



# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE TOWARDS A COMMON FRAMEWORK AND UNDERSTANDING

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Layout by Olivier Hargot ([www.o-h.be](http://www.o-h.be))

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# INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

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## Anastasia Crickley, Vice President UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Congratulations to all who have been involved in the development of this framework. I was glad to be associated with some of the thinking and also with its development in Ireland. I believe it is a very important milestone for connecting community development thinking and practice with progress in Europe and beyond.

Reading the framework, I am reminded that the Council of Europe's Charleroi Declaration states very clearly that *'the fight against poverty should not reinforce social aid arrangements which alleviate effects but do not tackle causes'*, and goes on to acknowledge *'the right to participate in decision making as a necessary pre requisition for human rights'*<sup>1</sup>. I recall also that the Budapest Declaration points to community development *as prioritising actions and perspectives of communities in the development of social economic and environmental policy and which also promotes the autonomous voice of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.*

The community development framework presented here, seeks to underpin the intention, practice, tools and the outcomes expected of community development in order to create the conditions for a just, inclusive and sustainable society by supporting communities to engage in collective action. It thus

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1. Resolution 243 (1993) Citizenship and extreme poverty

reinforces, develops and gives 2014 perspectives to the Budapest document.

The framework, which acknowledges community development as collective in analysis, means communities begin with their own analysis – not one which is imposed by the European Commission or a local parliament or a regional authority or anyone else. The actions are informed by collective decisions. While lots of very useful processes have individual outcomes the focus of community development interventions are collective outcomes which change the collective lives of the community or group as a whole.

It is also helpful to clarify the difference between doing community development and managing its outcomes. For example, if as a result of a community development process, you achieve a new local or national service, it doesn't continue to be community development when you manage the crèche or employment service. That may be excellent, useful and essential work made possible through community development but we are confusing ourselves if we continue to call managing the results achieved through community development processes, community development.

There is also need for clarity about the differences and links between community development and other forms of interventions in communities. Adult education initiatives (concerned with education for individual adults) and community based services could, but don't essentially have collective outcomes. While social work interventions often use community development methods to establish and work with people in groups, these methods are usually employed in order to achieve individual rather than collective outcomes – individuals better able to cope and make life choices rather than collective contributions to community or policy change.

In addition, I think the contribution of and need for community development in local development needs to be recognised. In a number of member states, EU programmes including LEADER have failed to spend their budgets. Obfuscation of the guidelines by local and national authorities who want to control the resources has been a barrier, but there has also been a lack of direct and sufficient engagement in community development processes which fully involve marginalised people and groups. Local development is a statement of outcomes which can only be achieved through good community development to create the conditions where people can participate fully in achieving such outcomes.

Community development is key for human rights realisation. Human rights are experienced by individuals but have a collective orientation and without community development processes are hard to realise. For community development to be effective in human rights realisation there is a need to use the language and engage in the spaces more often left to human rights lawyers and civil liberties groups. This requires actions from collective mobilisation around single issues, to engagement with regional and UN Treaty Bodies. Achieving rights outcomes also requires a focus on recognition and redistribution. By recognition I mean work, for example, that addresses gender discrimination and work that also addresses discrimination based on racism. Challenging links need to be made between inequalities and exclusions experienced by people from 'old' communities with inequalities and exclusions experienced by people who are more recently part of our countries. Gendered communities and gendered relations of oppression are a starting point, not an add on to community development work. This reality that communities are gendered, and that gendered relations of oppression continue to persist not just within communities but also within the mechanisms set up to inform collective processes,

provides a very real challenge for practice.

Addressing racism, poverty and other discriminations as well as promoting social and environmental justice, requires more than demands, which are also essential regarding these. Processes of consciousness raising and engagement core to community development are required which develop for example, integrating lived links between community and environmental concerns.

All of these considerations emerge because in community development we are not just talking about the advantaged community but require also the specific and targeted inclusion of marginalised people. We are not just talking about additional services which address the symptoms but frameworks which analyse and address the causes. We go beyond the provision of immediate services or supports, to communities as active agents in their own development and as active agents in addressing their own key issues and concerns. All of these pose challenges to the predefined outcomes, predefined conditions and predefined indicators of the initiatives which fund the work.

The framework and the associated contributions in this publication help articulate these challenges and pinpoint pathways through them which are consistent with community development principles and can facilitate funding concerns.

I hope you find them as useful as I do.



# INTRODUCTION

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## Hans Andersson, Chairperson EuCDN

Combined European Bureau for Social Development was founded in Swansea 1990. The aim was to facilitate joint projects and applications in the European context and to organize more systematic exchanges between national community work organizations and to promote community development on a European level. From 3 members in the start CEBSD has gradually grown to an independent European NGO with 11 member organizations. In 2011, we changed our name to the European Community Development Network in light of the growth in recognition and understanding of community development and the concern of the Network to focus specifically on community development as a means of intervention for social justice and inclusion.

In 2004 CEBSD's and CEBSD Hungarian partner "Hungarian Association for Community Development" together with "The International Association for Community Development organised a conference on "Building Civil Society in Europe through Community Development." The conference was attended by representatives from 33 countries resulting in the Budapest Declaration - a building stone for CEBSD's work. As a manifesto statement, the Budapest Declaration reflects community development principles and their application in work with rural and urban communities and on specific issues affecting not just geographical communities but also communities of identity or interest.

This project builds on that manifesto, bringing to life the specific goals of community development, processes through which it happens, tools we use

and outcomes delivered. In our view the framework which was developed through processes of reflective dialogue and engagement in eleven countries, offers, a comprehensive reference for good community development work, applicable to the countries represented in EuCDN and beyond. Finally we wish to express our deep appreciation to Magda Tancau for all her work in coordinating this project. We also acknowledge with gratitude the European Commission for funding to support this work and we are hopeful it will be of value to anyone interested in collective work to address social, economic and environmental concerns.



# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE: SHARED LANGUAGE, SHARED PURPOSE, COLLECTIVE IMPACT

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## Oonagh Mc Ardle, Vice-chairperson EuCDN

Community development is practiced across all the member countries of EuCDN. This created the conditions for a collective conversation about the meaning and contribution of community development as evidenced in work with diverse communities across different contexts.

Thanks to support and funding from the Europe for Citizens programme this project involved an on-going evolving dialogue which started in ten countries, with people who are directly engaged in community development work. Each conversation started by asking people to identify the key purpose of community development, the processes by which we work, the outcomes from these processes and the fundamental values to which all of this applies. Those national conversations were brought to a transnational dialogue in Bucharest where stories, debates and discussions from each of our countries were worked through and where a final framework emerged, ultimately reflecting all of the national conversations.

The framework begins with a stated purpose of community development- in itself a value statement. Our starting point is a recognition that the world is not equal, that some communities in all of our countries are excluded and unequal as a result of structures and policies that we have created. The defining purpose overall of community development is to transform that reality through the involvement and actions of people as their own agents of change.

Community development processes are distinguished from other activity and ambitions for a more equal, just and sustainable society through its processes of working with people to build knowledge, skills, analysis and action to support people to be central to the achievement of change. Our fundamental belief is that people have the right to meaningfully participate in society, through also participating in decisions that are made about them and acknowledge that some groups in our societies have little access to this type of participation.

Collective analysis for collective action towards collective outcomes is a fundamental feature of how community development happens. This means working with people collectively to understand and analyse their shared problems and working with them so that they are part of changing these common concerns. Collective outcomes mean that their actions benefit the community as a whole, rather than just personal development, individual gain or individual advancement.

When it comes to values, community development seeks to address poverty and inequality by working for equality. This involves working with people to challenge and change the attitudes of individuals as well as the practices and policies of institutions and structures which discriminate against people.

Methods and tools in community development are varied and various. Community development workers use many methods to support people to increase their knowledge and consciousness to act together for collective outcomes.

Outcomes are the answer to that *so what* question. We bring people together, we support people to think and act together. So what happens as a result? When we talk about outcomes in community development it is important to acknowledge that outcomes are connected to processes and to our intended purpose. Community development itself is concerned with outcomes through a commitment to developing an analysis for action and an analysis of the consequences of that action. From the outset, the intended outcomes from community development have to be linked to the concerns of communities themselves, linked to their agendas as defined in their own terms. The issues that communities themselves are concerned with and want to change are the defined outcomes that those concerned with community development must look towards.

A concern with transformative change requires aiming for change which has a lasting impact on the lives of communities for future generations. Community development is about working with people for a more just and equal society, recognising that inequality has not been created by communities themselves and will not therefore be solved by communities themselves, so the kind of thinking which supports and maintains inequality needs to change. This requires aiming at but beyond the level of community where communities themselves are better at negotiating, working collectively together and having an impact and an influence. A further ambition is to make an impact on structures and policies that have a negative impact on the collective lives of

people. A further ambition is to make an impact on the negative mindsets and ideologies about certain groups in our societies which have created and sustain inequality in the lives of communities.

While our framework aims to explain community development in an accessible format, the work itself is not simple or simplistic. The objectives are ambitious but our experience shows that through long-term commitment of resources and the support of competent professional community development workers, positive changes have been created which will affect future generations. The commitment of resources and supports for meaningful community development is an essential requirement towards achieving our collective ambition for a more socially cohesive, democratic, just and inclusive Europe (and beyond).

Finally, we look forward to hearing your feedback in order to ensure the on-going development of this framework and future discussions about community development theory and practice in our efforts to contribute towards good community development work not for its own sake but for greater inclusion of and equality for the communities that we work with.



# A COMMON FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Community development work is fundamentally about people working together to change their collective circumstances. It has established a clear intention, strong value base and tested processes, all of which are connected in seeking to contribute to change in the lives of communities. It is a globally growing practice, dynamically reflecting diverse communities'<sup>2</sup> conditions, contexts and challenges. For Europe it can be a powerful force in challenging injustice, environmental and economic crises, protecting human rights, advancing civil society and encouraging democratic and civic participation.

This framework has been developed to establish a shared understanding of community development across Europe by outlining its purpose - what it seeks to achieve, the values and processes underpinning this practice, the methods used and the outcomes which can be achieved.

The framework has been produced by member organisations of the European Community Development Network (EuCDN) through a process of discussion, analysis and reflection by people involved in community development work across ten European countries.

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2. **Community** is taken to mean people who share a common neighbourhood as well as those with a common identity or interest.

## Purpose

The purpose of community development is to help create the conditions for a just, inclusive and sustainable society by supporting communities to engage in collective action for transformative change.

