. It is designed to promote pilot initiatives aimed at improving the economic, social, cultural and political lives of women.

In 2004, €7 million was earmarked to fund projects which address the needs of women living in designated RAPID (Revitalising Areas through Planning, Investment and Development) areas. The RAPID programme operates in 45 designated disadvantaged communities in Irish cities and towns. There are three strands to the programme;

- A** Improving Women's Access to Education, Training and Employment
- B** Achievement of equality for women in the workplace and business
- C** Participation of greater numbers of women in decision-making in the workplace and in local authority/agency planning and development structures.

The INVOLVE project was funded under this EWM under strand C of the programme. The INVOLVE project aimed at encouraging the participation of greater numbers of women from the RAPID areas within Dublin 15 structures. The evaluation of the INVOLVE project will add to the growing field of knowledge of and expertise in enhancing women's involvement in decision making structures.

1.2 Blanchardstown Area Partnership

The project was developed by a group including Blanchardstown Area Partnership (BAP), RAPID and Blakestown Community Development Project (CDP). A wider range of partners came on board later. BAP is the local development agency responsible for co-ordinating responses for people living in disadvantaged circumstances in the Greater Blanchardstown area. This includes in its catchment area the four RAPID areas of Blakestown, Corduff, Mountview and Mulhuddart together with Hartstown and Huntstown. BAP was established in November 1995

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The proposal development group decided to focus on developing a project to promote involvement of women in



decision making structures as a result of a number of converging factors;

- the partnership wanted to develop an innovative programme to assist women to get involved in their community and the community structures
- members of the partnership knew from their experience on the ground that local women were not involved in development activities, like many projects the same group of women were involved in many projects with few 'new women' becoming involved
- BAP wanted to link in with the funding offered under the EWM programme and particularly liked the call for innovative and creative methodologies. There are very few women's group in Blanchardstown compared to other areas (e.g. Clondalkin),

In March 2006 the project completed a tender process for four pieces of project work relating to the overall goal of the project – leadership training, mapping research, organisational change training and finally overall evaluation. The expected project outcomes were;

- A snapshot of the current situation of women in decision making roles in the Blanchardstown area: a report with recommendations, which would be a tool for change
- New avenues for women in key agencies leading to participation in decision making processes
- More women from RAPID areas willing to take up positions
- Greater public awareness of gender equality issues.

1.3 Women and Participation – an overview

It is widely accepted that women face a series of barriers which make them less likely to engage in those structures which make decisions affecting and shaping our lives. These structures can range from local parent councils to entering and maintaining a political life. The research report 'Pathways to Power¹' completed as part of the INVOLVE project, provides a summary of the legislative and policy background for initiatives to promote greater involvement of women and outlines many of the barriers. These barriers are systematically rooted in our culture and political structures but also present themselves as practical barriers (for example childcare and caring commitments, cost issues and language barriers) and as women centred barriers (including lack of role models, low confidence or less developed skill sets).

The low level of female participation in Irish society is a key governmental concern and was highlighted within the Lisbon Strategy² (for economic growth) as requiring attention. In an update to the Lisbon Strategy in 2004, Minister D. Roche noted 'Ireland's targets under the Lisbon Strategy are that female labour force participation should reach 60%. We consider that the most urgent issues needing to be addressed, with regard to attracting more women into the workforce, are the continuing pay disparities experienced by women and the importance of more family-friendly work environments.'³

Decision making is a core policy issue for the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC) and in 2002 the NWC completed research entitled 'Irish Politics, Jobs for the Boys' which examined the levels of women's participation in local and national politics on state boards, regional authorities and NDP monitoring committees. Amongst a number of recommendations one is that the government should resource and support the women's community sector to support greater participation by women in national and local politics.

1.4 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation of the project commenced in April 2006 and finished in April 2007.

At the start of the project an evaluation framework was developed as a working document for the project. The framework looked at the aims and objectives of each phase and how sections would be evaluated. This was agreed by the steering group and the project consultants. Aspects of the evaluation evolved as the project developed but overall the framework served as a useful tool to map the evaluation requirements. The sections below describe how each element of the project was evaluated.

1. 'Pathways to Power: Women influencing decision-making in Blanchardstown' by Maureen Bassett & Mary Quinlan, October 2006. Available on www.involve.ie or directly from the INVOLVE project.
2. The Lisbon Strategy commenced in March 2000 at the Lisbon Summit when Heads of State and Government set a goal for the European Union over the next decade to become "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion". The strategy and related updates can be sources on www.europe.eu.int
3. Council Declaration on Spring Summit and Lisbon follow-up made by Minister Roche. Jan 04 <http://www.ue2004.ie>



Project Establishment and Management

This aspect of the project was evaluated through reviewing project documentation and qualitative evaluations with the project Co-ordinator and Steering Group. At a midpoint in the project and at final stages the overall projects and its composite strands were evaluated qualitatively by the Co-ordinator, the project consultants and the Steering Group.

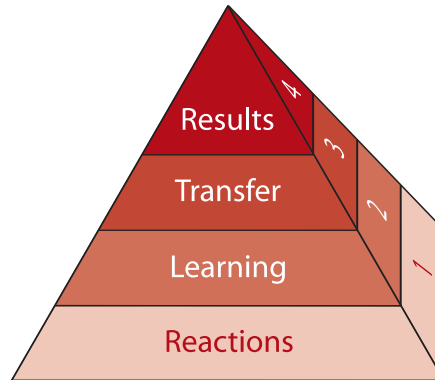


Figure 1: Kirkpatrick, D.L. (1994).
Evaluating training programmes: The four levels

Vocal Women Leadership Training Course

In evaluating this training course, the project evaluator was aware of the multi-faceted issues facing many of the participants – their successes through the course would be influenced by many factors and events within their lives. A simple model was devised to assess their perceptions of the impact of the course on their core skills and areas of their lives. The model used to evaluate this training strand was broadly based on Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Evaluation. (Kirkpatrick, 1994⁴) Evaluation at the first level measures how participants in a training program react to it. It attempts to answer questions regarding the participants' perceptions. This level was evaluated through a Midterm evaluation and a final evaluation. Evaluation at the second level attempts to assess the extent to which students have advanced in skills, knowledge, or attitude. This learning was assessed at the closing stages though a full evaluation session with a sample of the group and through looking at the course portfolios of some participants.

Research Project

This was evaluated through a facilitated discussion with the researchers and Steering Group at the completion of the research project. The objective of this process evaluation was to examine how the research might be used to progress the overall objectives of the project. The launch conference for the Research Report was evaluated using evaluation sheets completed by those attending.

Finally, the research was evaluated at the end of the overall project through qualitative interviews with the research consultants, the Co-ordinator and the Steering Group.

Organisational Training

Originally it was planned to evaluate this through feedback from the participants. However the training proved to be extremely difficult to organise so the process became much more interesting as an evaluation focus. Training which did proceed was evaluated through self completed evaluation sheets. Training which was difficult to organise or did not proceed was evaluated by interview with the main contact. In addition the Organisational Training was evaluated at the end of the overall project through qualitative interviews with the research consultants, the Co-ordinator and the Steering Group.

The aims, objectives, inputs and outputs of the evaluation are summarised in Table 1 Appendix 1.

4. Kirkpatrick, D.L. (1994). *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler. Cited in Winfrey, E.C. (1999). *Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Evaluation*. In B. Hoffman (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Technology*. A publication of San Diego State University. Available on www.coe.sdsu.edu/eet/articles/k4levels Permission granted to reference.



chapter two

establishment and management

2.1 Process and timelines of set-up phase

This phase extended from the time of the original application in October 2004 until April 2006 when tenders were awarded. The aim of the set-up phase was to establish the processes on a sound footing for the duration of the project.

The project application was prepared by the previous deputy manager of BAP in conjunction with the RAPID Co-ordinator and the Co-ordinator of Blakestown CDP. The initial proposal was submitted in October 2004, with initial approval given in March 2005, and final sign off in October 2006 with an anticipated completion timeframe of two years. The project application was endorsed by the Blanchardstown RAPID board. The application was supported in writing by the Wellview Resource Centre, Corduff CDP, Blakestown CDP, Blanchardstown Traveller Support Group, Citizen's Information Centre, Greater Blanchardstown Development Project and the Mountview Family Resource Centre. Matching funding was secured from some of the community development organisations and two statutory agencies.

The Network and Steering Group met in May 2005 to establish the project. There were subsequent staff changes and the Chairperson reconvened the Steering Group in late summer 2005 to further the process. A refined project application was submitted to Pobal in September (noting changes in timelines). The recruitment process started in October 2005 and the INCLUDE project Co-ordinator came on board in January 2006. These delays meant the project itself did not begin work until January 2006 and consultants were recruited to develop the project strands in April 2006.

The Co-ordinator immediately began work on converting the original application and concept into workable plans for each element of the project. Three elements were identified as being most representative of the vision for the project. These were;

- Leadership Training using creative arts methodologies for women from RAPID areas
- Research: mapping of women's participation in local development and statutory organisations in Blanchardstown, with a report and recommendations
- Organisational Change Training for key organisations in Blanchardstown

Tender documentation was issued in late February 2006 and tenders were received in late March. Following selection of consultants contracts were signed in early April 2006. A final evaluation was planned for the overall project performance. The evaluator agreed a framework working document with the steering group in May 2006.



2.2 Management structures

The original structures envisaged by the Steering Group included a number of layers including;

- an executive steering group working alongside
- a wider supporting network of interested community organisations
- 4 RAPID area implementation groups.

However these structures proved to be overly complex and were refined to include the Steering Group working with an executive management group and communicating to a wider organisation network as events required.

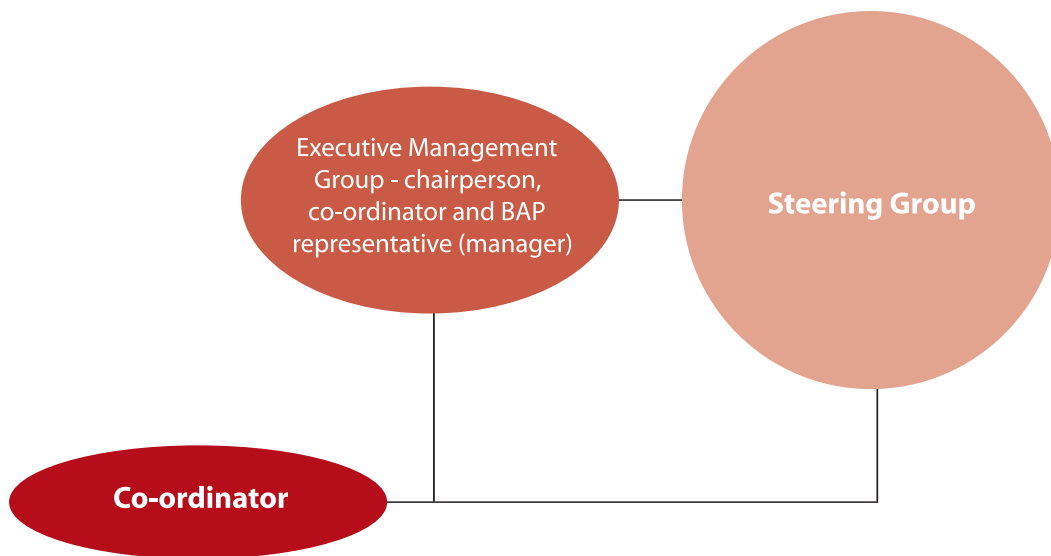


Figure 2: Management structures for INVOLVE project

The membership of the Steering Group was comprised of Mountview Family Resource Centre, Greater Blanchardstown Development Project, Blakestown CDP, Corduff CDP, Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group, NYP, HSE Wellview Resource Centre, CoDVEC Adult Education Service, HSE, Fingal local authority and BAP. Two other agencies were not able to commit to the project on an ongoing basis. The Steering Group met monthly with additional meetings as required.

The executive management group comprised of the Chairperson, BAP deputy manager and the Co-ordinator met weekly or as required. Three subgroups were established for the initial period – training, research and finance. These were dissolved as work tasks were completed.

On initial application, provisional agreements had been established regarding matching funding for the project. These arrangements were formalized at the start of the project.



Table 1: Aims, objectives, inputs and outputs of the establishment phase of the project.

