

COMMUNITIES AGAINST CUTS

Community Sector/ Trade Union Joint Campaign

Statement from the Organising Group. (SIPTU; IMPACT; Community Sector Employers Forum)

The severe funding cuts that have been imposed by Government on local community based organisations during 2009, together with the proposals for further significant reductions contained in the McCarthy Group report on public expenditure, will have a devastating impact on the poorest communities across Ireland. The McCarthy Report is now Government policy in that the Department of Finance has instructed all Government Departments to implement the cuts and structural changes identified. A detailed analysis of the McCarthy report shows that at least 6,633 jobs in the Community Sector will be eliminated. The removal of public funding for these jobs will result in the redundancy of thousands of local workers, and the effective ending of the local community development and essential services that are provided primarily in the poorest communities in both urban and rural disadvantaged areas of the country. The ***Communities Against Cuts*** campaign brings together the representatives of the workers and employers in a joint effort to prevent the implementation of this report by the Government. The aim is to encourage workers and employers across the sector to campaign collectively at a local and national level to inform people about the situation and to mobilise resistance to this concerted attack on our communities.

Why is the Community Sector so important?

1. The sector delivers a range of vital services that would otherwise have to be directly provided by the state at a far greater cost. Funding cuts will undermine services and directly impact on the lives of ordinary people.
2. Cutbacks in the community sector sacrifice long term social and economic development for short term savings. The Sector works with the most disadvantaged in Irish society and in the developing world – those who have gained little from the economic boom. The building of a more cohesive and equal society requires work to improve the situation and life chances of individuals and communities.
3. Community based projects are needed now more than ever due to rising unemployment. The sector has developed a community infrastructure throughout the country. This infrastructure is crucial for the efficient delivery of services at local level in response to the unemployment crisis.
4. Cutbacks and closures will only serve to increase poverty and exacerbate social and economic difficulties, particularly in areas of disadvantage.

What do we want?

- **The cessation and reversal of funding cuts to the Community Sector and rejection of the McCarthy Group proposals that impact unfairly on the sector and those on social welfare.**

- **Direct negotiation in relation to the future of the Sector with the Department of Finance and relevant Government Departments, through the agreed formal procedures before the Budget.**
- **Commitment by Government of increased funding and investment in the poorest disadvantaged communities through the Community based infrastructure.**

Impact of the *McCarthy Group* report on public expenditure on community sector jobs.

	Department	Programme/	Proposed Budget Cut	No. of Organ.	Jobs cut
1.	<u>CRAGA</u>	Area.Partnerships Comm.Dev. Prog.	€ 44m (64% cut) (+€10m 2009 cut)	52 182	1,500(e) 364
2.		Community Services Programme	€10m	363	510 (20% of 2550)
3.		Drug Task Forces	€3m	600	81 (20% of 408)
4.		Dormant Accounts	€20m.(100% cut)		100 (e)
5.		Rural trans. prog.	€13	37	100
6.		C&V Sector Supports	€10m (50% cut)		50(e)
8.	<u>Enterprise/T & E</u>	Jobs Initiative		79	1426
9.		Jobs Clubs		55	220
10.		Enterprise Boards		30	146
11.		Local Employment Service		24	311
12.	<u>Social & FA</u>	Family Res. Ctres./ Family med./Coun.	€30m (80% cut)	107	330 30(e)
13.		Childcare Comm.	€3m	33	150(e)
14.		Volunteer Centres	€2.4	22	40
15.	<u>Justice, E & LR</u>	Equality Initiatives	€2.5m		30(e)
16.		Disability & Mental Health organisations	€50m		1,025 (5% of 22,500)
17.	<u>Arts, Sport, Tourism</u>	Local Arts, sports and culture	€33.7m		200(e)
		Total jobs eliminated			6,633.

18. The **Community Employment Programme** has a current allocation of 24,058 places, including ; lone parents 4,955; disability 5,707- MacCarthy proposes removing the dual payment with a cut of €100million; effective at individual renewal date or for new employees.

The fifty two **Area Partnerships** have emerged from an intensive process of amalgamation undertaken over the past three years when the number of partnership organisations was halved. The Partnerships provide integrated local development and service activity tackling unemployment, educational disadvantage and concentrated poverty and disadvantage. The companies manage a wide range of local programmes employing thousands of workers. The removal of the core funding from the partnerships will result in their closure in urban areas and severe restrictions in activity in rural areas.