## Values and processes

Community development has always been informed by a set of values and commitments. This value base is important in defining the people and places where its efforts are concentrated, the approach taken and the outcomes sought. Core values for community development are concerned with greater social justice. This means working for a society where human rights are promoted and all forms of oppression, discrimination and exclusion are addressed. Through articulating and applying the principles of collective learning, empowerment, participation and active citizenship, collective decision-making and action for equality, community development is a participative and dynamic process. In a structured and co-ordinated way community development acts as a catalyst for social justice through its commitment to value-based analysis, action, reflection and learning. The core values and processes are:

- › **Collective learning:** people learn and build confidence by reflecting critically on their circumstances, and from their experience of tackling issues collectively, building solidarity and support through emphasising the common aspects of individual experiences.
- › **Empowerment** happens when communities collectively build power for change through awareness raising, critical analysis and developing and sharing skills and knowledge to enhance their capacity to become



actively involved in addressing both the causes and consequences of their marginalisation.

- › **Meaningful participation** is essential for **active citizenship** based on a belief that the health of communities, and society as a whole, is enhanced when women and men are motivated and able to have a say in decisions that affect their lives. It is achieved by addressing barriers to participation and facilitating the involvement of groups who experience social exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination in decision-making, planning and action. It succeeds by creating spaces and opportunities for lived experiences shared and voices to be heard, from local to global levels.
- › **Collective action for collective outcomes** involves communities developing an analysis of their circumstances, identifying priority needs and issues and addressing these through collective action. The focus is on achieving collective outcomes for the community as a whole rather than simply the advancement of individuals. It requires the building of solidarity through alliances with other groups, organisations and agencies in order to advance key community objectives as well as learning from others, nationally and globally.
- › **Equality** involves challenging the attitudes of individuals, and the practices of institutions and society which discriminate against and marginalise women and men based on ability, age, gender, marital or family status, socio-economic status, nationality, skin colour, ethnic group, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs.

## Methods

Community workers use many tried and tested mechanisms for collective engagement, decision-making and action underpinned and informed by core purposes and values. These are linked to the processes of community development described above. Across Europe, community development methods include:

- › Bringing people together around their shared experiences and interests [such as community meetings; advocacy; social events; festivals and street parties; arts and music activities]
- › Identifying and exploring the factors underpinning their marginalisation or exclusion [such as story-dialogue, theatre of the oppressed; conflict resolution, management or transformation; facilitation; group work]
- › Building and owning evidence and a future vision [such as community-led research including community profiling and needs analyses; future visioning; focus groups; community meetings]
- › Developing confidence, skills and understanding [such as community education and learning; support; encouragement; evaluation]
- › Mobilising and organising, networking and strengthening visibility [such as strategic planning; forming and supporting community groups; communications; alliance building]
- › Taking action [such as campaigning; lobbying; engaging with public bodies and political processes; self-directed projects; fundraising]

## Outcomes

### What change happens through community development ?

Community development is concerned with delivering real and lasting change in the lived experiences of communities through the participation of those communities in analysis and actions to address their concerns and interests. Outcomes are the changes or differences that occur as a result of action taken.

Community development is outcome focused, for the following reasons. Firstly, an agreed statement of the outcomes sought by a community is simple and clear evidence of the collective ambition of that community. Secondly, that collective ambition is the outcome around which actions can be proposed and planned – it enables planning to be strategic and focussed. Finally, it provides an expression of the values and priorities of that community which are not imposed by others but are community owned. Achieving real and lasting outcomes for communities requires:

- › that communities are at the **heart of the process** of planning and action for change
- › the experiences, **concerns** and interests of communities themselves to be central to analysis and action
- › that issues associated with inequality and **social injustice are addressed**
- › an approach which is **participative**, bringing together community and other interests to look to the future and establish a shared vision of sought outcomes

- › **analysis**: encouraging a consideration of the forces and interests that could help or hinder the achievement of the sought outcomes, and **strategy**: encouraging consideration of the various ways in which the outcomes might be achieved and the selection of the most effective combination
- › **clarity** and **accountability** to the community development task
- › a concern with learning, action, reflection and **continuous improvement**

Community development outcomes are changes which occur at various levels - at the community level, at the policy or structural level and at the broader level of ideology and culture. All these levels are connected. In order to transform the concerns and realize the interests of communities, the ambition of community development is to achieve outcomes which address the causes of issues as well as their consequences. Some examples of outcomes at each of these levels are given below.

## **Outcomes at the community level**

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- › People have a better **quality of life** through concrete physical change to communities; improved access to employment; creation of new community services, places, activities; and improved accessibility to services
- › Increased **community leadership** through more people becoming involved in community activity; people becoming more confident and critically conscious; skills and knowledge being shared and strengthened; and communities being more organised, active and participative in civil society and decision-making arenas
- › Strengthened **community capacity**, meaning that communities are active and resilient; able to engage with power and negotiate, challenge or contest; and can create and implement action and development plans for community benefit
- › Changes in overall **community experience**, as communities recognise common problems and formulate common goals; people feel a strengthened sense of belonging where strong mutual trust and solidarity exists; people feel a strengthened sense of ownership and decisions are made jointly; communities are inclusive and are able to manage conflict; and communities are entrepreneurial and have increased capacity to attract or generate funds

## **Outcomes in policy, structural and governance level**

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- › Community networks or partnerships are formed where strengthened alliances reflect collective common interests
- › Community issues appear on the agenda of decision makers
- › Communities participate assertively, and have influence in decision making at local, national or European levels
- › Communities are supported to design and control their own solutions
- › Changes which benefit marginalised communities are evident in policy or practices at local, national and European levels
- › Changes which benefit marginalised communities are evident in legislation at local, national and European levels

## **Outcomes in common mind sets, ideology, thinking which informs policy and legislation making**

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- › Decision makers have a well-informed understanding of and approach to marginalised and minority groups
- › Public institution staff have a well-informed understanding of and approach to marginalised and minority groups
- › Transparency is evident in the way decisions are made
- › Services and structures respond effectively to the needs of communities including minority and marginalised communities
- › Participatory spaces reflect genuine sharing of power with marginalised and minority groups in decision-making

COMMUNITIES  
CAN OWN  
ENERGY  
SOURCE

THIS OWNS  
YOU

ROACH

SOCIETY

ENVIRONMENT

ECONOMY

LESSONS  
LEARNED

LEAD

INNOVATION

BUILD

RURAL





# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE IN ELEVEN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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To illustrate the breadth, range and impact of community development across Europe, each member of EuCDN presents an example of practice in their country. Each of the examples shows how communities have mobilised and advanced their interests or issues, and how government and other agencies have responded. The examples also show the diversity of interests and issues, and the different ways that progress was made.

The practices are as follows:

- › From Norway, the Ideas Bank Foundation shows how Oslo city council has taken advantage of Local Agenda 21 to encourage local participation, arts, and neighbourhood planning.
- › From the Czech Republic, AGORA CE writes about the adoption of community development methods to encourage resident participation in redevelopment of residential courtyards.

- › The study from FDC in Catalunya highlights the importance of sound analysis of social and economic issues, and learning both within the community and from experiences elsewhere
- › Where there are high levels of mistrust, and lack of communication between people, building connections between people through shared actions is a prerequisite. The study from the Hungarian Association for Community Development shows how this can be approached
- › The example from Poland illustrates how community development can turn round a neighbourhood perceived as dangerous and violent and where residents feel vulnerable and excluded
- › In Bulgaria, the focus is on economic and financial measures to support Roma communities achieve economic independence and sustainable income generation, and greater integration into local communities
- › Poverty and exclusion can have a dramatic negative impact on people's health. The study from Scotland illustrates how a focus on health issues in the first instance can lead to building stronger communities with influence on many other aspects of wellbeing
- › Community development can have many starting points. The work in Romania started with a determination to preserve and celebrate cultural traditions as the key to building solidarity and identity, leading to social and economic development

- › A focus on women's workplace issues was the starting point for the successful campaign in Ireland to bring about social change in favour of a highly marginalised group, and successfully secure significant changes in government policy
- › Understanding good care as a basic right for all, the work in West Flanders, Belgium, by Samenlevingsopbouw West-Vlaanderen, encourages a network of volunteers to provide innovative care service in areas where public provision is poor, and through this to build social capital and engage in policy work
- › Finally, the example from Sweden demonstrates how a network of social work and service-user organisations can help prevent debt and destitution for excluded families, while supporting study circles to raise awareness and understanding of these issues and seek better responses.



## OSLO, NORWAY: DEMOCRACY NOT ONLY FOR THE INITIATED

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Sagene is one of Oslo's 15 urban districts. Each is governed by an elected District Council. The councils are responsible in particular for kindergartens, health services, social and child care services, environment and local parks. Comprising 33,000 inhabitants within an area of just over three square kilometres, Sagene is one of the most densely populated districts in Norway. It is changing rapidly, with population influx as well as fairly high population mobility. It also has the highest proportion of municipally owned housing in Oslo. This typifies former industrial worker areas that are transforming into modern, multicultural urban environments.

Sagene community centre is the hub for Local Agenda 21 activities. One main aim of the community development work has been to reach and involve those groups who are seldom heard. The community centre was opened in 1979, but received a new lease of life in 2001 when the district decided to make it the hub for LA-21 and for new, local democratic processes to supplement the representative democracy institutions. The district council wished to explore new roles and more active civic participation. This political goal was partly fostered by the fact that Sagene for various reasons has many poor people, often living side by side with new, high cost housing. The process was initially part of a ten year project, largely financed by Oslo and the state in a citywide programme for improvement of the old inner city areas. The main objectives were: improved housing conditions, a better environment for growing up, good public spaces and security, support for drug addicts, those needing psychiatric care and the homeless, environmental quality, public transport and

strengthening of local volunteer activities.<sup>3</sup>

To achieve these goals, the employees at the community centre had to abandon the traditional approach and think outside the box about their roles as service providers and enablers. Today, there is a sustainable development team comprising four people; 40 percent of their work is dedicated to running the centre so as to reach all segments of the local population, and 60 percent to maintaining and developing local parks and outdoor spaces so that they can be accessible to all and used for outdoor activities all year round. It is the stated policy of the team to develop multi-professional projects and networks and methods to reach the most marginalised groups in the social housing. They also develop methods for integrating culture, environment and local democracy: a sustainable community is seen as one that builds health.