Aim and Objectives	Inputs	Outputs
<p>Aim</p> <p>To establish and govern the project effectively</p>	<p><i>Establish sound management and communication structures for the project</i></p> <p><i>Ensure the Co-ordinator is supported and direction is provided as needed</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Establishment of initial steering group and forum and completion of application plan with support from BAP and CDPs in area — Recruitment process for Co-ordinator and administration assistant (January 2006) — Establishment of Steering Group and four initial subgroups 	<p>Steering group established</p> <p>Project strands designed</p>
<p>Objectives</p> <p>Establish sound management and communication structures for the project</p>	<p><i>Ensure the project is managed efficiently and effectively</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Project management controls established — financial monitoring and controls – support provided by BAP — management meetings (Co-ordinator, Chairperson and BAP representative) — regular Steering Group meetings — review of progress against plans — any required organisational policies and procedures were designed and implemented 	<p>Broader network established</p> <p>Strong project management controls established</p>
<p>Plan and implement agreed visions for the project</p>	<p><i>Plan and implement agreed visions for the project</i></p> <p><i>Agree timeframe and milestones</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Use by the steering group of the original application as a basis for developing further plans. The group restructured the project into three distinct phases which could be used as a basis for tendering to external contractors. — The SG designed tender documentation for all strands including evaluation — Tender process established — Consultants hired 	<p>Communication networks established</p> <p>Communication materials developed</p>
<p>Agree processes with funding body</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Evaluation framework developed and agreed 	<p>Trainers recruited</p> <p>Researchers recruited</p>
<p>Ensure the project was managed efficiently and effectively</p>	<p><i>Ensure local community development structures are involved with the project rollout</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Letters of support obtained for the project — Establishment of broader network forum — Communication about the project and its benefits — Communication materials and tools developed – fliers, webpage and dissemination of information — Communication with network regarding initial plans for strands and overall process 	<p>Organisational consultants recruited</p> <p>Evaluator recruited.</p> <p>Ongoing dialogue with funding body</p>
<p>Ensure the Co-ordinator was supported and direction provided as needed</p>	<p><i>Agree processes with funding body</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — SG agreed project structure with funding body — Provision of ongoing updates and information as required to funding authority. — Project schedule for overall project in place and agreed milestones for each strand agreed with Pobal — Ongoing communication between Co-ordinator and Pobal 	



2.3 Key difficulties arising within the set up phase

Some of the difficulties encountered in the establishment phase included;

- Timeframes – the initial project planned to last for 2 years was reduced to 15 months, representing a time lag of nine months. This created great time pressures within the project.
- Funding agreements – at the time of application the BAP steering group had understood that one statutory agency was to provide matching funding of €10,000. This was not formally agreed and was not provided subsequently. However the VEC provided this funding as the projects goals matched those of the VEC. Funding was also sought and received from IBM.
- Locating consultants with sufficient experience. The main thrust of the INVOLVE project was to train a group of women in leadership skills using creative methodologies. Locating skilled consultants with expertise in both creative methodologies and leadership training was difficult with few applicants.
- Geographical boundaries of the project. The project was funded to support women from RAPID areas – these were restricted to local authority housing estates. However the project quickly learned that it needed to extend its remit to include all socially deprived areas as many women from new communities were living in rented accommodation not within RAPID areas
- Departure of key staff. The departure of one of the key drivers behind the project at an early stage meant that there were delays in restarting the project. In essence this was a small systems failure which was overcome by BAP and the Steering Group.
- Administrative support. Whilst an administrator was recruited, additional administration skills were required to support the project.

2.4 Reflections on the project

Overall the Steering Group felt that the project broadly achieved what it initially aimed to do and were justifiably proud of its achievements. The following reflections are as a result of direct observations of the project mechanisms and documentation followed by interviews with the Co-ordinator and Steering Group.

2.4.1 Strengths of the project.

The skills of the Co-ordinator were a great strength to the project. The Steering Group remained committed to the project with a core set of members who provided support to the Co-ordinator and the project activities. A great deal was achieved in the first three months which compensated somewhat for the late start to the project. In essence a two year project was condensed into 15 months.

The project was broadly supported by a large number of organisations where it was seen as a new development and not just an 'add-on' to another organisation's activities. These external organisations were seen as 'delivering the project in the community'.

2.4.2 Areas of greatest learning

i) Timeframes

The original planned timeframes for the project were too tight and did not allow for contingencies. In a community development setting greater efforts must be made to involve all structures and this process takes time. Within this project staff turnover in the lead partner (BAP) created a difficulty in the provision of leadership. While this type of occurrence is unavoidable, arrangements should be put in place once departures are made known so as to minimize disruption. There was little flexibility on the part of Pobal, (Pobal is a not for profit company which manages the EWM on behalf of the Irish government) and this created difficulties in meeting requirements.

ii) Structures

The initial management structures emerged as being overly complex, confusing and burdensome. After the initial establishment phase, the steering group refined the structures to allow the broader network to meet when required (with communication in between). The envisaged local core groups and the substructures of the steering group were removed.

iii) Ownership of project

The initial project was submitted by the Deputy Manager of BAP working with the RAPID coordinator. However the programme was not a mainstream BAP or RAPID initiative. Indeed RAPID itself is not a service delivery



agency. There were strengths and weaknesses to this approach;

- There was a sense that the project not being fully 'owned' by any one agency with the result that follow-on actions were difficult to mainstream and embed in local structures.
- As the project was not part of any one existing programme it was possible for the Steering Group to shape it into a very innovative and flexible type project.
- However this innovativeness meant it does not fit in easily with the work programmes of BAP and local CDPs.

Previous EWM programmes were not tied to any one structure (such as RAPID) and it is worth reflecting on the benefits of how to structure funding initiatives to ensure easier mainstreaming and sustainability.

The project Steering Group reflected that the project was submitted initially as part of the 'treadmill of applications' whereby several applications for funding are made to a number of sources. Such processes often are not fully embedded until notification of funding is received. An example of this is the involvement of the wider CDPs – they did not become fully involved until after the project started and the Co-ordinator was being recruited.

iv) Matching funding

Many organisations within the community development sector rely on receipt of matching funding from local organisations/agencies as a precondition of applications. It is crucial that commitments from these agencies are formally secured in advance of project applications being submitted. It is recognised that this commitment requires a speedy decision in relation to applications so that overall agency budgets can be managed.

v) Administration support

The project budget allowed for administration support. However the salary offered attracted few applicants and on reflection additional administration support was required.

Projects such as these require a level of administration experience and prior experience as it is difficult to support untrained staff within such a short timeframe and still attain ambitious targets. The key learning in this respect was that the recruitment of administration support should be done once the Co-ordinator is in position and can indicate and recruit for the exact skills required. In addition, projects should consider sourcing experienced administration skills through other routes (for example, paying higher salaries to recruit more experienced staff – perhaps on a part time basis, sourcing experienced administration from community development organisations, etc.).

2.5 Recommendations for future projects

- In designing funding programmes, Pobal and other funding organisations should assess cost and benefits to aligning project structures specifically to one community structure such as RAPID. While there are obvious advantages, ongoing mainstreaming and integration into organisational work plans should be considered within this initial assessment. Projects should have clear ownership within communities.
- In drafting applications, agencies should formally agree funding commitments from matching funding organisations in advance.
- Applications should contain sufficient budget to obtain experienced administration support, either on a full or part-time basis.



chapter three

evaluation of leadership training

The aim of the Leadership Training was to support women to gain the confidence, skills, knowledge and understanding that they need to engage fully in and inform those decision making processes that have a fundamental impact on their lives, communities and workplaces. This linked to the EWM goal in that it was anticipated that as a result of this training more women from RAPID areas would be willing to take up decision making positions in their community and there would be greater awareness amongst these women of the need to participate and realise their potential contribution to influencing decision making. The course was entitled *Vocal Women Leadership Training Programme* and is referred to as the 'training programme' throughout the text.

3.1 Process and timelines for the training programme

The aims, objectives and inputs/ outputs for the Leadership training are shown in Table 2 and described in more detail below.

3.1.1 Project set up

Two trainers, skilled in leadership and personal development training and in the use of creative methodologies were contracted to facilitate the development of the training strand.

3.1.2 Project targets

The project Co-ordinator together with the community development agencies working with the trainers, implemented the process to recruit women from RAPID areas. The initial targets were

- To recruit 80 women across 3 groups , to include Irish, European, African, Traveller and people with a disability
- To design a recruitment process to target women for training through multiple approaches
- To define inclusion / exclusion criteria for women and any streaming process
- To maximise linkages through BAP to promote the programme with organisations who supported the initiative and statutory and voluntary agencies in the region (e.g. disability forum, international groups)

The recruitment team utilised the following processes;

- Hosting of Network Forum meetings to ensure all community organisations were aware of the projects activities and the need to recruit women.
- Development of promotional materials for dissemination throughout the area
- Creation of a website specifically for the project
- Promotion and hosting of 4 information mornings in regional community development centres to engage with local women.
- Articles in local community newspapers and newsletters of other organisations including Insight and Blakestown News
- Presence on websites of other organisations such as BAP
- Promotion through local community development projects
- Leaflet distributed through the community newsletter to each home



Table 2: Aims, objectives, inputs and outputs of the Leadership Training Phase of the project

Aims and Objectives	Inputs	Outputs/performance indicator
<p>Aim To support women to gain the confidence, skills, knowledge and understanding that they need to engage fully in and inform those decision making processes that have a fundamental impact on their lives, communities and workplaces</p> <p>PROJECT SET UP: To facilitate the process through the recruitment of suitable external trainers</p> <p>THE COURSE: To establish course/session work which will seek to explore the women's current experience of participation with decision makers and the barriers and the obstacles which prevent them from participating.</p> <p>THE COURSE: To 'roll-out' training schedule in RAPID areas</p> <p>THE ROADSHOW: To promote decision making and awareness through a Community Roadshow</p> <p>ACCREDITATION: To explore / achieve accreditation</p> <p>OUTCOME MEASUREMENT: To measure the change in skills, knowledge etc</p> <p>MENTORING: To identify key senior mentors in participating organisations who have roles in decision making which impact on women's lives</p>	<p>As described in project establishment phase.</p> <p>Process used to design curriculum. meetings, research etc</p> <p>Perspective of women on curriculum</p> <p>Process used to adapt curriculum according to emerging needs</p> <p>Recruitment initially targeted RAPID areas but expanded to include other areas. Extensive recruitment process developed. Venues were identified which were suitable for creative work including dance and voice work. Barriers identified in terms of recruitment, childcare and community venues</p> <p>The Roadshow was considered a key 'final event' and discussions on its format were used as a planning tool during training.</p> <p>A number of routes for accreditation were investigated.</p> <p>Midterm and final evaluation with Vocal Women</p> <p>Mentoring was included as part of the trainers remit.</p>	<p>Curriculum designed to include creative methodologies and leadership training. (see appendix 2)</p> <p>Course delivered as described. All elements included.</p> <p>In total 25 weeks of training were delivered followed by 5+ weeks of additional training (not fully complete)</p> <p>The course was expanded beyond RAPID areas so as to include those in receipt of rent allowance including women from new communities.</p> <p>28 women completed the initial 20 week training and 28 women opted to continue the extra 5 training weeks.</p> <p>The Roadshow was delivered through a number of inputs at external venues</p> <p>FETAC Personal Effectiveness GF0033 level 3 awarded to women. Portfolios were compiled by several women.</p> <p>Training course was evaluated with trainer, trainees, Co-ordinator and Steering Group.</p> <p>Mentoring provided to women by trainers, by allocating mentor time to a number of women weekly.</p>



By summer 2006, forty-five women were signed up for the training and of these 80% were from RAPID areas. In total 69 women signed up for the training (between summer and post summer recruitment intakes).

The project used a self-assessment questionnaire to gather information about the participants and 49 co-operated to provide data about themselves. The overall picture was one of very high levels of deprivation – 47% of those participants who provided data were unemployed, most of those working were in part time and low status employment, 34% were lone parents, 31% were early school leavers. 20% defined themselves as living with a disability. Ten out of the 49 women identified themselves as belonging to ethnic minorities. In reality, using local knowledge, the project leaders estimated that this was more likely to be approaching 37%, including representation from several African and Eastern European countries. The training participants included women living with drug users, ex drug users and carers. Over one third of the women defined themselves as volunteers in their communities.

3.1.3 Course structure

Initially 69 women were signed up to the course and were assessed through the application process to see which of the three training sub strands they wished to become part of and if they required childcare/elder care and/or transport.

- The sub strands dealt with
- women's current experience of participation with decision makers
- the barriers and the obstacles which prevent them from participating
- how to participate and influence effectively.

These sub strands were designed to support the different skills and experience of the participants:

- Strand 1 focused on building women's confidence and empowering them to be effective in setting and achieving goals for their own lives
- Strand 2 focused on supporting women to become more actively involved in the development of their local communities
- Strand 3 focused on building the leadership skills required to have women influence and input into local policy-development

In particular the trainers used the triple spiral model to assist the participants explore their personal, social and political situations. This spiral was developed by Emer Dolphin⁴. It begins with the personal situations in which women in Ireland find themselves, followed by analysis of the social and political setting.