The **Community Development Projects** were initially established in 1990 and located in the communities experiencing the most acute poverty. The projects have concentrated on developing these communities to increase resident participation, to

advocate for investment and have developed a range of local initiatives. The CDPs are a vital element of the capacity of local communities to combat poverty.

The **Community Services Programme** employs over 2,500 local residents, who were previously long term unemployed primarily in rural areas, to deliver a wide range of essential services for their communities; including eldercare, disability, community centres, sports and youth activities.

The **Drug Task Forces** have already experienced severe cuts in their project budgets during 2009. This has reduced the capacity to provide services to meet the crisis in drug misuse now spreading across the country. A further cut will result in redundancies and closure of front line services.

The **Dormant Accounts Fund**, obtained from the Irish Banks has dispersed over 200million to about 8,000 projects since 2003, including disadvantaged schools, pre-schools, drug misuse, homelessness and Travellers. Many local jobs have been provided from this funding.

The **Rural Transport Programme** has been developed in recent years to serve people living in remote rural areas due to the failure of public transport systems. This has achieved success in improving the quality of life of very many older people, people living alone and families linking them to vital services.

The **Jobs Initiative** employs 1,426 local residents in disadvantaged urban areas who were unemployed for over five years and over thirty five years of age. It has proved highly successful and now provides workers for a wide range of essential community based services in the poorest city areas. Many communities depend on these facilities, and the elimination of these jobs will end the services.

The **Jobs clubs** are located across the country and provide training and assistance to unemployed people between the ages of 16 and 64 who are seeking work. In the current unemployment crisis there are increasing demands for this professional and effective service.

The **Enterprise Boards** are located in each county and provide professional advice and financial supports for individuals entering self employment or for micro enterprise. They have experienced significant funding cuts in the past four years despite the increased demand for their services.

The **Local Employment Services** run independent community based Employment Centres that have proved highly successful since their establishment ten years ago. Thousands of unemployed people have been placed in work and training opportunities during that time and, with unemployment doubling in poorer areas, the service is now a vital element of the response locally and nationally to this crisis.

The **Family Resource Centres** were set up in 1994 to provide parenting support, counselling services, childcare and training to thousands of people in disadvantaged communities. These Family Centres are now a vital part of local communities and their closure will remove much needed facilities.

The complex issues related to **Disability and Mental Health** are addressed by a large number of small local voluntary agencies across Ireland. The proposal to cut HSE staff by 5% is likely to result in the equivalent loss of workers in this sector, despite Government commitment to prioritise this issue.

The withdrawal of all funding from **Local Childcare Committees, Volunteer Centres** will remove this new infrastructure, recently put in place by Government, to address the challenges presented to providing accessible childcare, encouraging voluntary participation.

The removal of funding from **Equality & Integration** initiatives aimed at promoting equality for women, meeting the emerging needs of new communities and providing

progressive responses to issues of gender equality and inclusion will increase racism and discrimination and reverse the recent gains achieving greater equality and inclusion for women and specific minorities.

The severe cuts in the **Community & Voluntary** grants and the **Arts & Culture** budget will have a negative impact on continued provision in these sectors.

The disproportionate 22% cuts to Ireland's **overseas aid budget** in 2009 (€222 million) has had a devastating effect on the work of Irish NGOs overseas, with many jobs lost, country offices closed and badly needed programmes for the worlds poorest ended. If the McCarthy recommendation of further cuts is implemented , it will lead to further job losses in Ireland and destroy lives in the developing world.

CONCLUSION.

The cumulative effect of the significant funding cuts already imposed in 2009 and the implementation of the McCarthy Group proposals will have a devastating impact on the poorest communities in Ireland. No consideration is given to the social implications of the massive scale of withdrawal of funding and investment from these local communities. In effect, the Government is attempting to abandon these communities as the number of unemployed doubles and a rapid decrease in household income is occurring. In these circumstances the intention to lay off thousands of community workers with the resulting removal of community development activities and essential services must be resisted. The objective of the **Community Sector & Trade Union Campaign** is to ensure that the Government budget in December does not set the basis for this withdrawal of public funds from those most in need.