“Our fundamental working approach is what the Dalai Lama calls ‘a policy of kindness’ and a focus on collective values,” says section leader Susan M. Guerra, or “I am because we are. Our methodological foundation is that of community development. It’s not easy to translate the word ‘community’ since it has several shades of meaning, including the local society as a whole, togetherness, shared interests, and groupings that lie outside the main body of society or the institutional establishment. We aim to create a ‘living tissue’ that connects all these different aspects of community. We attempt an anthropological approach by making ourselves available, by listening and by being analytical. I have many person-to-person conversations; I move around in the

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3. For an evaluation of the programme, see Holm, A., *Nærmiljøsetting og levekår. Evaluering Handlingsprogram Oslo indre øst* [Local environment and living condition. Evaluation – Program of Development for Oslo’s East-Central Districts], NIBR report no. 12/2006 (Oslo: Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, 2006).

district meeting people where they are, talking about how their living conditions are, what issues they feel are important, and what they might like to contribute. We want to bring forth their narratives. These have been documented in several ways including photo exhibitions and storytelling evenings. It's all about doing simple things in ways that are close to them. When the centre became the hub for LA-21, what we did both figuratively and literally was to open doors, draw back curtains and build a stage for dialogue".<sup>4</sup>

One of the very first events was a Future Scenario Workshop<sup>5</sup> where the majority of participants were individual citizens and representatives of various local groupings, and an "Open House" event with the local politicians. Since then various dialogue methods have been applied, including face-to-face conversations and public meetings employing creative approaches including café dialogues and art projects.

Guerra relates enthusiastically how the plan for developing the local area started: "We generated interest for a public meeting by distributing a 'future newspaper' based on the results of the workshop. It described in words and pictures what the area around the centre could look like in future, before inviting everyone to the meeting. Then talk really started! People thought it

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4. Paaby, K., "Demokrati ikke bare for de innvidde" [Democracy – not only for the initiated], in: Ideas Bank Year Book 2006 (Oslo: Ideas Bank, 2006), p. 88.

5. The Future Scenario Workshop is a method aimed at generating practical, collective ideas about the future. Participants can be thought of as "social architects", shaping their future through concrete images and plans of action. The method was originally developed by futures researcher and journalist Robert Jungk in the 1960s; see Jungk, R., and Müllert N., *Future workshops: How to create desirable futures* (London: Institute for Social Inventions, 1987); Paaby, K., "The future scenario workshop – learning for democracy", in: The Ideas Bank, *Signals. Local action – success stories in sustainability* (Oslo: Ideas Bank, 2011), pp. 72-76.

was a real newspaper. 150 turned up at the meeting and participated actively including in follow-up. Many of their ideas were adopted, including development of the nearby square and the Wall Art project.”

“The parks and town squares are peoples gardens” was the idea behind the development of local open spaces as meeting places and democratic arenas. Based on inputs from the public meetings, concrete plans were developed for the public space and park in front of the community centre. The State Housing Bank provided part funding. These funds were administered by the LA-21 Forum<sup>6</sup>, on which the council is also represented, but the council was deliberately not given a leading role. “We must dare to take a hands-off approach”, said the then council leader Tone Tellevik Dahl. “The aim was to provide resources and administrative support for local initiative to flourish as decision maker and participant in complex, sectorised and time-consuming processes of change”.<sup>7</sup> The park, which had been bare and often vandalised, and which many felt to be unsafe, has been transformed into a lively meeting place where there is seating, skating, table tennis, an occasional market, exchange markets and many other activities as well as attractive planting and landscaping.

Whilst developing the community centre, Guerra and her co-workers have been particularly attentive to issues of communication. “We are continually seeking new ways to communicate: can we find forms of expression that can

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6. Following the Local Agenda 21, many cities in Norway created such arenas co-operation between the politicians and elected officials, public administration, citizens and civil society, and the private sector.

7. From the input by Tone Tellevik Dahl on “Democratic improvement. From local practice to implementation in the national policy”, Ideas Bank seminar “Refurbishing Democracy”, 27 October 2005.

express the commonality of interests amongst all the varied opinions and views of the users of the community centre?" This led to the idea of the Wall Art project – a signal that "You can come in!" The idea was inspired by the mural artists in Mexico City in the 1930s, who used public spaces to give a voice to population groups who had not previously been heard.

The LA-21 forum invited some of the nearby housing associations to six workshops over the course of a year. After showing them the work of the Mexican *muralistas*, they were asked: "What makes a good and safe neighbourhood?" "What does Sagene mean to you?" "What is art?" Participants then produced sketches expressing how they felt about the neighbourhood, their experiences and their wishes for the future. Participants represented many different ages and backgrounds. At times it was a challenge to avoid individuals trying to control the process; one person left because he felt he was an "expert" on art who should be listened to by the others!

After the first three workshops participants became impatient to realise their project, so a local architect and an artist were found who volunteered to lead the process of expressing all the ideas that the workshops had produced. They produced 12 suggestions as to how the wall could be painted. This led to discussions and by a process of elimination and consensus building to the final result as it is today.

An environmental element was included through re-use of old cups and ceramics from a local tile supplier. The LA-21 forum wished to engage as many people as possible in the project and arranged an open workshop at the annual Sagene Environment Day, where 100 white tiles were painted with individual contributions. The event attracted quite a crowd with enthusiastic suggestions from all sides.





*The Sagene Mural: A public testimony of community and participation (Photo: Sagene CC)*

Susan Guerra concludes: “This has been a process of identity building. We have generated local leadership, good alliances, and support to local initiatives from the people. Not least, the Wall Art project is a publicly supported display of participation and local narrative. The challenge has been to be aware of our role, which is not to control or be the experts but to enable, assist and use our professional skills in a constructive way. We have seen how qualitative processes need time.”

# PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS OF RECONSTRUCTION OF COURTYARDS

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The authority of Prague district 9 builds on a previous project supporting public participation in a reconstruction process in another part of this district. The courtyards intended for reconstruction were neglected for a long time and residents demanded an immediate solution. The authority of the district wanted to consult with users for a new design of these places, reflecting their needs and suggestions. To achieve the successful completion of renovations it was necessary to support all stakeholders (young families, retired people, etc.) to be involved in the decision-making process.

## Goals of the project

The project had several inter-related objectives. The first goal was to give all stakeholders an opportunity to participate in planning for the upcoming reconstruction by expressing their needs and intentions regarding using these spaces. Secondly, the project sought to establish a cooperative group composed of local landowners, residents and representatives of local authorities to develop a proposal for a use of the courtyards. The ultimate goal was to deepen the relationship between people and place through closer cooperation between all stakeholders.



STUŽBA KRAJINNÉHO VNITROBLÚKU U PRÍRODOPÁNY VELENOV



LEGENDA

- Zelená plocha
- Oblasť pre výsadbu stromov
- Oblasť pre výsadbu kríkov
- Oblasť pre výsadbu kvetov
- Oblasť pre výsadbu tráv
- Chodník
- Objekt
- Oblasť pre výstavbu
- Oblasť pre výstavbu
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## **The project process**

Based on the objectives of the project the first step was to create a participatory group. Representatives of the Prague 9 district, architects, local residents, representatives of owners of houses were all approached to participate in the group. The main task of this group was to lead consultations with all stakeholders, to identify the main topics of the project and for the development of an action plan.

The next step was to develop a questionnaire for an opinion poll carried out in local households. Agora CE only provided the technical support and the content was entirely in the hands of the participatory group. The questionnaire focused on how the area was currently being used. This helped to identify key stakeholders and indicated interest by residents in participating in the upcoming restoration of these areas. It also helped to draw attention of local residents to the project and proposals for upcoming changes.

A first public meeting was held, where the results of the survey were presented to locals. The meeting was also attended by the architect hired by the district municipality. The residents could subsequently participate in working groups based on the results of the survey and their personal preferences. These groups formed specific proposals for the reconstruction. The working groups were represented by local residents as well as by other key stakeholders and the architect. The resulting proposals were presented at the second public meeting and the best proposal selected for implementation.

A tender for a construction company was subsequently organised and the renovated courtyards can now serve their users.



## Methods

The project used several methods of community development.

First of all a participatory group, was created. Participation in this group was voluntary and the local stakeholders dominated. During the preparatory phase this group met several times. The outcome of the meetings took the form of a questionnaire based on personal experiences with the area in question.

The needs and concerns of local residents were identified through the local survey carried out with the use of questionnaire prepared by the participatory group. In the questionnaire citizens could express their opinion on current status of the area and specify what it should serve for. The number of completed questionnaires was not high but it helped to define the groups of people who currently use the space of the courtyard and subsequent phases of the project then focused on these people.



Participation also involved public meetings with all stakeholders from the area. These meetings were designed as workshops where participants could express their views and discuss proposed changes with the representatives of the municipal district. People appreciated the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process. The final method used in this project was the working groups, which focused on specific proposals based on the needs of the courtyards users.



## **Outcomes**

In conclusion we can say that we managed to achieve all our goals. The participatory group with the help of Agora CE created the questionnaire and the communication strategy for the whole project. All key stakeholders participated in the groups which influenced the decision-making process.

The project strengthened the confidence of local people in participatory processes and also managed to show how the authority of the municipal district operates. At the same time informal groups of citizens were created which can continue after this project to address collective concerns.

## **BARCELONA, CATALUNYA: PROMOTING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SOLIDARITY IN LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

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The Poblenou district of Barcelona, formerly called the “Catalan Manchester” because most of the industry of Barcelona was concentrated in this area - was the engine of the Catalan industrial revolution and one of the key drivers of the industrialisation of Spain. For the last 50 years, this district has been losing this central industrial role and the characteristics of an industrial area. Consequently, old factory buildings have been converted either into good houses or into offices for new companies linked to the new industries and communication technologies, while others have simply remained empty.

As a result, the appearance of the neighbourhood has changed radically. The use of the infrastructure, the characteristics of the communities, the relationships between people, how the area is governed are now totally different.

The area has a high unemployment rate - between 12 and 13%. A relative recovery of productive activity has happened in the last few years, mainly thanks to 22 @ initiative - a public-private initiative aimed to create a pool of companies engaged in the IT and communications sector. On the other hand, due to the economic crisis from 2007, several old factories and industrial warehouses, supposed to be “saved” by speculation plans, are now left unused. The availability of these empty buildings has generated a social phenomenon called “new slums”, in memory of the previous “shacks” which were officially eliminated in 1992 before the Olympics Games of Barcelona.



These new “ slums ” have brought into the district hundreds of people, mostly young Africans who now occupy these empty spaces.