The original target was to run 20 weeks of training. Five additional weeks were sourced from project budgets and through savings made by amalgamating all groups. The overall timeframe for the course was

- 25 weeks of weekly delivery to each of three sub strands (4 before summer, 13 September to December and 6 post Christmas)
- 5+ weeks of all three amalgamated groups

3.1.4 The Roadshow

The Roadshow was initially envisaged as being a series of planned events highlighting the work of the INVOLVE project. Instead it evolved into a number of presentations to external groups. This approach was deemed more likely to influence the agenda of other organisations.

4. Reprinted in Making Connections: Women. Developing Links for Change, 1994, Available. from Banulacht, Dublin.



3.2 Starting points for the training programme.

3.2.1 Vision and goals for women at start of the process

At the start of the training each training sub group articulated their vision for the project.

Vision and goals for the women in each of the sub strands and images which represent these visions (taken from early sessions)		
<p>Strand 1</p> <p>Grow Optimism Attentive Leadership Sociable Fun, job, meeting people Awareness, learning and development Teaching Pride – Proud of myself Confident Achievement Peace of mind Own business Reclaim my enthusiasm Be more decisive Put into action Craft skills Developing our inner self further Confidence and openness Opportunity Fun-time for me Self worth Content and comfortable in your own skin Be creative</p>	<p><i>Key words used by women</i></p> <p>Strand 2</p> <p>Self-confidence Independence Pride Enjoy life and motherhood Self-esteem Lose fears Have fun Make friends Effort in the community Support for lone parents/carers Welcome challenges Promote youth clubs</p>	<p>Strand 3:</p> <p>Balance in life A voice Having confidence Making a commitment to ourselves and community To feel connected To be self-motivated Identifying our strengths</p>
<p>Strand 1</p> <p>Coming together. Unity and love, Sun. Tree. Light. Eagle Flying. Flower</p>	<p><i>Image for development</i></p> <p>Strand 2</p> <p>Butterfly. Sun. Open door. We'll follow our Rainbow</p>	<p>Strand 3:</p> <p>Path / Road</p>
<p>Strand 1</p> <p>Personal Development. Confidence. Self worth. Enjoyment</p>	<p><i>Summary of aspirations</i></p> <p>Strand 2</p> <p>Personal development and beginning of community involvement</p>	<p>Strand 3:</p> <p>Personal development and stronger community involvement</p>



Key priorities for action

The women were asked to identify the key issues impacting on their lives and the key organisations that relate to these. These are shown in the table below;

Key Issues	Key Organisations
Health - Medical Centre needed for women & children - Not enough GPs & health centres - Women's Health & Domestic Violence	HSE + Minister
Childcare - Lack of crèches - Good childcare for all + playschools - After-school care	Dept of Education + HSE + FÁS
Education More primary & secondary schools needed Smaller school/class sizes	Dept of Education + politicians
Housing - Lack of social housing - High rents - Housing allocation e.g. left empty due to vandalism yet families need them - Rent supplement & loss of this if earning over certain level. Lack of affordable housing resulting in discouragement of employment. Catch 22 leading to isolation & loss of self-esteem	Dept of Environment + Fingal Co.Co + DSFA + local TDs
Discrimination - Many people from ethnic minorities are living in fear & therefore moving away	All organisations + Dept. Justice, Equality & Law Reform
Environment - Inadequacy of green areas - More playgrounds needed - Planning issues - Amenities/sports facilities	Fingal Co.Co. + Dept of Environment
Crime - Anti-social behaviour - Drugs/alcohol - Role of Community Gardai Minister for Justice + the courts + the legal system	Gardai + Parents + all citizens.
Transport - More buses needed - More direct routes - Buses to run on schedule	Minister for Transport + Bus Eireann + Dublin Bus

Taken from Research Report (reference page 39)

3.2.2 Vision and goals of the Steering Group for the Leadership Training

At the early stages of the project, the evaluator enquired about the vision of the Steering Group for the training programme. The following were the expectations of the steering group for the Leadership Training;

- The programme would reach and be completed by a large number of women (each woman attending 80% or more of training)
- This implies that women would be supported to complete the programme and be able to overcome the multitude of obstacles which prevent their active participation in general.
- Women would have a sense of confidence in their daily lives (not just in relation to external organisa-



tions). More will have the courage to challenge

- Women would have some influence on how the course progresses and develops
- Women would enjoy the course
- The programme would enable women to build their capacity to participate in the community development structures or organisations that make a difference to their lives
- Programme will facilitate 'baby steps' for women and allow them to come out of their comfort zone at their own pace
- The creativity of the training would be maintained
- It was hoped that through work within other organisations, further training and education opportunities can be offered to participants

For some of the participants, this training would be their first step in coming out of the home. Some of the change process happening will be laying the ground work for more involvement in the future – the group acknowledged that achieving participation in decision making structures is a long process and this project might only be the first step.

3.3 Key difficulties arising within the Leadership Training

3.3.1 Arranging suitable venues

The creative training required that the training venue be large enough to allow for creative dance and movement, be acoustically suitable and be sufficiently sound proofed so as not to disturb other centre activities. In addition large venues were required to accommodate the three groups meeting together. These requirements emerged as a challenge and only a few venues were suitable.

3.3.2 Project attrition (fall off rates)

Of the 69 women who signed up for training, 8 did not start and 26 continued, a retention rate of 43%. 35 started but did not continue, with most of the 'drop off' occurring relatively early in the process. Their reasons for leaving were recorded and are illustrated below. It proved difficult to record exact numbers at any one time as some group members attended sporadically and this affected final numbers. Over one third of the women cited family caring reasons as their reason for drop off. In reflecting on retention, the trainers noted that

- the summer break was a big reason for a drop off
- women from ethnic minorities were affected by a degree of intermittent attendance and this can impact on the cohesiveness of the group and final group numbers
- they checked in regularly with the group, especially in the early stages and assisted, where possible, women with difficulties
- many women were very sorry they had to leave the project.

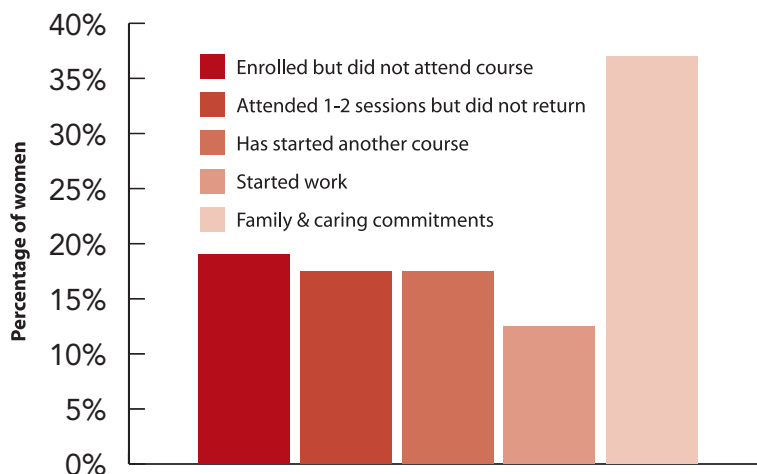


Figure 3: Percentage of women who enrolled for course but did not attend or who attended but did not continue, with reasons for non-continuation. N=43



3.3.3 Childcare places

The issue of insufficient availability of community childcare arose early in the process of recruiting women and was a key barrier to both women signing on to the programme and being able to continue. As can be seen from the table above, over a third of women who did not proceed with the programme cited family caring commitments as the reason – the majority of these were related to childcare issues. A summary of the key issues is as follows:

- There were not enough community crèche places available for a programme this size. The programme had overestimated the number of community crèche places which were available. Some crèches were full and others were limited in size.
- The childcare facilities have differing criteria for attendance based on location specific policies but also on children already attending (such as limits on age ranges, pick up times, policies on parent on site etc). The community crèches operated on differing levels of resources which impacted on the quality and range of service they could offer.
- Arranging crèche places was further complicated by having three different strands and differing requirements for each participant. A number of women switched strand in the early stages and this had a knock on effect on arrangements.
- The INVOLVE programme placed more pressure on the demand for existing childcare places. This pitched one development area up against another to compete/argue about place availability, creating tensions.
- Pobal, the body which manages the EWM programme, only allows for a contribution to be paid towards childcare costs. This did not cover the full cost of child minding for women who were not able to use community crèches
- Creating inclusion/exclusion criteria for childcare necessitates additional administration for projects and can pose in itself as a barrier to women joining courses.

In summary, there were simply not enough places in the region (including all RAPID areas) for a programme of this size. In order for women to be able to engage, particularly in sporadic development type initiatives (as opposed to full time jobs), there needs to be drop in type crèche availability or organic crèche facilities with sufficient capacity to be able to expand to meet the needs of emerging training programmes.

3.3.4 Accreditation

The trainers and coordinator investigated a number of possible options including looking at accreditation options offered by NCI, Maynooth and various FETAC options. In the end the course was accredited as a FETAC Personal Effectiveness GF0033 level 3. While this was probably acceptable to women in strand I and perhaps II, it was most likely below the skills set of the women in strand III, many of whom were already well qualified through other courses.

3.4 Midterm evaluations of the Leadership Training

3.4.1 Midterm evaluation with Vocal Women

In December 2006, a Midterm evaluation was held with the women who remained on the course. This was both a creative evaluation and a discussion on how the course was impacting on their lives. The women were asked to

- A Describe how the course was changing their life – through drawing
- B To write about how the course was changing their lives.

In analyzing the feedback from the women a number of themes emerged:

- There was an overwhelming positive response to the training and the creative methodologies used.
- Women were feeling more confident in their dealings with others
- The course was having a positive impact on relationships within their family and particularly with their children
- The course was preparing them (in term of confidence, skills etc) for the next stage of their lives. Some women reported being 'trapped' in their present existence but now being able to navigate a way forward – some reported it as being a stepping stone.

The course was providing them with tools to deal with some of the barriers which were preventing them participating. These were described as



- more confidence in questioning.
- understanding the reasons why women were being ignored.
- anger and conflict management strategies.
- confidence to get decision makers to listen.
- pride in women in Blanchardstown
- reducing fears
- understanding the status quo.
- course was enjoyable and fun

At this point, women from strand III had identified the lack of a women's network as being a barrier to the development of a vocal and participative women's movement in Blanchardstown. Key issues named to the Steering Group were

- a lack of adequate childcare
- a lack of continuity in the provision of support initiatives – initiatives need to be sustained through adequate resourcing
- women want to be recognised and supported
- the lack of a supporting structure such as that which exists in other areas, for example, Clondalkin.

A number of 'next steps' were identified and agreed by the Steering Group and the Vocal Women group with the result that the joint resources of the Steering Group were to be used to support the development of a women's network.

3.4.2 Midterm evaluation with Steering Group

A number of recommendations were made within the research regarding the Leadership Training programme. These were able to be incorporated into the training programme as it moved into the September to December 06 phase.

Figure 4

Some quotes from Vocal Women INVOLVE project at mid-term evaluation, September 2006



The course has helped me focus on myself, my needs, my career, training to help me achieve the career I think I want. It has helped me to take steps, to be aware of my deeper self, to use my voice and not be afraid.

The course has made me happy as I can get out and about mixing with other women. I hope this course will continue in the future. I hope it will help me to get a job, house and crèche in the future.

I feel more confident, within my inner self. When I started the course I was lost and I was hidden behind a cloud. I am able to express myself better, to listen. This course has helped me, to get a place with LES which I have finished and enjoyed and now the next step is to go job seeking.

The course has helped me to keep focused. It gave me back my enthusiasm. It highlighted a lot of skills I thought I had lost. It gave me back my confidence and is continuing to free my spirit and keep me in touch with my inner self. It gave me the tools to deal with the interpersonal, inter-departmental, and intercompany politics. The creative methodologies used are excellent and productive.

This course has certainly helped me to meet people. It's enabled me to know the feelings and concerns of others. It has opened my eyes to see that if women are being listened to, we can make lots of changes to the world in general.

Trees—signify growth. I have learnt to grow wisely in character, improving my relationship with my children. The course made me realise that if women come together with one voice, we can make a great impact in society. It has given me the self confidence, self control that I need.

The course is helping me to take care of my own needs. I am getting better at accepting help from people. I am finding it easier to deal with strong arrogant people. Now I write letters to agencies and get more active responses.

I feel more hopeful. I am more confident. The course has brought women of Blanchardstown together giving us inspiration. It has given us a voice and ideas about what is important to us and the communities in our area.

I feel more confident asking questions looking for reasons and answers. I am able to voice my opinion instead of staying silent and annoyed.