## **Purpose**

This project sought to stimulate better dynamics between the neighbourhood community, initially through strengthening relationships between individuals and social organizations. In addition the project developed co-operative and solidarity economy initiatives in order to generate employment among the most vulnerable sectors of the population. This includes both the new young African squatters and other inhabitants particularly marginalised as a result of the crisis, mainly young people and people over 45, especially women, who are in this situation because of long term unemployment or social exclusion.

## **Values and processes**

The project sought to build empowerment and participation by strengthening the associations, and developing cooperative and solidarity economy and developing solidarity among community members in favour of those most marginalised encouraging measures of equality and social justice.

Based on these values, the processes undertaken consisted of:

- › Learning about other positive experiences from elsewhere: namely the French experience “Régies Quartiers” was visited to study and compare patterns of cooperation between government and social institutions;

- › adapting the French experience to the local and regional reality of Poblenou neighbourhoods, in particular through the exploitation of potential new “veins of employment”, in relation for example with the empty buildings and their potential use for a social purpose; sharing and reflecting on the experiences and learning within the Poblenou neighbourhoods together with various social organisations of the district;
- › negotiating with local authorities the transfer of more than 15 thousand square meters of land, in order to transform it into a project to create jobs based on economic solidarity and cooperative engagement.

From this process of working together in Poblenou, initiatives with similar issues have emerged in other districts of Barcelona. One example is a project called “cooperative districts” based on a community development approach to social economy. This project aims to create an alternative to the dominant economic model in force in Barcelona which is mainly based on the intensive exploitation of the city by promoting international tourism and consumerism to globalized middle class travellers from all around the world.

### **Methods and Tools**

The methodology used is based on the traditional methods of community action and community “dynamics creation”:

- › a first phase consisted of establishing a ‘Dynamics Creation Core Group’ formed by people who are key in the area and closely linked with active associations and movements of the district;

- › a second step was a study and reflection phase based on a diagnosis of the area, including the learning from the exchange of good practices with a French organisation;
- › a third phase was aimed at creating awareness of other social district stakeholders of the diagnosis and conclusion of the “Dynamics Creation Core” Group and to encourage the involvement of new people;
- › a fourth phase – the current one – is looking for confluence with other similar initiatives in Barcelona to develop a roadmap and a logical framework to promote the so-called “Cooperative Districts” projects.

The tools are as follows:

- › Meetings for reflection and analysis;
- › Study and reading of various documents and texts related to topics such as: neighbourhood dynamics, social economy, cooperatives and co-operativism, urban design proposals, local development, transformative planning;
- › Seminars of discussion and reflection with various stakeholders of the neighbourhood of Poblenou;
- › Formalization of a Promoter Group - in this case the “Dynamics Creation Core Group”;

- › Visits to various experiences, international and local, including “Regies Quartier” in Perpignan and Montpellier and the “emblematic” Cooperative experience of Can Batlló in Barcelona-Sants
- › Public activities and events including a Solidarity and Social economy Fair Market in Barcelona, fair-trade campaigns, and flea markets in the neighbourhoods
- › Solidarity action, like solidarity day and work with the young African squatters of empty factories and warehouses of Poblenou
- › Lobbying of the public authorities through concrete proposals based on project outcomes

## Outcomes

A Promoter Group has been established. It is composed of various significant and active key actors both from within and outside the area who belong to well known and highly recognized social organisations in Barcelona. This Group is really a guarantee to keep the original vision and mission alive.

The negotiation with the City Council and the Mayor of Barcelona to transfer district land of more than 15 thousand square meters to the neighbourhood to launch a pilot initiative for solidarity and social economy is well advanced.

The City Council is strongly supportive in seeking to convince the owners of an old disused factory - which has been occupied for social activities - to return it to the neighbourhood.

Solidarity towards the African squatters is an explicit part of the general plan of the Promoter Group for the development of the neighbourhood.

From the perspective of social economy, the urban and economic recovery of Carrer Pere IV, the main street of the neighbourhood and one of the key cultural places of the district has already started in the framework of urban redevelopment launched by the City Council of Barcelona.

## MISKOLC, EASTERN HUNGARY: MOBILIZING COMMUNITY ACTION IN A BLOCK OF FLATS

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The Dialogue Association has been carrying out community development actions since 2002. The goal of the association is to develop settlements and small regions in North Eastern Hungary and areas beyond the border, populated by ethnic Hungarians. In doing so the goal is to promote social innovation through community development. Our mission is to strengthen local society, to improve the quality of life relying on the resources of inhabitants by strengthening their advocacy skills, and enhancing the local public sphere.

We have been working at the block of flats of Avas, Miskolc, since 2010, through a gradually evolving strategy. Our efforts at getting to know the area began by contacting local institutions. Following this we began to occasionally organize social actions with the involvement of local young people. We work with the inhabitants in the framework of a neighbourhood community development program, funded by the Swiss-Hungarian NGO Fund. In the TÉRer<sup>8</sup> program we draw on community development processes in order to activate local community in a part of the city where isolation is a frequent phenomenon in the block of flats, so are problems of coexistence, while there are only very few community initiatives. Community initiatives have been lacking, and there is no community centre to provide space for these initiatives.

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8. A word play in Hungarian. The compound word 'térer' means signal for mobile devices, where the first part of the word denotes 'space', the second half means power, thus the literal meaning of the words that make up the compound is space and power.

## **Purpose**

The long-term goal of TÉRer program is to enable people and families living in the block of flats at Avas to get involved in a self-help voluntary movement, through which they can perform certain social responsibilities and resolve local problems.

In the neighborhood project our short-term goal is to support local people with the potential to become community workers, evidenced by their commitment to local issues, to initiate the resolution of community problems and to be able to mobilize other inhabitants. In order to generate further actions and community-based programmes, our goal is to start a community centre that could allow self-organisation of local community workers. Our longer-term goal is to facilitate cooperation among neighbourhoods as a result of the community development process, which could develop into a neighbourhood committee.

## **Values and Principles**

The neighborhood community development project at Avas facilitates the resolution of local problems through actions of neighbourhood communities, i.e. participation and commitment may come to the foreground. Mutuality is deemed important, as the community space builds on the principle of community and thus relies on the capacities and possibilities within them. In both cases control by the community is crucial. Thus strengthened, disadvantaged communities in the city will be able to face burning questions such as equal opportunities, as well as social and economic justice.

The sense of belonging, mutual openness and turning towards each other, slowly developing during programs, is not for itself only: it prepares partic-

ipants' cooperation for a common goal and establishes the results of authentic actions.

The skills that enable the sense of social and civil responsibility can only be gained gradually. Community discussions teach people how to accept each other and help those points prevail, which support a common goal.

## **Methods and Tools**

Starting from May 2013, we conducted ten participatory needs assessments, using questionnaires and developing interpersonal relationships. Questionnaires, however, were not administered to the full extent, as isolation among the local inhabitants is of such great scale that it was very difficult to reach individuals. Another reason was that the population and families here experience such disadvantage that because of their prioritization of their basic needs - they were unable to realize the opportunities in community work.

Another issue identified during the administration of the questionnaires was that local inhabitants are mentally worn out and are often unable to build contacts. Therefore it became a defining method to initiate an outreach group for mental health care, adjusted to the needs, and a number of thematic clubs were launched, building on local knowledge inherent in the groups. This is how the Artisan club emerged, which is clearly a success because it was organised on a community basis, i.e. on members' own initiative. This club and other self-help groups will organise the community centre on a community basis.

The approach of community action was to encourage people from the neigh-



bourhood to commit to issues relevant to their neighborhood, as well as to participate in actions that reflect on their broader environment and common issues. One of the most active and spectacular actions was the day of TÉRer , which connected to the nationally and internationally held Citizen Participation Week. On the first day of the action we painted the stairs in front of the social institutions together with the locals and volunteers. This joint activity was preceded by a small campaign, when we worked with members of the Artisan club to create the street design we would apply to the stairs. People could vote on social media sites on the motif that they liked most.

The following day, the TÉRer day, we set up an information point by the stairs. The people present were given the opportunity to fill out different questionnaires: the TÉRer questionnaire that promotes community work, as well as a questionnaire on public trust, which was directly connected to the Citizen Participation Week. The Avas Youth Group organized games for the children and our partner, the Holdam Association, debuted with various activities, where the women's club focuses on children and on living a full life as mothers. On that day we held our first dialogue circle, where we discussed local community initiatives with inhabitants at Avas. We presented the most recent, the 4th issue of our journal, Panel Paper, which seeks to promote the local public sphere, and showed the videos recorded at the "Miénk a TÉR/ The SPACE is ours!" summer camp. As the official inauguration of the painted stairs, we sang together with a popular, up and coming pop star.

During the programs we provided an exhibition space for volunteers of the Avas Artisan Club. Members of the Club have persistently sought out opportunities to display their work, so they later tried themselves at the Christmas fair and because their first items were quickly sold to the locals, they enthusias-

tically continued their creative activities at the club.

Besides community actions and the launching of a community-based community centre, another distinctive feature of the programme is the efforts at promoting an interdisciplinary approach. The operator of the community centre, to be renovated in the framework of the social urban rehabilitation programme, is a social institution. Although this centre has not been renovated yet, and has not opened officially, the Association was given a space as a result of a great amount of lobbying: we laid down in a cooperation agreement how the space is going to be used in a community development program. It is important to highlight the emerging professional relationship with the social institution of the district. It is only the social institutions of the district that respond to the problems here and provide basic services, which work with a high number of clients and are thus overloaded. They are able to focus on individual case management and have not much capacity left to operate the community centre. In the community centre there is a possibility to have two professional groups work side by side, and to facilitate dialogue between actors of the social sector and community development. At the moment this is manifested in occasional case consultation and joint professional forums.

Finally we would like to highlight that during a process of many years we have seen a growing involvement of volunteers, university students learning by doing, as well as interested interns and high school students on their mandatory community work, and most recently, in the context of public policy trends, community workers in the framework of public employment program performing cultural public employment. It seems fair to conclude that an NGO, with the necessary long-term/continuous capacity to be present in an area, has facilitated results. Although it requires a lot of energy, attention and

commitment to cooperate with these groups, this presence allows us to reach our goals.

## **Outcomes**

In the framework of the neighbourhood community development project we have identified local values and problems and collected ideas that form the basis for local planning. We have recognised offers, local knowledge and competences, which may be involved in a community centre operating on a community based way.

So far we have progressed data from 150-200 questionnaires in an online format, which forms the basis of the neighborhood problem map and support situation analysis, as well as the preparation of action plans responding to it. The situation analysis forms the basis of community activities and actions that aim to mobilize locals. The above-mentioned first action mobilized 200 people.

Recruiting youngsters has been ongoing at local high schools. At the Jesuit High School and the Avas High School we began a preparatory training for community services, conducted awareness-raising training sessions in more than 8 classes, as a result of which 20 students indicated their intention to join community actions.

The efforts to facilitate cooperation among professions and institutions have yielded four formal cooperation agreements, as well as the unfolding dialogue between representatives of related professions, we see the possibilities and forms of joint workshops emerge.

Of the community-based services, four have been started: the Avas Youth Club, the Family Sports Club, Artisan club and the Maternity Club. Several others are being organized: the Avas History club and the Kids club. In the framework of mental health care (as a low threshold outreach program) we have provided care for five people and held two group events on lifestyle and way of living. Participation in clubs has proven to lead to positive individual results related to lifestyle. Those locals who attend club sessions develop a lot both with respect to self-esteem and self-confidence, but also in their cooperation skills and sharing their valuable knowledge.

Finally, the community development programme provided continuous opportunity of competence development for six people active in neighborhoods, i.e. community worker candidates. Facilitating sensitivity to participate in public life is the greatest challenge for community development. Locals find it easier to connect to issues in their immediate environment, mostly responding to problems. However, there is a long way to go before they can actively relate to the questions of their neighborhood in a broader sense.

Andrea Sélley Dialóg Association Miskolc <http://dialogegyesulet.hu/>

## CZESTOCHOWA, POLAND: REACTIVATING LIMANOWSKI STREET

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This is an example of work with a community facing multiple challenges, which aimed to mobilise the residents of Limanowski Street in the Raków district of Czestochowa to help them improve the living conditions of their neighbourhood. The work took place 2011-2013 within the framework of the project “Creating and developing standards of welfare and social integration”, co-financed by the European Union and supported through education and consultation by Local Activity Support Centre CAL<sup>9</sup>.

The community of 47 and 49 Limanowski St., inhabited by about 500 residents, is known as an “enclave of poverty”. Problems faced by residents include long-term unemployment, alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and educational disadvantage. It is one of the most dangerous neighbourhoods in the city, with the greatest number of National and Municipal police interventions. Representatives of institutions and organisations, building managers, national and municipal police, often comment that *“it is not worth it to do anything there, it would be a waste of money, time and energy, the people living there destroy everything and do not take care of anything”*. On their own, the residents have been unable to develop joint solutions or undertake activities underpinned by principles of partnership, co-operation and inter-institutional collaboration, due to the negative perception of the external environment and earlier failures. Due to the high turnover of tenants, residents appear to have little engagement with each other and show limited solidarity with those who are vulnerable and

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9. [www.cal.org.pl](http://www.cal.org.pl)

needy. Long term residents, who represent a minority, stick together, while the new arrivals, after having been evicted from other parts of the city, experience high levels of alcohol addiction. For all of these reasons, this neighbourhood was chosen for local community work.

## **Purpose**

The aim of the activities undertaken by the community organisers from the Municipal Social Assistance Centre in Cz stochowa was to encourage the local residents to solve the most pressing problems of their community.

## **Methods and tools**

The work carried out in the community was based from the beginning on cooperation with residents and partners. A diagnosis was carried out using action research methodology with a selected group of 80 residents. The result of this study was to map the resources and needs of the 47 and 49 Limanowski St. community. The activities of the community organisers were supported by local allies. Over a dozen major institutions and organisations declared their intent to sign a partnership agreement and to support the initiatives carried out in an ongoing manner.

The most important challenge was to determine how to engage people to become involved and work together. Residents were initially very wary and lacked faith that they could actually change their lives and surroundings. Therefore, the community organisers slowly gained their trust by organising meetings, conducting debates with individuals and educating through the use of workshops. At the beginning, residents took part in work to clean up their

surroundings, where they helped one another by sharing tools. They also took part in activities to clean their local square, in which about 60 people participated. As co-hosts, they organised neighbourhood events by jointly preparing, arranging and decorating the square, preparing food, supervising the yard, distributing, monitoring and cleaning.

They also joined in the planning of common space and in activities to change their backyard. They set up a beach volleyball court, planted flowers, cleaned the sandbox, installed new benches and trash bins, and renovated several stairwells. The residents are beginning to interact with each other, they are friendlier to each other, and by acting together, the indifference and isolation felt among residents of different stairwells and entryways is beginning to fade. A sense of safety increased, which is reflected in the intervention statistics of National and Municipal Police. The number of stores selling alcohol has also decreased. Additionally, a facility was secured, where a Community Club is now located. Residents participated in its renovation and decoration. The Club offers activities for children and adolescents three times a week, and three volunteers work there. During the summer holidays, recreational activities, a trip to the circus, as well as English lessons were organised. During the school year, the Club provides help with homework, arts and crafts, reading stories, music and movement classes. In addition, since February 2013, the Club also serves local seniors as a place to meet, participate in workshops, as well as cultural and educational activities.

## Outcomes

Over the two years of the organisers' work, the number of people interested in participating in common activities slowly grew, and the activities already undertaken improved communication among the residents and their interactions with one another. Relationships with local institutions were renewed, in particular with the Department of Housing and City Councillors. Appointment of a committee for local community organisation has brought a positive response on the part of residents, partners and institutions operating in the neighbourhood. People were motivated to act, it changed their awareness and perception of social work and sensitised residents to the needs of others. It showed that without financial resources, but based on support, trust and commitment, even the seemingly impossible can be accomplished. Currently, 6 people work in the local community organising team at the Social Assistance Centre of Czestochowa, who support and mobilise people to change their communities.





## **PLOVDIV, BULGARIA: IMPROVING ROMA LIVELIHOODS**

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The Land – Source of Income Foundation is an NGO located in Plovdiv Bulgaria and focuses mainly on employment, entrepreneurialism, and opportunities for generating income for Roma minorities. The organization was founded by C.E.G.A. – Creating Effective Grassroots Alternatives Foundation in 1997 as responsible for the economic program. The Land Foundation and CEGA work closely together as CEGA does the community work and the Land Foundation offers economic advice.



The goal of Land Foundation is the improvement of Roma families' livelihood in rural areas by achieving economic independence based on land ownership and sustainable income generation through farming or business. The Land Foundation works in several small villages and towns in the Plovdiv region, and does not work in the large cities. The region of Plovdiv is largely populated with segregated minority communities living in rural areas.

## **Purpose**

The Land – Source of Income program has taken a sustainable, long-term approach that provides vehicles to help enable income generation for Roma.

## **Values and processes**

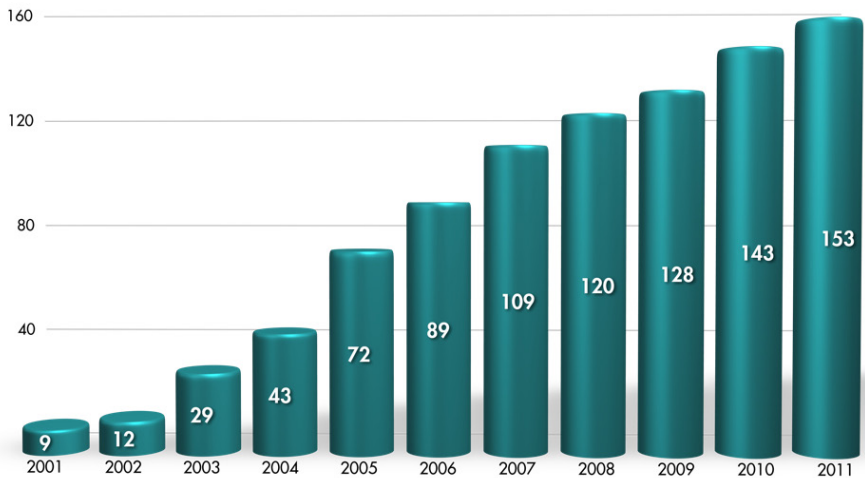
The Land Foundation provides opportunities for Roma to accumulate assets (i.e. land, tractors, and business equipment) and start their own businesses. This solution focuses on Roma Families and neighborhoods, and is all inclusive. The Foundation helps Roma select land for farming, or develops business plans for small start-ups. Then, it provides financing for the purchase of the land, or for seed funding for the new businesses. It continues this relationship by providing training and business support from experienced agricultural or business consultants. As the Roma gain more experience, the Land Foundation will provide short-term loans for the purchase of fertilizer, seeds, or small farm equipment. All of this support continues for many years until the Roma families no longer need help, or become large enough not to be considered part of the Land Foundation program. As the Land Foundation works with individual families, strong relationships develop. These relationships are based on developing a strong work ethic, responsibly repaying loans, improving themselves, helping others, and most importantly, developing a trust and respect for each other.

As some of the families working with the Land Foundation become more successful, they get other Roma to help with the farm or business. This expands the income generation and employment in their community. When this happens, the Land Foundation starts working with the local schools to develop small inclusion projects, or work with the local municipality to try improving

the integration of Roma into the local communities. The Land Foundation drives inclusion of Roma using all three approaches, but it does this by first developing a strong economic foundation before they build upon that base and add other school and community improvement integration projects.

## Outcomes

### Contracts Signed with Roma Families



The Land Foundation currently has 76 families (approximately 300 people) in 11 sites in the program. The participants have purchased approximately 400 decares of land, and are cultivating more than 300 decares of additional leased or previously-owned land. The Land Foundation has supported 153 income generating contracts for land, equipment; more than one hundred contracts have been paid back. The delinquent or late payment rate is approximately 15%.

## Approach

Many factors contribute to the success the Land Program has achieved. However, it is primarily due to hard work, diligence, continuing communications, developing relationships, and understanding the changes in the communities where they work. Following are some of the key factors the Land Foundation has learned for a successful Roma Income Generating program.