This course has helped me to focus on the need for women of all classes, race and cultures to get involved, and have an input on policies and decisions that have an impact on our lives.





3.5 Final evaluation of Leadership Training

3.5.1 Final evaluation with Steering Group, Co-ordinator and external trainers at closing point of the project

At the end of the programme the training was evaluated through qualitative interviews with the Steering group, the Co-ordinator and trainers. In most regards, the trainer's reflections on the project echoed those of the Steering Group and therefore all interviews are presented together.

a) Meeting expectations

In general the Steering Group's expectations were met – the Midterm evaluation with the women had shown that they were personally developing and expanding their range of opportunities. For the trainers most expectations were met although they reflected that many were met in ways different to their original expectations. In terms of using creative methodologies, the trainer's expectations were fully met. The course showed how powerful creative methodologies could be used as a tool to engage and develop women's potential.

b) Strengths of the Leadership Training programme

- The skills and flexibility of the trainers were excellent. They showed great perseverance and dedication to the course and the combination of training / leadership and creative methodologies was rare in trainers and a bonus to the project. Without their input and skills the course could not have flourished. From the trainer perspectives, the project offered them an opportunity to broaden their skills and experience in delivering training using creative methodologies and so they were able to make additional commitments to the project.
- The experience of the project Co-ordinator was a key strength in getting the project off the ground – the initial planning team was very complimentary about the skills exhibited by the trainers and Co-ordinator.
- The support provided by the Steering Group and their vision for a truly innovative project was a key strength – in essence the project allowed itself to be flexible and nurtured creativity.
- The contacts and credibility provided through the CDPs was a key strength. Recruitment was easiest in areas where there were already women groups and strong links to the community through the CDPs.
- Overall the Co-ordinator, Steering Group and trainers felt the objectives for the training programme were achieved. The course achieved great personal development for the participants.
- From the trainers' perspectives, a key strength of the project was the acceptance within the tender process of sufficient time for planning and liaising with the project Co-ordinator.
- The induction mornings to promote the project were very positive and well received – in most cases all women attending signed up for the course.

c) Areas of greatest learning within the training programme

i) Project targets:

The initial target of 80 women from RAPID areas was ambitious (though participants differed as to whether it should be changed). In reality, 69 was the highest number achieved. The course required a high level of commitment from women; one morning a week for over 20 weeks (this was extended near the end of the project). Many women were already involved in other activities and were not able to commit further. The geographical boundaries of the RAPID areas were unsuitable for training courses of this type – these boundaries predominantly represent local authority estates. However many people in receipt of housing support receive rent allowance to live in other areas.

On balance most felt that a target of 80 women is not achievable in a disadvantaged area and future projects should concentrate on reaching and retaining lower numbers.

ii) Childcare and community facilities:

There was insufficient community infrastructure to accommodate large community based training. Childcare during both training phases and ongoing work remains a key barrier to the participation of women and this was strongly illustrated within this project. The childcare contribution allowed from Pobal was not realistic against the cost of childcare.

Large or innovative/creative training type courses are limited in the venues they can use. Creative initiatives require acoustically suitable venues and in this project only one or two venues were suitable.

iii) Retention rate:

The Steering Group and Co-ordinator felt the high attrition rate is common to many community run courses and reflects the experience of those organisations represented on the Steering Group – in essence these are reflective of the nature of the target group and where they are positioned in life. The primary reasons cited included



lack of childcare and family caring commitments alongside more positive reasons including acceptance onto other courses and availability of work opportunities. The high rate demonstrates that many barriers exist which prevent women participating in ongoing training.

In comparison to other courses, the training was very innovative. Some women may have had different expectations. Differing expectations may have impacted on the retention and sign up rate of women – in future courses it will be easier to define what this type of course is about and the expected benefits for women.

iv) Cost per participant:

The initial training budget was €28,000. This excluded training venues, refreshments, travel and carer allowances for participants, materials and equipment for the training and any accreditation costs. The initial target was to recruit and train 80 women, representing a gross basic training cost of €340 per participant. This level of cost is very low for any type of accredited course. Recruitment was below this rate and attrition rates were high through the course. 615 individual training sessions were delivered over the initially planned 20 weeks, at a cost of 900 Euro per participant. In comparison to other training courses of this nature, this cost is not particularly high. Most certificate type courses cost in excess of this figure – in comparison most foundation certificates cost approximately €1,300 per participant.

v) Accreditation:

The accreditation process was challenging due to

- the varying degrees of education attainment
- the inclusion of women with weak language skills
- the level of documentation required for modules and how this could be tied into the creative methodologies.

The only accreditation available to the women was a FETAC Personal Effectiveness GF0033 level 3 and this was seen as a minor qualification for more advanced women (such as those entering Strand III). Ideally the respondents felt that accreditation should be allowed a longer process. In addition, it was almost impossible to learn from other EWM or similar initiatives about their experiences with accreditation as there is no one central location for records of these projects.

vi) Timing:

The starting time for the training was May and whilst unavoidable, this necessitated a long delay until September for the next phase of the training and meant there were in essence two 'starting' points. Ideally this could be avoided in future projects.

vii) Stranding process:

The initial vision to strand the women into three distinct sub groups was logistically very difficult. In essence it meant time was spent allocating women into strands, cross referencing this with childcare and venue requirements and verifying if arrangements suited women. This was done in the context of a number of women presenting with language and literacy difficulties and the infrastructural barriers present in a disadvantaged community (childcare shortages, low educational levels etc).

It was clear that a form of stranding was necessary as women differed in their requirements – some were looking for personal development whereas others wanted a space to discuss more strategic issues affecting women. However, if run again the trainer felt that two strands would be sufficient and more manageable.

viii) Role of the Steering Group

At many points, respondents noted the strengths of the Steering Group and the positive nature of their relationship with the Co-ordinator and the trainers. The Steering Group was very courageous in fully supporting creative methodologies throughout.

In terms of next steps, it took some time for the Steering Group to reach the position where it was able to drive the continuation of the project and provide strategic leadership. As the project was not under any one community organisation, it was difficult to locate one clear 'champion' for the project within the Steering Group. The trainers noted that in future projects, some structured time with the Steering Group at the start of the process might help to further their understanding of the ongoing needs of the women trainees.

ix) Reflections of the course content

Creative methodologies and leadership development:

The trainers noted the challenge of needing to both facilitate the group through personal 'deep' learning through creative methodologies as well as being able to facilitate discussions on more strategic issues such as women and participation. This required a lot of energy and creative thinking. Their experience illustrated that two trainers were needed to co-facilitate and their original plans to facilitate alone have to be reviewed.



Time required to support creative performances

The trainers noted that each of the creative performances at external events – (Roadshow) required a great deal of planning and group support which had not been factored into the trainer's time. This time could not have been shortened as it was crucial that the women felt confident presenting to the community; in many ways this was their first external presentation and as such represented huge personal risks as well as growth.

Initial expectations for the course work

Initially the trainers thought that the groups would work on specific themes which would be informed by the issues which affected their lives. However, the participants themselves took the course in a different direction and choose to work on the theme of creating public presentations to key public audiences and to look at creating a women's network. This flexibility was required within the course.

Requirement to induct external trainers

The trainers noted the need to brief external trainers on the course content and approach so that they were able to tailor their input to the needs and expectation of the group.

Extent of personal exposure

The facilitated session unearthed a level of disclosure within groups (as part of the 'deep' learning process used in the training) and this required management and careful facilitation on the part of the trainers. Whilst these trainers were very comfortable with dealing with sensitive issues, it is a lesson for future projects – these skills should be assessed at tender stage.

3.5.2 Final evaluation with VOCAL WOMEN at closing point of the project

A sample of the women (N=14) who had completed the full 30 weeks of training (20 weeks plus extra weeks) attended a final evaluation session.

i) Strengths of the training programme

Overall the women were very positive about the programme and noted the strengths as including;

- The course was focused on women and this was very attractive.
- Art and creative methodologies allowed a freedom to learn through positive development
- Course content was good
 - The grounding – every week the training started with chanting and grounding. The women found this very helpful
 - Open discussions – these allowed participants to separate emotion and relax and were a safe platform to speak their minds
 - The course was fun and allowed learning and growth through games (e.g. seaweed, paper sculpture, pushing games etc)
 - Goal setting – each week the participants focused on a goal to achieve in the following week. This was revisited the following week. Through this exercise, the participants felt they were able to focus on the goal and it made the learning 'real'
 - The creative methodologies were another way of learning about yourself – you found your own flow. Examples cited included Gabrielle Roth and dance to express moods, voice work, bin bag thinking. The course facilitated the women to learn about building trust, setting boundaries, managing anger and conflict, letting go, recognising the inner self
- The facilitation was excellent
 - The facilitation created a safe space which enhanced 'togetherness' and a sense of 'team'. The facilitation and the groupwork allowed listening, understanding, valuing opinions and being non-judgmental
 - The group commented that trainers were expert in guiding but not dominating
- Through the course awareness was raised about the common needs and experiences of women. The need to be active and responsible for creating change, the right to have your voice listened to, the confidence to express opinions and needs, how to manage difficult or challenging situations and the difference between blame (it's others responsibility) and responsibility (I may be able to do something)
- The course was an excellent way of getting to know other cultures and people from different areas. The course allowed knowledge of each other to build and acceptance to grow. The women felt they had all the same issues and could learn from each other.

ii) Areas of greatest learning within the Leadership Training programme

The areas of learning for the course in general included;

- Childcare and crèches – problems with these disrupted flow and stopped many women from continuing courses
- The overall focus was on getting the women active in the communities. Training to support this aspect



should have happened earlier and be included along the way as opposed to coming at the end

- The deadline for the completion of the training imposed constraints – the timescale was not long enough

Research

- The women were consulted with as part of the research – in reflecting on their involvement in the research the women reported that they would have liked stronger links between the research and the training. However they acknowledged that the research was a separate element within the overall project.

Reflections of stranding

- The stranding was necessary as the women were coming to the course with different needs and abilities.
- However stranding meant that not everyone was exposed to the same learning
- From a practical perspective, stranding meant some women couldn't be in the training sub group they wanted.
- The stranding allowed the social analysis spiral and the 'three circles' to be explored with each group depending on where they were at in life

Initial promotions and information

- Women had different expectations based on the initial introductions to the course. For some, these introductions and promotions might have been clearer, though participants recognised that the course was very innovative and experimental and so information will be clearer on future courses. Some of the promotional methods were not very effective as leaflets and fee newsheets were delivered too late

When asked about the level of 'drop off' for the course, the following reasons were cited

- In some cases the days for the strands did not suit women.
- All follow on was changed to Fridays and this did not suit some women.
- The chanting did not suit everyone. Some felt it was at odds with their religious faith. Not everyone was at the same stage. A recommendation was that more information and explanation of the chants was necessary.
- Some women left to take up employment and this was positive.
- Others left for different courses and wanted something different.
- Childcare was a big issues for women. Courses such as these need quality childcare on site for women.

The participants reflected on their learning from the amalgamation process of the three sub groups into one towards the final stages. These included;

- Not enough time was spent on bringing the full group together to bond -it felt very rushed for some
- The course content moved away from the 'deep' (personal development focus) into a task oriented (strategic focus).
- The focus was too much on 'work to do' and needed to be balanced with a continuation of creative and nurturing elements

Specific recommendations to INVOLVE, POBAL and statutory agencies on next steps from course participants

1. The creative leadership course was good and more should be run. These should be available nationally, be community based and creative in methodology
2. The emerging network should be supported through practical assistance and funding
3. If completing research in tandem with training then ensure it is integrated more into training and women are acknowledged in research '*Nothing about us, without us*'

Specific recommendations on course content from course participants

4. Those organising the course (INVOLVE project or others) should take some or all of the course so as to be familiar with the process
5. The course is a positive method of tackling diversity and integration and could be used in this way.
6. Childcare access needs to be resolved if these courses are to continue
7. If using creative methodologies, especially one which rely on one or two strong methodologies (e.g. chanting), then check in with the group and listen as to the ongoing acceptability of this as a method.
8. Include specific skills development such as study skills, board of management skills etc at an early stage so as to facilitate women to get involved in other ventures and to complete learning journals
9. If looking for accreditation, know in advance requirements for documentation and include skills development on this aspect as the course progresses.



10. If amalgamating several strands, then allow time for group bonding and ongoing creative work.

The women also reflected on the impacts and outcomes of the training course on their personal lives, their lives in the community and on their levels of participation in decision making structures. These are reported in the next section.