The Land Program provides an integrated approach including finance, training, and consultation for several years. This builds confidence and trust within the community, and enables sustainability

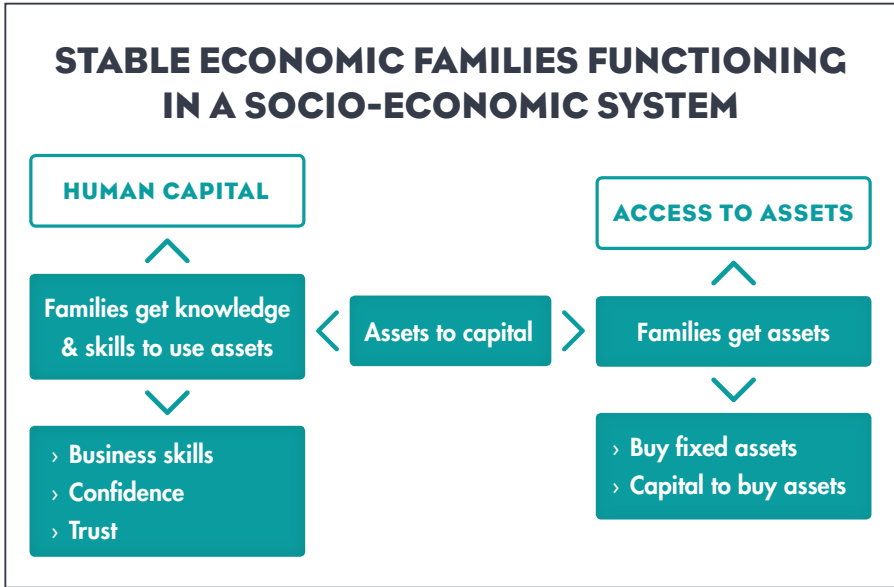
- › Support many small initiatives (or projects), and not one large one. The Land Foundation wants to get as many entrepreneurs operating as possible, generally several are successful.
- › Applicant selection is an important criterion for a successful outcome and also for sustainability. When making this selection, it is important to find someone who has an innate entrepreneurial spirit, and is willing to take a business risk.
- › There are several criteria needed for good selection of a Roma community to work with. Although this program can be successful in many small village mahalas, there are some community traits that can make success easier. These include understanding the leadership dynamics of the Roma community. If community leaders are not respected, then it will be hard to get local Roma interested in the program. If there are several strong competing factions with the community, that will deter program success. The only way to know this is to have contacts within the Roma community who

can help an NGO understand the communities' political and leadership environment.

- › Qualified agro and business consultants available locally to help with on-site visits. It is important to have consultants who are willing to work with Roma, and will do consultations on-site in the mahalas. These consultations also help keep the Land Foundation aware of changes and potential problems with our participants before they happen.
- › Financial support with conservative lending practices and a stable low interest rate that does not change. (The Land Program has a constant 6% rate.) Develop loan approval criteria which include visiting the applicant, and getting input from business or agricultural consultants. Although the loan is paid back to the NGO by the Roma applicant, the purchases are made directly by the Land Foundation.
- › By using land as an asset, the land becomes collateral which can be used as a "safety net" for The Land Foundation during the payback period. When the land is paid back and the deed transferred to the applicant, this asset becomes a base for further expansion, and eventually enables the applicant to work on their own.
- › Applicant selection is a key part of the program success, and there is not a standard process used by the Land Foundation. This is where years of experience play an important factor in the final selection, and meeting with the applicants in their homes provides the basis for an "instinctive" decision. Some of the other more concrete criteria the Land Program reviews include
  - have they ever borrowed money before and did they pay it back; did any

family member finished 8th grade; work history of the person; references from the community.

## Summary and Conclusion



The goal of this program is to enable minority families to become stable economic units which can function in society and successfully work in the economic system. In order to accomplish this goal, the Land Foundation focuses on enhancing the “human” capital by providing knowledge, skills, and continuing support in order to build confidence and trust. At the same time, they provide families with funding capital to buy capital equipment assets. It is the transition from human capital knowledge and enabling families use these skills and knowledge which has proved to be a successful formula for income generation and integration of minority families.

## EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND: GROWING HEALTHY COMMUNITY ASSETS

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Wester Hailes is a peripheral Edinburgh housing estate of about 9000 residents. There are high levels of social housing, and the scale of the health challenges faced by the community is demonstrated by the nature and extent of health and other inequalities, for example:

- › unemployment levels at least twice that of the Edinburgh average
- › low levels of educational attainment – the percentage of those without any qualification is almost double that of the whole of Edinburgh
- › infant mortality is almost one and a half times the Edinburgh average
- › cardio-vascular disease is almost twice the level of more affluent areas of the City.
- › high incidences of mental ill health with, significant differences from Edinburgh as a whole for levels of self-harm and depression as well as drug and alcohol dependency.

The Wester Hailes Health Agency (WHA) continues a now long-standing tradition of working with local people to tackle health and other inequalities. The organisation provides a wide variety of services within the community, and in these times of increasing financial hardship continues to work innovatively through local partnerships and to ensure that the voices of local people are reflected in its strategic work with health services and the local authority.

## Purpose

Linda Arthur the Manager, describes their philosophy as a holistic model of health, informed by a community development approach, so keeping the emphasis on the active involvement and priorities of local people. This ethos underpins the other key strand of their thinking, partnership working with both statutory agencies and other third sector organisations. This philosophy provides the bedrock of the organisation's development, and its Business Plan brings them to bear on its six strategic objectives:

1. addressing health inequalities
2. promoting healthy lifestyles
3. improving individual mental well-being
4. supporting access to information and resources
5. offering services and therapies
6. working strategically

The Agency's community-led health approach facilitates the building of 'social capital': local people are supported in making a wide range of connections and links with others and other organisations, which in turn develops their confidence, sense of purpose and self-esteem. In particular, this way of working enables people to contribute to positive change in their community through volunteering and other 'in-kind' activities.



## Values and processes

The organisation remains rooted within the community, in particular with its commitment to local people on its Board which provides clear direction for its work, based on local needs and priorities. This sustains the organisation's reputation locally, maintains trust across the community and giving it a unique position from which to speak on local health priorities. The views and concerns of local people are further articulated through a variety of methods and approaches, including both rapid participatory appraisal and drawing on more traditional research. e.g. such as clinical evidence relating to the incidence of diabetes. These are then used to support the development of the local Neighbourhood Health Plan. The issues raised, such as community safety concerns, the impact of addictions and the level of diabetes type 2, would have remained hidden without such research, and services can now be developed in response to locally identified needs and priorities and delivered in partnership with the community and local organisations.

Through its focus on social capital, the WHHA and its partners have taken the lead in Edinburgh in the development of timebanking. This work was originally developed in the USA by Dr Edgar S. Cahn as an alternative 'currency': he reasoned that if there was not enough traditional money to support a community's ability to provide its own services then why not create 'new money' to pay people for what needed to be done? The approach is now recognised and applied internationally. The first UK Time Bank was established in 1998, and it involves people using their time as a currency; an hour of time given to someone else earns a time credit that can be exchanged for an hour of someone else's time. All skills are valued in this same way, and often include gardening, painting, shopping, accounting, tutoring and household repairs.

Back in 2008, a steering group was established to explore setting-up a local Time Bank. An exploratory visit to an existing Timebank encouraged the steering group to go ahead and appoint two 'time-brokers' to coordinate the project, and the West Edinburgh Time Bank, the first in Edinburgh, was launched in August 2009. It goes from strength to strength, currently has 40 members and is supported by 12 local organisations.

## **Methods and tools**

Projects that build social capital, such as the Time Bank and the Walking Group, are not purely the work of the Agency and its members, but are put together in partnership with other organisations through a local steering group, and by using local connections, resources and the strengths of each partner. This partnership working with local organisations and groups is being extended further through the WHHA's strategic approach, both locally and city-wide. It is an active member of the Edinburgh West Voluntary Sector Forum, and builds links with local and national politicians from all parties. 120 people attended the Agency's last Annual Meeting, including local people, local groups, organisations, and politicians.

The organisation is committed to the development of the South Edinburgh Public Partnership Forum, which works to give local organisations and people a stronger voice within the National Health Service Community Health Partnership. They have seen local people becoming more 'politicised', with a small 'p', and are instrumental in supporting people in becoming more aware of what's available and influencing decisions that affect their lives.

The organisation is also involved in a number of other strategic forums

including the South-West Edinburgh Inequalities Group which comprises third sector organisations and statutory agencies, and which supports the development of the Neighbourhood Health Plan that sets out local health priorities. Bringing local views into these plans through the Agency's participatory research, demonstrates its value to the City Council and the Health Board in meeting the Single Outcome Agreement for the City.

Another key arena in which they are involved is the Lothian Community Health Projects' Forum, which brings together organisations delivering community development approaches – community-led health – to health improvement. This helps to ensure their engagement with City-wide strategies; for instance, recognising the links between their own Community Gardening and Green Gym initiatives to the Edinburgh: Greening Edinburgh for Health through Community and Therapeutic Gardening action plan.

The Agency's extensive range of services, established over the last decade, include:

- › Dietetic service provided by a community dietician: includes 1 to1 and groupwork on healthy-eating, cooking, weight-reduction and advice for those with type 2 diabetes.
- › Mental health and substance misuse services: counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and solution-focused therapy.
- › Groups: including the Carer's Group, Dropins, Anxiety Management, and the Women's Group.
- › Complementary therapies: including massage, reflexology and shiatsu.

- › Volunteering opportunities: for example, the Community Gardening Project, the Green Gym and the Time Bank.
- › Physical activities: Tai Chi, the Walking Group, Pilates, Aqua Fit, Men's Jogging Group, as well as rock-climbing, and sailing.

## Outcomes

Community gardening and related activities have been supported by the Agency for nearly five years now, as Stuart Sheriff, a key volunteer, explains: *"It started with us tidying-up the back. We then made a memorial garden, through a raised bed, for people who want to remember someone. It's a nice place to chill: in the summer, with the trees, you could almost be anywhere."* Stuart enjoys working with others, discussing and planning what they are going to do next. Different people with varied interests and abilities have become involved, and so new directions have therefore been generated: growing vegetables, then flowers, a wildlife garden and so on; now, there's talk of a sensory garden. Meanwhile Stuart has undertaken training down at the Royal Botanical Gardens' nursery: *"I enjoyed it: it was stressful, but I learned lots of bits and pieces."* This area of work continues to stimulate other opportunities: there's now a community orchard, allotments and tree-planting; improvements at Quarry Park and along the Union Canal to enhance the area's greenspaces; and plans for an environmental arts project. A Green Gym has been started to link exercise, the environment and improving mental health. WHHA Manager Linda Arthur points out that although these activities are not traditional therapies, they are proving highly therapeutic!

There's also a walking group Its Good to Walk, which provides opportunities

from short walks up to the more strenuous and challenging. The Agency has recently won the Active Communities Award in the first ever Physical Activity and Health Alliance Active Factor Awards Scheme, which recognises projects that increase physical activity and reduce health inequalities.