3.6 Impacts and Strategic Outputs

In assessing the impact of the Leadership Training course on the lives of the women trained, the project management and the evaluator were conscious of the limitations in evaluating progress. Within this project the trainers and evaluator attempted to develop a pre-test tool for use with the trainees. However the diversity within the group meant that there was too much intra-group variation to facilitate a design within the resources of the programme and the evaluation. The project relied on the external presentations as a measure to look at impacts, reflections of the women and the trainers and a closer look at the personal portfolios of some of the women.

The trainers noted the individual levels of progression which they could observe within many of the women. The external presentations represent the most visible record of some of this progression. To date these inputs by INVOLVE women have included;

Creative inputs and presentations

- Input at launch of research report
- Input at Corduff Health Action Group (CHAG) and ongoing involvement in this group
- Creative Learning workshop as part of Aontas festival of Learning
- FINAL EVENT—The launch of the Vocal Women's Manifesto for Dublin 15 and the INVOLVE Final Report. Creative presentation by Vocal Women's group Dublin 15.

Strategic meetings

- Meeting with Head of Consumer Participation within HSE
- Development of INVOLVE notice board
- Approaches from external organisations to INVOLVE to source women for community initiatives (e.g. community policing, Garda initiatives, Mountview group lobbying for a new resource centre etc)
- Regular presentations and ongoing negotiations with steering group regarding the future of the group
- Presentation to Board of RAPID

Attendance of VOCAL WOMEN group at external conferences

- Attendance at NUI Conference Galway on health services for ethnic minorities
- Attendance at Banulacht conference
- Attendance at cross border Women in Focus conference organised by FCC

Formal participation onto external groups

- Lobbying of local politicians on issues of importance to women
- Invitation to Vocal Women to nominate rep to join LDTF (Local Drugs Taskforce) in Dublin 15 and local drugs team in Mountview/Blakestown
- Election of Involve participant to Safer Blanchardstown Forum
- Volunteering to run girls guides/brownies in local area.
- As part of an ethnic minority delegation, one woman, visited President Mary McAleese and spoke to her with confidence and control

For the women involved they also reported personal impacts from the training. These included;

- being able to plan, organise and prioritise
- being able to budget and spend wisely
- having greater control over their lives
- can see results
- better relationship with children, confidence regarding their parenting
- confidence in going forward to parents teacher's association
- confidence in speaking with my child's teacher – as a result an Irish class is being set up, transport is being organised for school



- arranged a collection for a neighbour's child with other neighbours
- for ethnic women – being able to talk calmly, relate to the 'Irish way' of doing things

The personal portfolios of some of the women were made available to the evaluation process. Four were followed as a sample of the learning. These showed;

- One person had been 35 years attending hospitals. As a result of the training she is now able to discuss issues with her consultant and note areas where she is not happy with care, and has been able to challenge a difficult person in her life
- Another woman has been working in the community for many years but is now able to prioritise and value her contribution. She can now deal with frustration by handling the source of the frustration at the time as opposed to getting angry with her children. In particular she noted being able to control her emotions.
- A participant from an ethnic background noted she had started from nothing and had grown through the course. At this stage she can speak up in a crowd and can contribute at conferences. The art used on the course was very motivating – she can understand others reactions and manage issues respectfully. She now has confidence in planning her life and asking for her needs to be met.
- One person had rated herself with 'zero's' in terms of self-esteem, confidence, independence and ability to meet new people at the start of the course. Now she feels much more able to participate and can see avenues opening up. Already she has given a creative presentation to the CHAG group, approached her child's teacher, nominated herself as a potential member of a local drugs team. She is also better at dealing with her children and has more fun with them and has been able to keep her blood pressure under control through de-stressing exercises (as measured by her doctor)

Within this discussion (and that of the Mid-term evaluation) participants frequently referred to the positive impact of the programme on their family relationships, particularly in relation to parenting and engaging with their children. This noteworthy result was somewhat unexpected but a very positive outcome of the training.

The table shows the extent to which the Vocal Women group are now reaching out into the community. These achievements should be borne in mind against the starting points for the women and illustrate;

- How far many women have progressed. The trainers noted that many of these women were particularly reticent about speaking within a group at the start of the project.
- The level to which some of these women are taking on a leadership role – in observing the groups interactions with the Steering Group, the Vocal Women are articulate and confident in their engagements
- Many external organisations are now recognising Vocal Women (and the INVOLVE project) as a legitimate group and are requesting inputs to other processes.

3.7 Recommendations for future projects

The evaluation of the *Leadership Training Programme* shows that this type of training is a valid methodology for delivery of leadership training.

However the lessons from this project point to address problems such as childcare, practical arrangements for such courses and ongoing training and support requirements. Key elements required to deliver the project are

- skilled coordination and administration
- skilled support from steering group and strong and positive engagement of community partners
- suitable venues and transports
- flexible childcare
- In particular realistic and achievable targets should be established in advance.

chapter four

evaluation of research project & midterm review

The INVOLVE project included a research element designed to look at the level of participation of women in the area's community and statutory structures. This resulted in a final research report "PATHWAYS TO POWER". This is available on www.involve.ie and from the project itself⁵. The aims, objective, inputs and outputs are provided in Table 3.

4.1 Summary of processes used to research organisations

The full research report provides greater detail on the methodology and processes used within the research project and the reader is advised to refer to the full report for further detail. A range of methods were used for mapping the current situation with regard to women's participation in decision-making in the Blanchardstown area. These included:

- A literature review of the legislative and policy context most relevant to the participation of women affected by multiple disadvantages together with a review of key web sites both in Ireland and overseas
- A review of some examples of best-practice case studies promoting the participation of women from disadvantaged areas in local development
- Discussion with key local informants to ascertain information on local organisations and research work carried out in the area
- Review of local research documentation
- Development of a data base of organisations to be researched along with selection criteria
- Design of a questionnaire covering six broad areas : organisational culture and current thinking; policies; structures and decision-making processes, mapping; supports and linkages, and training
- Distribution of the questionnaire to 52 organisations and schools, together with pre-testing, and follow up
- Interviews with personnel in three statutory organisations
- Interviews with key personnel involved in the four case studies chosen
- Facilitation of two focus groups
- Attendance at Strand I of the Leadership Training Programme

Given the potentially large number of organisations in the target area a set of criteria was developed to guide the selection process for the most strategic organisations to include in the mapping process. Criteria included:

- their relevance to the needs of the target group
- their strategic importance in terms of policy development and implementation
- the potential they have for leadership in the area of gender mainstreaming

5. *PATHWAYS TO POWER: Women influencing decision-making in Blanchardstown*. By Maureen Bassett & Mary Quinlan, October 2006. Available on www.involve.ie or directly from the INVOLVE project.



Table 3: Aims, objectives, inputs and outputs of the evaluation of the Research.

Aim and Objectives	Inputs	Outputs
<p>The aim of the research was to audit current participation of women in statutory and non-statutory organisations in Blanchardstown, to map current procedures within organisations for the participation of women from RAPID areas and to identify how greater opportunities for women's participation might be developed.</p> <p>Objectives (based on Pobal objectives)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — A research plan will be developed — The research will be completed within timeframe — A final report will be produced for presentation to the Steering Group — A progression map will be developed for the dissemination of the report — The research will inform the development of the Leadership Training and the Organisational Training. 	<p>Draft and final research plan developed and agreed with Co-ordinator</p> <p>Interaction with Strand I Leadership Training and the Organisational Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Attendance at training course and consultation with INVOLVE women — The Steering Group provided input on organisation to be consulted. This was informed by previous needs assessment research in the region — The Steering Group were facilitated, as part of the Midway evaluation, to consider the findings of the report and to plan how they can use the results to advocate for changes in practices and promotion of better practice — The research was informed by the trainees and then used by the trainers. The recommendations directed towards the training were incorporated into the Leadership Training programme. — The research recommendations were incorporated into Organisational Training plans <p>52 organisations were targeted with three follow ups to non-respondents.</p> <p>A research launch was planned</p> <p>The research report was disseminated</p>	<p>Research plan outlining all methodologies (as above) developed and used to guide research.</p> <p>The research was completed within the timeframe agreed with the Steering Group</p> <p>The questionnaire was designed in partnership with the Steering Group.</p> <p>17 organisations returned questionnaires.</p> <p>Case studies were completed on 4 organisations</p> <p>A final report was agreed with the Steering Group – draft final report (July 2006), final report by Sep 2006.</p> <p>The research was launched in November 2006.</p> <p>A dissemination plan for the report was developed and responsibilities assigned for dissemination – large mailshot, within organisations represented on Steering Group, conference, known women's networks and via the web page.</p> <p>The Steering Group agreed a number of priority tasks to progress the research findings.</p> <p>Evidence of discussion of research input into training, organisational training and the deliberations of the Steering Group for the INVOLVE project.</p> <p>Reflection with trainers at end of process on how research shaped and influenced the Organisational Training</p> <p>Research reflected within Roadshow.</p>





A maximum upper limit of 52 organisations was agreed to ensure that in-depth and quality information was collected. These were 8 statutory organisations that received nineteen questionnaires between the various different departments; seven public/local development organisations; 10 schools and 16 voluntary/community groups and organisations.

The questionnaire was designed to be answered in less than 10 minutes and sent by email to 52 key addressees (representing 47 different organisations). It was pre-tested by 3 organisations and small changes were made. Despite three follow up calls and emails to the other non-returnees, completed questionnaires were received from only 17 organisations (5 statutory organisations, 4 public/local development organisations and 8 community/voluntary organisations) representing a response rate of 32%.

The final research report covered the following topics;

- Introduction
- National and Local Context
- Research Findings
- Best Practice Case Studies
- Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1.1 Main findings

The research commenced in May 2006 and was completed by September 2006.

The research highlighted that

- Women were involved in organisations but not at a more senior or influential level. Although local men comprised 25% of those involved in the organisations who responded they comprised about 35% of local people on boards. This shows systematic barriers to participation are at play and exclusion is not random.
- There was a need for an infrastructure for women's groups to be in place.
- a gender analysis approach is still required to understand and react effectively to social exclusion.
- There is a strong need for capacity building with organisations (of all types). The importance of relationship building with key organisations for the purpose of change work was highlighted, also that interventions be based on a partnership approach with clear benefits and outcomes for all parties. It will not be beneficial to continue to focus on training women if there are little opportunities for them to progress and organisations continue to use traditional approaches to involving women.
- Capacity building for women was also required. This benefits from an emphasis on progression routes, mentoring and ongoing support particularly as women take on representative roles.

4.1.2 Launch of Research Report

The Research Report was launched as part of a conference on women's participation in November 2006. The conference was attended by 93 persons from statutory, voluntary and community agencies, representing excellent attendance. Of these, approximately 13 represented statutory agencies. Indeed, in planning the conference the organisers found it particularly difficult to engage with the statutory sector. Overall, the returned evaluations for the conference were positive and the content was received very well. Most reported having enjoyed the creative presentation by the Vocal Women.

4.2 Mid-term evaluation — the research as a tool to review overall project progress

As part of the evaluation process for the research, a mid-term review meeting was held to examine the current status of the project and how the lessons from the research could be used to add value to the other elements of the project. The meeting was attended by members of the Steering Group, the Co-ordinator, the researchers and the creative training consultants. It was facilitated by the evaluator.

Key points raised in the discussion

The research showed that there are no linear routes of progression for women. The path of progression is very slow (likened to women taking one step forward and perhaps two steps back etc). Resources are required to support women through these progression routes (examples might include the facilitation of a women's network such as the Clondalkin Women's Network) and to 'stick with' the vision of providing supports for women. This naturally gave rise to questions regarding the long term sustainability of the INVOLVE concept (as opposed to the actual project) and how the women coming through the programme would be supported in the long term. The example of the local drugs task force was given – here community representatives are supported in an ongoing fashion.

Boards of management and in particular women sitting on boards or other community structures need a personal understanding of gender related issues and how they impact on women's participation. Without this understand-



ing it is difficult to name and identify gender related issues which impact on women's participation. In practical terms this requires relevant training for women at different points.

Recommendation to INVOLVE

A number of recommendations were made within the research towards the Leadership Training and the Organisational Training. The trainers were able to take these into consideration and adapt the programmes as required.

The discussion on the research report led to a number of recommendations emerging from the midway evaluation for the overall INVOLVE project. In particular the group recommended that the INVOLVE project working in partnership with others should begin the process of developing a strong infrastructure of women's groups in the Blanchardstown area, leading to a women's network that will support women's participation in decision-making.

Key outcomes of midway evaluation

- The group agreed to launch the research through a public event and discussed possible speakers to add to the significance of the event. The launch was to include a creative element and was to target many of the key organisations identified within the research themes.
- The Steering Group began planning the next stages for the project (post closure). Key tasks identified included planning for funding applications to provide support for women, building infrastructure for women's development, supporting and developing women who have already received some training.
- Four organisations were identified as being crucial and these were to be targeted for the organisational training.

4.3 Final evaluation of the Research

At the end stage of the process, qualitative interviews with the Co-ordinator, Steering Group and researchers allowed reflection on the work.

a) Strengths of the research

The project partners reflected on the following strengths to the research;

- The research was completed within the timeframe and a final report was produced.
- The research was able to highlight key findings which assist broader understanding of the participation of women.
- The report was used to influence the other strands of the project namely the Leadership Training and the Organisational Training.
- The research was disseminated throughout Blanchardstown and was felt by the Steering Group, Co-ordinator and researchers to be of assistance in influencing external agencies through the launch and subsequent dissemination. In total 800 copies of the report were disseminated by networking and post. At Blanchardstown level copies were sent to: organisations/groups both statutory and community, to all those organisations targeted by the research, FCC departments, strategic policy committee members, RAPID Board members, County Development Board members, politicians and local libraries. At Dublin and national level copies went to community and statutory organisations both statutory and non statutory with a with policy focus, the membership of the NWCI, all EWM projects, and targeted community groups. The steering group felt the launch was very successful with high attendance.

b) Areas of greatest learning

i) Timeframe: The timeframe was extremely tight and coincided with summer time. In essence this meant that many key individuals within agencies were away. For example, only one school out of 10 responded to the questionnaire. The timeframe impacted on response rates and the availability of persons to connect with the researchers, make comments on questionnaires and produce final reports.

ii) Response rate: The final response rate was 32% and while this was disappointing, the researchers felt this was a common response rate for community and organisational research⁶. From the research perspective of representation of organisations in the area, this response rate was low⁷.

6. A lower response rate was achieved (17%) in the Study of Diversity and equality in employment in Blanchardstown, Blanchardstown Employment Diversity and Equality Project. A joint initiative between Blanchardstown Area Partnership and great Blanchardstown Chamber of commerce. Burtenshaw Kenny and Associates, 2004.

7. Bowling A (2002 and 2004) Research Methods; Investigating health and social services. 2 ed. Open University Press. 2002.



There was no doubt that the timing of the research impacted on the response rate and all agreed that such research should not be conducted over the summer period. Despite three reminders, it proved difficult for the researchers to engage with the statutory agencies to participate in the research. The low level of statutory engagement was apparent throughout the overall project and was not specific to the research project and was one of the key recommendations of the project report. Some members of the steering group felt the design of the questionnaire may have been a challenge to those organisations not familiar with concepts such as gender proofing, participations etc. However in the absence of specific evaluation with the non-responders this cannot be explored.

Within the research findings the research reflected that greater pre-development preparations work might have assisted in achieving higher response rates.

Evaluators note: Although members of the Steering Group had previous experience of research projects, the Steering Group did not include a specific person with research skills. Such research support might be accessible through Pobal. Such skills could have assisted the project and looked at ways to increase response rates. In comparison to many research projects, the overall budget was low (€12,000) and it might not be possible to achieve high response rates within small research projects of this nature.

iii) Statutory engagement: It proved particularly difficult to engage with statutory agencies. This might have been alleviated if pre-development work and relationship building had been commenced with these agencies prior to the research commencing. The use of existing support agencies such as Pobal, RAPID and BAP could be used to strong advantage in promoting the research.

4.4 Recommendations for future projects

- The Research Report provides a series of recommendations in relation to the topic of female participation. In terms of the research project itself, the key recommendations are;
- The research should be used to maximum advantage through continuous referral in project reports, inter-agency dialogues and future projects. In particular the research should be presented and discussed with Pobal and other statutory agencies;
- In future projects, the project planners should identify the pre-planning work required in advance of any research project commencing;
- In future research projects, the project group should seek to include specific research skills at planning stages.

The tender brief specified that the researchers identify 'existing service providers in the Blanchardstown, including local authority, statutory, and key community and voluntary organisations' and to use these as the basis of the research. As a result the project consultants agreed to research a large number of organisations through a questionnaire. In this way the research would provide an overview of the entire area. Some of those interviewed at the end of the process reflected that a 'next stage' would be to undertake to audit in more detail a smaller number of agencies now that an attempt had been made to survey a larger number. In this way it might be easier to establish closer and more meaningful contacts within the Agencies and to complete further research. Both types of research would complement each other and add to the understanding of organisational barriers and methods to achieve greater participation of women.



chapter five

evaluation of organisational training

The original tendering process called for tenders to provide for Organisational Change Training on the topics of gender proofing and the participation of women within key organisations.

5.1 Overall vision, process and timelines for the training

The aim of the training was to assist identified key organisations in Blanchardstown with the opening up of avenues for women from RAPID communities, so that more women could become involved in decision-making at local and regional level. It was envisaged that the programme would take the form of training on gender mainstreaming or other gender awareness training.

The choice of which organizations which would be offered training was to be informed by the research. The training was to assist organisations to gender mainstream their programmes, as required by commitments made by the Irish government under the Amsterdam Treaty and the Beijing Platform for Action.

Based on their experience of gender training, the successful project consultants offered four two-day training courses. Organisations would be selected after the research was completed and from discussions with the Steering Group. The target for the training was to include CEOs, managers and project leaders as they would be in a situation to ensure implementation of action plans. In addition, the trainers noted the importance that a mix of genders should attend the training and that gender issues should not be purely seen within these organisations as ‘just to do with women’.

Finally the INVOLVE project and the trainers wanted to ensure that the training included the voice of the women targeted by the Leadership Training.

5.1.1 Course description

The aim of the Organisational Training was to support key policy making/influencing organisations in the Blanchardstown area to further develop strategies for involving women from RAPID areas in decision-making. The course was to run over two separate days; two days were chosen to allow for some of the initial training and skills to be applied within the workplace and subsequently reflected upon during the second day. The trainers provided the following broad outline of the course. The learning objectives were;

- To develop an understanding of a gender analytical approach to equality for women
- To develop an understanding of the importance of women’s equal participation in decision-making at all levels
- To develop an understanding of the barriers to equal participation particularly for marginalized women
- To develop an understanding of core concepts e.g. equality, gender mainstreaming, gender proofing
- To support participants to identify actions and strategies which will promote the participation of women in their organisations and the local area
- To enable participants to develop relevant skills to promote the participation of women for example use of a gender proofing tool
- To contribute to the building of commitment to supporting the participation of women from the RAPID areas



In designing the course, the first day was to focus on understanding of gender equality, rationale for greater inclusion of women in decision-making, barriers and supports needed, analysis of current situation in the organisation in this regard and identification of goals for work before the second days training.

The second day was broadly designed to include reports on learning and progress since day one, approaches and tools for gender mainstreaming, application of this to own context, detailed action planning to advance greater inclusion of women from disadvantaged areas in decision-making.

The training would use a range of methods including short inputs, interactive exercises, small and large group discussions. The trainers planned to demonstrate a number of gender analysis tools with participants which they could subsequently use within their own organisations.

5.1.2 Progress in delivery of training

Informed by the research and the discussion at the Mid-term evaluation, the Steering Group made a final decision as to the key organisations which would be targeted for the Organisational Training. Four organisations were chosen; the HSE and Fingal Local Authority, the INVOLVE Network affiliated to the INVOLVE project and the Board of the RAPID project. The HSE and Fingal local authority were chosen as being two of the main statutory agencies concerned with many of the issues raised by the women. The INVOLVE network and Board of RAPID were chosen as the former represents key community development organisations and the latter provided a window to a wide range of agencies in the area. Both also represent entities sharing a particular interest or focus within the Blanchardstown region.

Senior managers within these organisations were targeted through their representatives on the Steering Group and by direct follow up by the Co-ordinator. The project consultants were contracted to deliver the training. The trainers participated in the recruitment process by

- meeting with the local authority in advance of the training. This approach proved successful as more senior people were nominated for the training (day 2)
- the trainers met with the HSE and negotiated a revised programme based on their needs – however this training did not go ahead.
- the training was also promoted at the Research Report launch.

In reality it proved difficult to proceed with the full training programme. In total the following was achieved;

- INVOLVE network - 2 days training delivered to one group
- Fingal County Council – 2 days training provided. Each day was to a different group. The second day was attended by more senior personnel.
- HSE –Several provisional days were arranged for the training. Preparatory work was completed which included revision of the course programme to meet HSE organisational objectives resulting in a revision of the course into one day. No course was delivered due to difficulties in securing sufficient senior management commitment to the course.
- RAPID board- no course delivered. The Co-ordinator and representatives of Vocal Women made a presentation to the board, which was received well. Despite this, there were no takers for the training, although some RAPID board members had already done the training by virtue of being in the INVOLVE Network.

This outcome does not reflect the effort which was undertaken to try to establish links and arrange the training. All emails and reports of communications were copied to the evaluator so that progress could be monitored. In addition the training was customized as requested to meet the needs of agencies if required.

As a result the evaluation focuses primarily on the reasons why courses did not proceed.

5.1.3 Course evaluation and key learning

Course evaluation sheets

Of the days (4 in total, representing 3 courses) which did proceed, the trainers provided an evaluation sheet to course participants.

The course was evaluated very positively in one course (INVOLVE Network) with a commitment to use the learning on gender mainstreaming, the INVOLVE project and the research within their own organisation. The most useful aspects were the tools demonstrated around gender proofing and the facilitation of a discussion on future planning 'after INVOLVE'. Within this training all respondents felt the content of the course on both days was 'about right' or 'very useful' and the methodology used by the facilitators was 'helpful' or 'about right'

Within the second course (Fingal) participants reported enjoying the course with all reporting the content was



'helpful or very useful' and the methodology used by the facilitators was helpful. However many wondered whether they were the best persons to receive such training as they were quite junior within their organisation and the course was more for senior managers. Although managers had been targeted, none were in attendance. Participants reported learning about female participation and gender barriers, importance of planning and consultation and from the interaction with their colleagues they learned of the services provided by different departments to RAPID areas.

The second day was attended by a more senior group who also evaluated the course positively but again some noted the lack of senior involvement and leadership in this area. Most felt they would use aspects of the training, either by being more aware of gender equality in their work, using the learning in future consultations or to generate policies with staff. Some felt they were not working in relevant areas for the training. Many raised time constraints and workloads as barriers to giving the issue more consideration.

Key learning from discussions with project consultants, Co-ordinator, persons responsible for organising training and Steering Group

Securing senior management commitment

Both the Steering Group and the participant felt that securing senior management engagement prior to training is a key component to success. In retrospect, the training did not have a solid base of relationships and senior management 'buy-in' upon which to build. This had also emerged as a recommendation from the research. This was not surprising given the timeframe of the INVOLVE project but is a consideration for future developments.

The training was targeted at senior managers but these were very difficult to recruit. Recruitment needs to be through a strong internal 'champion' within the organisation. However over-reliance on one person can cause difficulties if this person is assigned to other areas or if they are not senior enough to influence their own organisation.

The primary implication of not reaching senior managers related to integration of learning into organisational activities. It follows that if those attending do not have power to direct their own work then they will be unable to deliver on actions to analyse and move towards greater gender equality within organisations.

Preparatory and planning work

Both the research and the direct experience of those looking to organise and deliver the training showed that this type of organisational training needs a long lead in time in order to engage with organisations.

The project aimed to recruit approximately 10 senior managers from within the organisations and relied on the capacity of one main contact person to engage with and to recruit these managers. Participants in the final project evaluation noted that an alternative approach to achieving a better organisational understanding of women's barriers to participation may be to engage on a one-to-one basis with key targeted managers within organisations to look at policies and processes within these organisations.

Others noted that participants need clear briefings in advance of the training; this implies a responsibility on the key contact person to be able to brief attendees in advance. In turn this requires clear briefing and communication materials for use within organisations.

Practical issues

Overall it was noted by participants in the evaluation that time is required to prepare for organisational training and to meet with managers or agencies prior to training. This leads to the recommendation that budgets for training need to include resources for relationship building which would include sufficient planning time, time to follow up with organisations and time to customise training if required.

This type of training required two trainers to co-facilitate due to the variation and complexity of some of the discussions which the training can provoke.

Reasons put forward for non-engagement

Those participating in the evaluation put forward a number of reasons as to why organisations did not participate easily in the organisational training. It is important to note that these reasons included some personal views of respondents. There may be other reasons for non engagement.

- In some statutory agencies and local political structures, women are not represented at senior level within management – this makes it difficult to engage these organisations in work concerned with the issue of gender equality. On the opposite side, others noted that in some organisations many of the senior managers are women who may feel they have considerable awareness of gender issues although this does not imply an



awareness of gender related barriers to participation.