Tracey Lee, a resident and Board member of the Timebanking project says: 'We've 40 members signed-up with varied skills: gardening, sowing, DIY, painting and decorating, knitting and cooking. In the summer, gardening is popular, along with painting and decorating and the DIY. Some people come along and say, "Look, I've no skills at all" ... but everyone has something to offer: companionship or helping with getting people to hospital appointments, for instance. We use our imaginations with people's interests, hobbies and talents. Being a member of the Time Bank encourages 'neighbourliness'. The social side plays a big part and members feel better connected. We've two groups: a 'Knitting Group' where people earn time credits and knit for a charity working for orphaned Ugandan children; and a 'Theatre Group' that meets four times a year and goes to the Edinburgh Fringe.'

More broadly, the Agency has established a diverse range of projects and partnerships to address health inequalities in its area. Staying true to its longstanding traditions and values, it continues to generate further opportunities for local people and groups to develop social capital. Current national policy drivers focus on asset-based health improvement and the co-production of services and so offer significant opportunities for the WHHA to build on its previous successes in community-led health and the generating of social capital. However, in facing this most challenging of times, there is a requirement for appropriate strategic support and resourcing to enable the organisation to continue to have this critical and positive impact on the lives of

many people in Wester Hailes.

Case study adapted from 'Breaking through: Community-led health organisations Removing Barriers to Wellbeing' published by the Community Health Exchange at Scottish Community Development Centre.

<http://www.chex.org.uk/media/resources/publications/briefings/Breaking%20Through.pdf>

## **FACAENI, ROMANIA: LOCAL CULTURE AND TRADITIONS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

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PACT Foundation's „Learning, Participation, Trust” program aims to build the power to act of marginalized and disadvantaged groups from communities in Southern Romania and to develop community-based organizations (CBOs) that represent the interests of such groups and approach efficiently the various problems that the community is confronted with. The programme is designed to stimulate the participation of citizens from rural and small to medium urban communities (up to 30,000 inhabitants), to encourage them to associate and work together, acting collectively within organized structures at community level.

During the fifth round of program implementation (2010-2012), the initiative group of Facaeni community (Ialomita County) emerged. Following a complex but successful experiential learning process, the initiative group evolved into a solid civil society structure made of community members of different ages and various professions. The first community project that the group developed and implemented together, summer vacation activities for the children in Facaeni, turned out to be a success especially because they became aware that each member of the initiative group, with his/her own skills and hobbies, represents a resource for the community. They managed to organize an unforgettable holiday for children in the community.

To continue with the capacity building process, PACT Foundation went on to support the initiative group of Facaeni, along with four other community-based

organizations with a similar history, through a further project called „Identity-Tradition-Local Welfare“.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the „Identity-Tradition-Local Welfare“ project implemented by PACT Foundation was to develop five targeted rural areas, including Facaeni commune by capitalizing on local cultural heritage and creating a favorable context for community development through stimulating the entrepreneurial spirit and culture among the local citizens.

By designing and implementing this new project, PACT Foundation pursued its commitment to work in the south of the country, as being the least developed area economically, socially and from the point of view of civic activism and civil society. PACT Foundation’s activity relies on specific community development methods to create and develop the capacity of local initiative groups so that they find solutions to a wide range of simple to complex problems that they and their peers are confronted with and to develop, together as local work teams, projects meant to lead to the sustainable development of their community.

## **Values and processes**

With an increasing interest coming from community members towards this issue, the initiative group in Facaeni recognised that the cultural identity, in a close relationship with the social capital of a community and the social identity of its members, can actually contribute to the sustainable development of their community. They understood that the more a community values its



history, traditions and customs, and the higher the consumption of culture and education, the stronger are the relations created among community members, as well as their relations with the external factors that may influence their community.

The initiative group members channeled their efforts towards raising awareness among their peers, especially the younger ones, regarding the resources that their community holds and the beauty of their local cultural heritage. Thus, the inhabitants of Facaeni community were encouraged to participate in the making of an inventory of the local cultural heritage, learning to embrace and cherish it, to feel enriched by it and to understand their duty as active citizens of the community to hand it over to younger generations as legacy, unaltered in its essence yet enriched by their own emotions.

Furthermore, the initiative group set itself to channel the innovative potential of the local inhabitants towards initiating businesses or other income-generating activities to promote the local cultural heritage and lead to an increase of welfare in the community they belong to. An added value of the project consisted in the collaboration of specialists in the area of cultural heritage from the county institution in the field with a civil society organization from the rural environment that promotes the active participation and contribution of local citizens to all areas of public and community life.

### **Methods and tools**

Within this project, the initiative group of Facaeni set itself to contribute to the social and economic development of the community it represents, by capitalizing on the local traditional culture and crafts.

Throughout the project, their effort was accompanied by resource persons from PACT Foundation: a community facilitator – a person representing a constant support that PACT offers to communities for implementing such activities; a trainer to deliver local training to an extended group of community members, besides those in the initiative group, and a consultant in the area of traditional culture and heritage, from part of the specialized partner institution.

The initial community visits of the community facilitator were meant to support the CBO members with promoting the project idea within the larger community, in order to attract more people from various community institutions (school, church, commune hall and local council), formal and informal community leaders, elderly, keepers of folk traditions and people passionate about traditions, to get them actively involved both in the project activities and in attracting new resources from within and/or from outside the community, including volunteers and especially young volunteers. Thus, an extended local working group was created, with the role to implement the project activities.

The members of the working group, together with more members attracted from the community, participated in a one-day workshop organised locally with the aim of transferring knowledge and practical skills from specialists to participants: skills such as inventory-making and the promotion of traditional local heritage according to the local specifics and identity. Following their participation in this workshop, the people from the local working group learned from dedicated experts how to create a portfolio of non-material local heritage, an inventory to be gathered by community volunteers, comprising all types of non-material cultural heritage such as traditional dances, songs, crafts, recipes, mournings, poetries, and legends.

In the next stage of the project, a plan for promoting local traditions was

developed by the local working group, including a local event with invitees from the county and the region, aiming to promote at least one specific piece of local cultural heritage, considered by community members themselves to be emblematic for their locality. Another type of innovative local event organized in Facaeni was the motivational evening. The initiative group, with the support of the extended working group, organized two motivational evenings, aiming to further promote local traditions with as many community members as possible.

In the final stage of the project, the members of the initiative group in Facaeni participated in a contest of community businesses ideas, along with four other such groups, to add further value to their community's traditional cultural heritage. They benefitted from a training session in the area of cultural entrepreneurship, where an applied, practical methodology was used, capitalizing on the resources inventoried up to that moment and also on the existing knowledge package and potential of the locals. Based on this training, with the support of the trainer and the community facilitator, the initiative group developed a start-up business plan, contributing to stimulating the entrepreneurial spirit of community members, thus creating the premises for the local non-material heritage to become a viable resource for the welfare of their community.

The fundraising events organized afterwards mobilised the necessary resources needed to materialise the idea proposed by the group within their business plan for a social entrepreneurship start-up. The initiative group in Facaeni eventually managed to set up a local crafts workshop for wicker, frail and trellis work, through which they also aim to hand this craft on to the youth in their locality, so that this activity, besides adding value to a local tradition

which is at risk to be lost, becomes an income source for current and future generations.

## **Outcomes**

The main long term results generated by the implementation of this project for the community in Facaeni are important for both agencies. PACT, successfully piloted a new approach to the development of the communities it works with, focusing on the recognition and validation of the local resources by community members themselves. The initiative group in Facaeni increased its capacity to approach community issues in an innovative manner and thus contributed to an active change in the mentality of inhabitants from a Romanian rural area, who previously would mistrust the power of associating with one another in view of generating income.

Among these results:

- › Developing the capacity of the initiative group in Facaeni to stimulate participatory processes at the level of the entire community, with the inclusion of interested stakeholders from local, county and regional levels is the most important of all the long-lasting results, which PACT pursues through all the community development processes that it initiates and supports in the communities it targets and works with.
  
- › Increasing the interest of community members in Facaeni with regard to the local traditional culture and for rediscovering, inventorying, cherishing and capitalizing on the local heritage in terms of traditional culture, for the welfare of the entire community.

- › Developing the entrepreneurial skills and the associative spirit of Facaeni community members – the project ended with the set up of a wicker, frail and trellis work crafts cooperative, made by 5 local inhabitants, of different ages and with diverse skills, yet holding a common interest: that of preserving and passing over a traditional craft to younger generations and creating jobs for the youth in the community.
- › Existence of an innovative development model, an example of success, with the potential to motivate local community members and change their perception regarding the power of association in general, and to be replicated in the region and in other communities.



# IRELAND: FROM PRIVATE HOMES TO PUBLIC ACTION: THE DOMESTIC WORKERS ACTION GROUP

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The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland is a national organisation working to promote justice, empowerment and equality for migrant workers and their families. For ten years, MRCI has taken a stand with migrants to tackle the root causes of inequality. They use a community work approach with a focus on participation, leadership and empowerment, and have a strong track record in securing policy changes e.g. Bridging Visa for undocumented migrants; reversal of work permit changes; protections for domestic & agriculture workers; reversing the minimum wage cut. Their community work is 'consciously, actively and specifically focused on bringing about social change in favour of the most marginalised or excluded in society and enabling them to address the social, political and economic causes of this marginalisation' (Community Workers' Co-operative, 2004: An All Ireland Statement of Values, Principles and Work standards' CWC 2008).

Rooted in a form of community work practice developed in Ireland in the past half century, the work of the MRCI is based on the core values of equality, anti-discrimination and social justice.

## Purpose

For domestic workers their work in private homes as live-in carers, child minders and housekeepers has contributed to them being exploited and isolated. One of MRCI's first initiatives was to establish an action and campaign group which has successfully forged alliances to achieve key policy reforms.



## Values and processes

The MRCI firstly established a support group for domestic workers through a monthly social gathering. The evolution from support group to an action campaign group took several years of painstaking community work, the slow pace of progress reflecting the extent to which domestic workers were in vulnerable and isolated situations.

As community work practice emphasises the importance of “starting where people are at” and bringing them along with you, we initially did little more than host monthly get-togethers, providing workers with a secure and welcoming environment to allow them to get to know and trust each other, as well as us.

In order to move beyond participation to the empowerment stage, we introduced creative projects aimed at encouraging the women to collectively identify and critically examine the problems they faced in their workplaces.

Today, the Domestic Workers Action Group – it changed its name from a support group to an action group in 2008 to reflect its campaigning remit – is at the forefront of the fight for the rights and dignity of workers employed in private homes throughout Ireland.