- The training was better received in the INVOLVE Network as these organisations were already engaged and familiar with the INVOLVE project.
- There appears to be a lack of belief in agencies as to the value of gender mainstreaming – many respondents confused it with equality proofing and felt it had been adequately covered in other training. This might require promoters to look at how the organisational training is presented and explained to organisations so that it is seen as being separate to equality training, innovative and of practical relevance to organisations.
- No men attended the INVOLVE Network training. This lack of male interest was noted by one of the speakers at the launch of the research report as an ongoing challenge.
- Each statutory agency has internal directorates which can operate quite separately. Some participants felt the 'wrong' area of their organisation was represented. For example, the community section of the local authority was not in attendance

Of the organisations which were not able to participate, the feedback provided noted that

- The capacity of large organisations to participate in this type of training is limited compared to smaller community development type organisations which appear more advanced in their capacity to engage in more innovative type of training.
- Senior managers within statutory agencies are already under great pressure – it may always remain difficult for them to participate in non-core organisational training. Targets need to be realistic – ten managers may be just too many. Training provided must be adaptable and of direct relevance to organisations and their strategic goals. This may mean reframing gender analysis focus to align with the organisational goals.
- The RAPID co-ordinator reflected that RAPID in itself is not an organisation but a forum for a number of organisations – in practical terms this meant it was less suitable for organisational training
- The priorities of one organisation are often not the same as those of other organisations. Within many of the large statutory agencies there is substantial internal change underway. This can make it difficult to reach managers, sustain ongoing contact with existing managers (who may change roles) and finally to pursue non-organisational priorities.

Value of training

Those participating in the evaluation noted the ongoing importance of organisational training concerning gender equality. Areas where they noted an ongoing need for gender proofing and a focus on participation included development of primary health care centres, county development plans, forthcoming plans to build Metro stations and development of local area plans.

The trainers noted that it can be possible to achieve strong senior management buy-in – both the Donegal VEC and the North Western Health Board (now HSE West) were able to designate senior managers to attend organisation training on gender equality and participation of women. It ultimately depends on the commitment of senior managers.

As part of the Belfast Agreement, organisations in Northern Ireland are required to address equality issues within their structures. This is most probably a requirement which will 'travel South' and may be legislated for in the future. This will make this type of training more valuable and relevant.

5.2 Recommendations for future projects

Respondents felt that the aim to provide Organisational Training was very ambitious but for the reasons outlined above all felt it was still very relevant. The following recommendations reflect their response of project participants:

- Allow time and budget to facilitate a long lead in time for Organisational Training and pre-planning work with agencies and trainers
- Ensure that an approach to securing commitment for Organisations Training is developed prior to the training being promoted. This might include one-to-one work with senior managers, working with selected organisations or using a planning group to tease out training and specific requirements of organisations.
- Ensure training is championed by an internal senior manager within selected organisations
- The concepts of gender mainstreaming, participation and gender equality need to be revisited to ensure they are appealing to external agencies. This might be as simple as looking at the language and communication materials around the training.

chapter six

conclusions and policy considerations

Chapters 3 to 5 document the processes, key learning and recommendations from each of the elements. A brief discussion on overall conclusions is provided below.

6.1 Conclusions

The INVOLVE project ran from Autumn 2005 to June 2007. The project aimed at encouraging the participation of greater numbers of women from the RAPID areas *within Dublin 15 structures*. The project aim was supplemented by a number of action oriented objectives⁸, which were;

- to recruit a Co-ordinator
- to establish strong management and operational structures to manage and implement project
- to contract an evaluator for the lifetime of the project
- to target and recruit the participants
- to establish course/session work which will seek to explore the women's current experience of participation with decision makers and the barriers and obstacles which prevent them from participating.
- to undertake an audit to examine current decision making process in a range of statutory and development organisations
- to identify key senior mentors in participating organisations who have a role in decision making which impact on women's lives
- to 'roll-out' a training schedule in RAPID areas
- to promote decision making and awareness through a community Roadshow
- to evaluate the impact of the programme on organisational change/participation in decision making/awareness/involvement

These objectives were translated into three distinct elements operating in tandem within the overall project. Each element is discussed in detail within each of the relevant chapters. Overall the project performed well in terms of meeting its aims and objectives. As with many innovative and demonstration projects of this type some areas were more successful than others.

6.1.1 Vocal Women Leadership Training Programme

The strengths and reflections of key learning from all layers of the training programme show that the course was received positively by women themselves. Whilst logistical problems did emerge, the evaluation has shown that the course can be realistically delivered within disadvantaged communities. Key elements required to deliver the project are

- skilled coordination and administration
- skilled support from a steering group and strong and positive engagement of community partners
- suitable venues and transport

8. Taken directly from Pobal Action Plan 2004



A key barrier to the effective delivery of the training was childcare and this needs to be considered and resolved prior to programme commencement. Much of this is beyond the control of small projects and requires a more strategic regional and indeed national response.

The target of 80 women from disadvantage communities was in retrospect not achievable. Whether it is good to set high targets, in order to achieve reasonable outcomes which allow for high attrition, is debatable. Prior to agreeing funding, discussions on the feasible project reach should be fully debated between funders and recipients. As it happened, this area did not have the community infrastructure to facilitate such large numbers (see childcare and venues). The high attrition rate is common to many community training programmes which are run in disadvantaged areas. This aspect is in essence a consideration for overall programmes aiming to increase the participation of women from disadvantaged communities and must be factored into programme expectations at the outset. Ways to increase retention should be explored at programme planning and initiation stages.

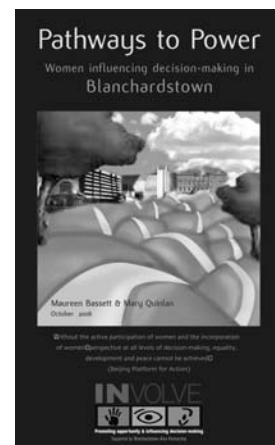
In conclusion, it can be noted that the creative leadership training is having a positive impact on the capacity of the women to participate. It is clear that women are beginning to feel more confident and personally capable of managing their interaction both within their personal and family relationships and also within the wider community. A more long term evaluation within the context of a future project would be useful in tracking the progression of participants so that skills transfer and long term levels of participation in decision making structures could be measured.

6.1.2 Conclusions: Research Project

The Research Project resulted in the publication of the research report: *Pathways to Power: Women influencing decision-making in Blanchardstown* by Maureen Bassett & Mary Quinlan, October 2006. Available on www.involve.ie or directly from the INVOLVE project.

The Research Project delivered a valid tool which can be used to further develop understanding of participation of women in decision making. The response rate was disappointing and could be improved in future projects through stronger liaison with organisations prior to research commencing.

The research should be used as a foundation from which to build further knowledge of organisational and their perceptions and needs concerning greater participation of women in decision making structures.



6.1.3 Conclusions: Organisational Training

The Organisational Training represents a methodology to achieve change within organisations. A number of key challenges can be identified through the lessons learned from the organisational training within this project. These can be summarised as follows;

- There is an ongoing challenge to achieving greater participation of women within statutory organisations. The recruitment processes, policy making process and difficulties in engaging with these organisations means these systems are not open to new ways of working.
- For a community development type project delivering training to a statutory agency, a particular approach needs to be developed, delivered through good communication and dialogue and by persons who understand organisational constraints. This might best be achieved by concentrating on one area or organisation and using a small planning group to tease out expectations and requirements in advance of training. In addition there is a role for national organisations to work from a 'top down' approach with such agencies.



6.2 From practice to policy – what can be learned?

Overall the project delivered its aim to encourage the participation of greater numbers of women from the RAPID areas within Dublin 15 structures. The project was innovative in nature and as such the lessons learned are of great value to future projects.

Overall the evaluation shows that the project was successful in achieving its main objectives and as a result the community development organisations in the area have increased their capacity and understanding of women's participation and how they can play a role in shaping projects and initiatives to develop this vital work. More importantly conversations with the women directly impacted by the training shows that leadership training using creative methodologies is an innovative and engaging method of attracting and building the capacity of the very women the EWM set out to target; namely disadvantaged women with potential to engage with decision making structures at varying levels.

In reflecting on the barriers to ongoing development two recurring themes emerged across the elements. These two themes; namely **lack of quality flexible childcare** and the **policy learning round statutory engagement**, require more support and strategic thinking from a national policy perspective so that change can happen at grass roots level.

The issue of childcare is not new – all community development projects have had to grapple with the childcare requirements of their target group. At a national level, the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme has resulted in significant investment in developing the infrastructures for childcare facilities and such progress is to be lauded. However, there is still a need for national direction in the development of 'step up' childcare facilities which allow women (or indeed men) to participate in training, developmental and, most relevant to this programme, decision making structures on a more flexible basis within the community. Such childcare needs to be readily accessible and be high quality in nature. The community childcare facilities which do exist are not adequate to support and sustain ongoing work to increase participation and the transition of women towards employment. This issue is not confined to the Blanchardstown area and ideally should be examined from a national perspective.

Throughout the project and most particularly in relation to the Organisational Training, there were difficulties in trying to achieve statutory engagement in the work being undertaken within the strands. While there is no doubt that this type of work can take time there are areas where national support could assist. This is of particular relevance when the ideal of "mainstreaming" is considered. The work presented in this project represents a 'bottom up' approach to organisational change and ideally should be supported by simultaneous drive from 'the top'. This might include a role for Pobal and the parent organisation at a national level to champion the need for organisations to become engaged in looking at the issue of female participation and to communicate the lessons learned from these projects to national health, local government, social and family affairs and education sectors. An example might be to engage with the HSE at national level to explore how the HSE can develop its capacity to increase the extent of female participation as a part of consumer participation initiatives. It seems fruitless to work towards greater change in the community and at the interface between communities and organisations if there is not a parallel effort made within policy channels to influence these organisations and work towards achieving change 'from the top'.

To quote one of the partners to the project

'how is the learning and the lessons for policy communicated at national level to other agencies?'

The evaluation as presented demonstrates that initiatives to promote the participation of greater numbers of women in decision-making in the workplace and in local authority/agency planning can be developed within community development structures. These initiatives require time and commitment and a vision for long term change. Equally they require reflection and support from national and policy making structures to ensure that change occurs from within these structures.

Appendix I: Aims, objectives, inputs and outputs of the evaluation of the project

Table 1: Aims, objectives, inputs and outputs of the evaluation of the project.

Aim and Objectives	Inputs	Outputs
To evaluate the project and its components.	Initial meeting with Co-ordinator and ongoing liaison	Creating an evaluation framework for this project. This mapped the strategic aims and objectives of the elements within the project and identified the expected inputs, processes and outputs in all its activity strands.
Objectives; To describe and analyse the inputs, process and outputs of the project in all its activity strands.	Initial meeting with steering group. Initial meeting with consultants for strand 1, 11 and 111	For projects not yet developed, inputting at planning stages to ensure performance indicators are established at the outset and the projects lend themselves to evaluation. These will then be agreed in the final evaluation framework.
To assess the degree to which the projects aims and objectives were achieved.	Midway process evaluation with steering group and consultants for strand I, II and III (mid way evaluation)	Tracking the development of projects and recording progress as well as measuring outputs from the project elements
To assess the impact of the project.	Midway process evaluation of strand I with project women	Midterm process evaluation of overall project and strand I (training)
To identify the strengths and weaknesses of the project.	Final evaluation interviews with steering group	Evaluation of research launch.
To capture the main learning from the project.	coordinator and consultants from Strands I, II and III	Qualitative summative evaluation with persons involved with the project (including those involved at funding level, steering, coordination and the women participants) to look at overall project performance, achievement of original objectives, management structures, impacts, strengths and areas for development
To make recommendations arising from the work of the project.	Final evaluation meeting with women from strand I	Completion of an overall evaluation report with recommendations.
	Review of project diaries (2)	
	Discussion with persons co-ordinating organisational training within chosen organisations	
	Design and completion of evaluation forms for launch of research report	
	Exploration of the context, history and funder's requirements for the project with project Steering Group and project Co-ordinator.	

Appendix II: **Summary of Vocal Women Training Programme – Emer Dolphin & Siobhan Larkin**

Aim of programme

To develop and deliver an innovative leadership training programme for women living in the RAPID areas in Blanchardstown using creative arts methodologies

Methodology

The training had an adult education approach and was participative, empowering, experiential and group-centred. The methodology was highly creative, using a range of mediums – primarily voice, movement and art, complemented by dance, drama, percussion and simulation games. The programme also had an action-learning focus, emphasising the practical application of the learning to participants' lives.

Structure

3 groups each meeting once a week over twenty weeks, and occasionally brought together for a common 'big group' session.

Accreditation

Personal Effectiveness Level 3 FETAC

Core Trainers

Emer Dolphin,	087-2745539	edolphin@iol.ie
Siobhan Larkin	087-121-7196	siuinlarkin@eircom.net

Both trainers have significant training and expertise in the following areas, which they combined and integrated in the development and delivery of the programme:

- Community Development (have worked as Training and Organisational Consultants in community sector for many years)
- Voice Work (Naked Voice Facilitator Graduates, trained by Chloe Goodchild)
- Leadership Skills (Landmark Education and other leadership courses and experience)
- Creative methodologies (trained in many workshops in dance, art, breathwork, shamanic and alternative health and spirituality)

Programme Content

The programme content was structured around the following inputs:

- key theoretical and creative frameworks relevant to personal development, social analysis, community development and leadership
- participative exploration of a range of creative methodologies including voice, movement, art, dance, drama, percussion and simulation games
- structured dialogue and exercises on the practical application of the learning for participants in their everyday lives
- planning and production a number of collective creative public performances
- portfolio-building skills to track and document the learning for the purposes of accreditation and evaluation

The 9 sections below give a sample of some of the core content of the programme. All sessions were facilitated by the Core Trainers except for Art, Drama and Percussion which had guest facilitators. The Core Trainers also participated in these sessions to ensure the integration and cohesion of the whole programme.

1 Key Framework – The Three Circles of Self ©

The 3 Circles of Self was a key framework used throughout the course. It distinguishes three realms of our lives, each of which have a specific area of knowledge and skills. It explores how to develop, balance and integrate these areas to live a practical, powerful and peaceful life.

Content:

- Rational and practical skills
- Emotional intelligence – feelings and self-awareness
- Deeper – creative and spiritual wisdom

Rational and Practical Skills:

- Planning
- Organising
- Analysing
- Reasoning
- Goal-setting
- Doing

Emotional Intelligence

- Being aware of our feelings
- Being aware of other people's feelings
- Being able to express our feelings authentically and responsibly
- Being able to deal with the negative emotions e.g anger and hurt, especially those in our emotional 'bin bag' where we have dumped negative experiences from the past
- Being able to play and have fun

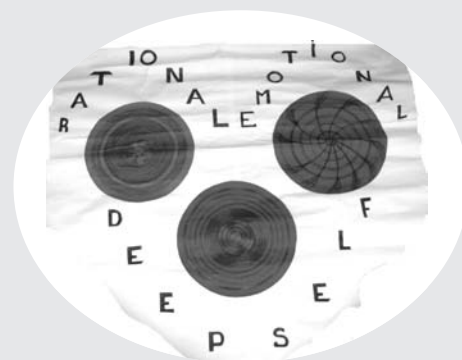
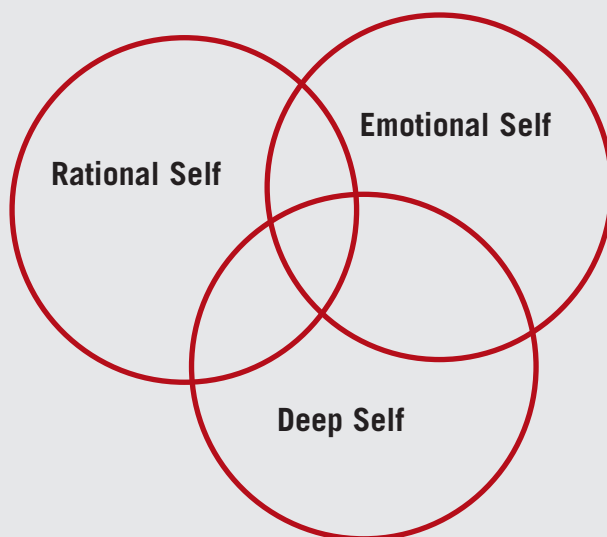
Deeper Wisdom

- Listening for our own depth and wisdom
- Trusting the Wise Woman within
- Exploring purpose and meaning in our lives
- Contribution and leadership– choosing to make a difference
- Ways to nurturing our Deeper Self: nature, meditation, relaxation, chant, breathwork, and creativity

Exercises:

Following input and discussion of the framework:

- Do a drawing showing how the three areas relate to each other in your own life
- Discuss how you want to balance and strengthen these three areas in the next year
- Set goals for yourself to do this



©Emer Dolphin

2 Voicework

The vocal frameworks used in this training are sourced from The Naked Voice (www.thenakedvoice.com), which is an innovative sound and vocal arts initiative developed by internationally renowned singer and composer Chloe Goodchild, with whom both Emer and Siobhan have trained for several years.

The Naked Voice methodology creates a Singing Field – ‘a meeting place to sound and sing beyond the boundaries of creed and culture, where longing and belonging can dance together.’

Content

- The Sanskrit Scale as Metaphor for Life (enhanced by contemplative movements developed by Shintaido master Masashi Minagawa.)

SA	Union
NI	Surrender
DA	Cutting through the illusion
PA	Responsibility
MA	Compassion
GA	Material security
RE	Relationship
SA	Nothing

Singing the Sanskrit Scale in groups, in pairs and at home on their own enabled participants to become aware of and explore their relationship to each of the realms above.

- The Seven Chakra Mantra

So-Aum	Crown
Aum	Brow
Ham	Throat
Yam	Heart
Ram	Solar Plexus
Vam	Navel
Lam	Base

This is a one-note chant which grounds and aligns your entire energy system.

- Sacred Chant

Various ancient and modern contemplative chants were taught and sung to create a Singing Field of harmonious energy.

- Naked Voice Work

This uses the voice and sound to authentically express and transform personal issues. It was also used to explore feelings around key community issues at a group level

Exercises:

Through the awareness and ongoing practise of the above frameworks and tools, the group learnt to listen with respect to itself and its members with a total acceptance of every voice. Each session started with a grounding and meditation exercise, followed by chanting for 10 – 15 minutes. This enabled participants to build a deep space of authentic listening and community within the group

Resources: CD player, Chloe Goodchild’s *Sound Awareness* and ‘In A’



3 Movement

The movement used is Shintaido or New Body Way and is an internationally recognised body movement that cultivates the spirit along with the mind and body. Emer and Siobhan trained with Shintaido Master Masashi Minagawa as part of their Naked Voice training

Content

- *Kenko Taiso* (“healthy morning exercise”) – warm-up energizer exercises which stretch and release tension from our bodies. They pay particular attention to opening and loosening our minds, bodies and spirits in preparation for the rest of class.
- *Wakame* (“Seaweed movement”) - in which one person (the leader) acts as the ocean current and the other person, (the receiver) mimics the wavy, undulating flow of seaweed in the current. It is a wonderful sensitivity training exercise.
- *Tenshingosō* - representing the life cycle of a human being or the universe, from the “before death” moment of “um,” through the birth and flowering of “ah,” the expansive movement of “A,” the culminating and bringing to fruition movement of “E,” and the returning or giving back of “O,” finally completing the cycle and returning to the darkness, nothingness, and non-existence of “um.” The movements can be accompanied by making the sounds.

Exercises:

The above movements were used regularly to energise and deepen awareness and connection in the group. The Tenshingosō was also used as a project management framework for preparing creative performances.

4 Dance

Dance was approached through first building an awareness of body language and our relationship with space and movement. Participants were then encouraged to move into free self-expression in dance, and to combine voice and movement together.

Content and exercises

- Shintaido movement and body warm-ups.
- Body language awareness exercise and our relationship with space – moving towards and away from each other in different ways
- Free dancing to Gabrielle Roth’s *Endless Wave*
- Sharing and feedback on experience
- Individual performances combining singing and movement

Resources: CD system, Gabrielle Roth’s *Endless Wave Volume* , large space

5 Art

Guest Facilitator Valerie Coombes (Ph. 01 2840644)

Valerie calls her work *Freeing the Artist Within*, a gentle process which includes body relaxation, meditation, focusing, sound and stimulation of the imagination.

Content and exercises:

- Relaxation and visualisation exercise
- 3 drawings of fear, a current issue and a positive solution to that issue
- Sharing and feedback
- Painting the nucleus or core or ourselves and sharing that with others
- Freestyle expression to music

Resources: Paper, paint, pastels, charcoal, pallets, wipes, kitchen towel, cling film, brushes, sponges, space.

6 Drama

Guest Facilitator: Orla Hassan (desertfishproductions@yahoo.com)

Orla is trained in Forum Theatre, which uses drama and theatre to empower participants to explore and transform their experience of oppressive situations

Content and exercises

- Background information on Forum Theatre approach
- Games to heighten our senses and to get us out of habitual behavior
- Image Theatre – using the human body as a tool for representing feelings, ideas, and relationships. Participants create anything from one-person to large-group image sculptures that reflect the sculptor's impression of a situation or oppression.
- Working on a specific issue through Forum Theatre to develop a scene and engage the audience in transforming oppressive situations
- Feedback and discussion throughout

7 Percussion

Guest Facilitators:

Sinead O'Brien (Ph. 086 394 6899) Web: www.livingrhythm.ie
& Siobhan Daffy (Ph. 087 417 9710)

Sinead and Siobhan facilitated a dynamic and lively group session using percussion and voice to create a dialogue amongst participants. This session was deliberately put first to focus on bonding the group through fun self-expression and creative play.

Content:

- Warm-up exercises
- Vocalising names and sound exercise
- Body rhythm game
- Percussion rhythm exercises
- Drum circle involving improvised creative play facilitated from centre of circle

Resources: Various percussion instruments, drums, space.

8 Simulation Games:

Simulation games were used as a fun way to explore key themes relating to practical management, planning and team-work skills as well as issues such as leadership, power and powerlessness.

Content:

- Planning and Team-work: Group is split into several competing teams of 5-6 people each. Each team is given a supply of old newspapers, masking tape and stapler. Their task is to build a high, stable, stand-alone structure made from newspapers within 15 minutes. The highest structure wins.
- Feedback on practical skill of planning and experience of team-work
- Our Relationship with Power: Group is split into 2 rows facing each other. One row is given a cushion, representing their power. Their partners in facing row then come forward and ask them for the cushion and then roles are reversed. The exercise can be done several times exploring different ways of being e.g. being assertive, being submissive, manipulative, pushy, generous, playful etc.,
- Feedback on what we observed about ourselves in the different roles and different ways of being

Resources: lots of old newspapers, masking tape and staplers, cushions

Design of cover by Printwell Co-operative inspired by a painting by Joan Campion of Vocal Women's Group Dublin 15.



INVOLVE



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More information available on the Involve project available from Co-ordinator Iris Lyle, telephone 01 824 7843 or email to irisinvolve@bap.ie



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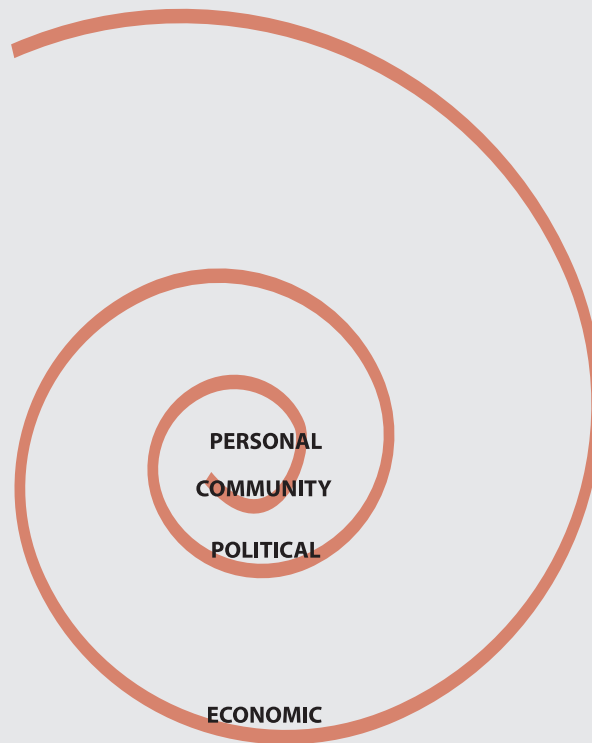
9 Social Analysis

Social Analysis was explained through the Spiral Analysis framework, adapted by Emer Dolphin from the work of Sean Healy and Brigid Reynolds, and published in *Making Connections*, Banulacht 1994.

Content:

Spiral Analysis model

Social Analysis Spiral



1 The Personal

How do I experience things?

2 The Community

What are the dominant beliefs, values and how are these passed on?

3 The Political

How are decisions made and who makes them?

4 The Economic

Who owns and controls resources?

Exercises:

Pick one of key issues for women e.g. Health, Childcare, Crime and use the model to analyse it within the Blanchardstown area.

Resources: Photocopy of 'Using the Spiral' section from *Making Connections*, Banulacht 1994