DWAG's 270 members, mostly women, have summoned the courage to highlight exploitative work practices on the streets and in the media. They have won high profile labour cases. They have lobbied politicians up and down the country. They have forged key alliances with employer groups and trade unions, nationally and internationally.

Through our careful community work with domestic workers, these women are no longer invisible victims of an unfair regime. DWAG's loyal and active members are speaking out, presenting a strong critical analysis and making clear demands from politicians, policy makers and society at large.

Collective action was critical in this campaign as a necessary and important engagement with power built upon a process of consciousness-raising in turn aiming to bring about transformational change for communities. The focus on relationship building and sustainability shows how community work practice values process as much as outcomes; not only why we do things, but how we do things. Peer support and solidarity remain an important feature of the group.



## **Methods and tools**

Participation is actively supported by overcoming barriers – for example, by holding meetings on Sundays which is commonly a day off for domestic workers

- › Consciousness raising was supported through the quilt project, with 45 women designed and made a hand-stitched textile quilt with a series of panels highlighting the blurred boundaries between work and time off in their largely unregulated sector, where employers often expected them to be available around the clock.
- › The quilt, which took 12 months to complete, was displayed during a national exhibition and was part of a broader campaign for protections for domestic workers.
- › Much time is invested in empowering the women by linking their lived experiences with an analysis of power inequities which require structural changes. A powerful way to do this is through creative projects such as drama, art and film.

## **Outcomes**

Campaigned, along with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, for the introduction in 2007 of a Code of Practice outlining domestic workers' rights and protections, as well as employers' obligations. The code sets out terms and conditions of employment in private homes, an important recognition that domestic workers have legally enforceable rights.

Succeeded in convincing the National Employment Rights Authority to undertake inspections into employment conditions for workers in private homes.

As the history of DWAG shows, community work practice requires patience, commitment and a steady focus on the endgame.

“The DWAG supports women who often have very little power to take a stand and fight for rights not only for ourselves as individual women but for all employed as carers and in the private home. I am amazed at what we have managed to achieve over the past few years.” Hilda Regaspi, DWAG Core Group member

[www.mrci.ie](http://www.mrci.ie)



## WEST FLANDERS, BELGIUM: CARING NETWORKS

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Good social care is a basic right for all people. That's why Community Development Samenlevingsopbouw West-Vlaanderen created caring networks.

A caring network is a local service which brings additional help and assistance to vulnerable people like the elderly, marginalised families and children. Central to the network is the involvement of volunteers from the neighbourhood or vicinity. These volunteers cooperate with existing social services and have regular contact with the co-ordinator of the caring network.

In rural areas, social services have disappeared, having been centralised to cities, where they are working on specific rather than multiple and complex needs.

### Purpose

The purpose of caring networks is to reduce poverty and social exclusion in Flanders by working in a proactive and preventive way.

## Values and processes

Samenlevingsopbouw West-Vlaanderen, the organization of community development leads the process in its role as:

- › Innovator: new answer for needs
- › Creator: helping local authorities to develop caring networks
- › Supporter: supporting existing caring networks through providing training and education, supporting Network Co-ordinators to help each other with certain cases and identifying and strategising around common challenges.
- › Policy work: creating a policy frame for this work

Once the caring network has been initiated, Samenlevingsopbouw West-Vlaanderen asks local governments to invest in the personnel costs for a coordinator of the network who works with a group of volunteers.

This coördinator fulfils an important role through:

- › Carrying out home visits – searching for solutions
- › Searching for and supporting volunteers
- › Matching clients with volunteers
- › Developing contact with local authorities, professional social services, associations, key-people in the village, etc...

The project works with a group of volunteers - empowered active citizens.  
Their role is:

- › Mobilising local social capital in neighbourhood and vicinities
- › Creating new networking for clients/participants
- › Providing different care services, depending on local needs

## Methods

A caring network provides a local service which brings additional help and assistance to excluded people- older people, marginalised families and children.

Caring networks work in a proactive way to prevent social exclusion and other social problems by training volunteers to provide information, through detecting possible problems and sign-posting to social services. Tools used in this work include:

- › Measures to help elderly to stay at home longer in a higher quality way by organising additional care tasks, etc.
- › Meeting points, cooking activities, assisting homework for children, etc.
- › Some additional care tasks such as transportation, etc.

## Outcomes

To support the development of caring networks in other areas, this project

- › developed pilot projects in 3 local communities
- › supports existing care networks, including 11 caring networks in 18 different municipalities
- › this has involved linking with 430 volunteers
- › who have supported 1,000 individuals
- › is engaging in policy work to create a structural and sustainable frame for caring networks.

In summer 2014 a website will be launched with supporting materials for those who want to build a caring network in their own community.

# OREBRO, SWEDEN: MANAGING MONEY: CHALLENGING POVERTY

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EKSAM is a non-profit organization for economic cooperation in Örebro, directed to citizens in Örebro in need of free financial advice and / or assistance with their personal finances. EKSAM previously operated as a project, with the Foundation Cesam as a responsible party, but since the beginning of May 2013 it is run as an independent non-profit agency with its own board, finances and partially new staff. The agency consists of several member organisations in the field of social work and user organisations.

## Purpose

The main purpose of the organisation is to fight poverty and work towards social inclusion, primarily at a local level, by identifying and counteracting factors and social conditions that contribute to the creation of poverty and social exclusion. One of the goals for EKSAM is to prevent people from falling into unsustainable financial circumstances, and to provide knowledge and techniques so that people can attend to their own personal finances.

## Values and processes

Many of those who visit EKSAM have very complex problems and many individuals linked to very difficult economic and social conditions. The economic problems often derive from other social problems such as mental and/or physical illness, lack of social networks, trauma, alcohol and drug abuse, crime, etc. The reverse is also not unusual, with economic problems in



themselves bring considerable emotional and psychosocial problems. Changes in the individual's life situation such as; divorce, the death of a significant other, sickness and unemployment can be devastating for households with already strained finances and could eventually lead to over-indebtedness. Most of our visitors have very large debts to both "The Enforcement" (Kronofogden), various debt collection companies, and often very high credits. It is not uncommon that people come to us with an eviction notice in their hand after a hospital stay or a similar absence. This includes people with few social networks, but also those who, because of guilt and shame are not able or willing to ask for help from friends or family. Lack of knowledge about personal finance and consumer rights is not uncommon among visitors and is another reason why people fall behind with rent and utility bills.

The daily work is based on democratic values. All people are equal, regardless of background. Diversity and equality, also among children and adolescents, are important starting points for EKSAMs work. We acknowledge at the outset the resources of each person and their capacity to take charge of their own life and finances. We believe in building up people's self-esteem and confidence in order to support them to improve their lives. Our role is not to take over responsibility from the individual, but to "help people help themselves" that can work in both the short and long term.

## **Methods and tools**

EKSAM works with knowledge development by producing work methods aimed at preventing people from ending up in difficult economic conditions. We also create networks with operators in the public, private and non-profit sectors to work together with these issues.

Furthermore, we seek to make children and young people living in economically disadvantaged families visible. One example is that, in a playful way, involve the young people in family financial planning which could act as a breeding ground for future entrepreneurship among these young people.

In addition to individual support, EKSAM offer workshops, study circles and lectures in economic issues. EKSAM aims to be a place for collaborative actors and regularly holds joint meetings with non-profit, public and private actors.

## **Outcomes**

Work has been successful for over three years and we hope to be able to continue helping people with personal financial issues, even if our goal always is to get people to be able to manage personal finances on their own.

# CONCLUSION

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The current economic crisis across Europe has highlighted both the limitations of individual solutions and the increasing interdependence of the local, national and global levels. A key focus of community development, as highlighted in this publication is the importance of collective solidarity and action. While each member organisation of European Community Development Network is involved in community development in each of our own countries, we know that the impact of globalisation means work at local or national level is not enough to effect change. We recognise the need to look outwards, to foster connections with others and to build international networks of solidarity to bring about change at these levels as well. This is why we are members of the European Community Development Network. It is our belief that the role of community development in supporting people to be active participants in addressing issues of concern through influencing decision making at local and global levels has never been more fundamental. We hope that this publication and our future work can contribute to making our vision for a more just, equal and inclusive Europe a reality for all who live here.



# EUCDN MEMBERS AND PROJECT PARTNERS

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## CESAM

Centrum för Samhällsarbete och Mobilisering  
Centre for Community Development and Local  
Mobilization  
Sweden



## Samenlevingsopbouw Vlaanderen vzw

Community Development in Flanders and  
Flanders, Belgium



## Közösségfejlesztők Egyesülete

HACD - Hungarian Association for Community  
Development  
Hungary



## Foundation Desenvolupament Comunitari

Community Development Foundation  
Catalunia, Spain



## The Ideas Bank Foundation

Norway



## Stowarzyszenie Centrum Wspierania Aktywno ci Lokalnej CAL

CAL Association  
Poland



**AGORA CE, o.p.s.**  
The Czech Republic



**Scottish Community Development Centre**  
Scotland



**Community Workers' Co-operative**  
Ireland



**Фондация „Старт за ефективни граждански алтернативи“**  
“C.E.G.A. – Creating Effective Grassroots Alternatives” Foundation  
Bulgaria



**Fundația PACT - Parteneriat pentru Acțiune Comunitară și Transformare**  
Foundation PACT – Partnership for Community Action and Transformation  
Romania





## **THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT NETWORK (EUCDN)**

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Formerly known as the Combined European Bureau for Social Development, EuCDN membership is national-level community development organisations in Catalunya, Sweden, Flanders Belgium, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Czech Republic, Scotland, Ireland, Bulgaria and Romania.

Although Europe is recognized mainly as a wealthy democracy where everybody should have guaranteed basic human rights, the reality shows that there are still people being excluded or oppressed. That is why EuCDN works on inclusion, participation and democracy through the promotion and development of sustainable community development in Europe. In that way EuCDN:

- › **supports citizens, professionals and policy makers from different countries in Europe;**
- › **endeavours to develop a Europe which functions on the basis of community and participative democracy;**
- › **helps build European civil society through community development.**

To achieve this mission, EuCDN aims to implement dynamics which could help transform the European reality. Within this framework, EuCDN carries out the following activities:

- › Studies and research – national and international;
- › Facilitation of agency development;
- › Taking part in policy discussions on social development;
- › Make studies of good practice widely accessible by disseminating the results
- › Use all legal means possible to achieve the goals of community development