

Report on the Seminar

# Impact of Poverty in a Changing Ireland

7th September 2010



Organised by Sligo County Community Forum with support from the  
Sligo Social Inclusion Measures Group of the County Development Board



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*“People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society”*

(Irish Government, National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016)

## **1. Introduction**

2010 is the European Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion. It is about building commitment to solidarity, social justice and social inclusion. To mark this year, and to give a voice to those who are marginalised, Sligo County Community Forum with the support of the Sligo Social Inclusion Measures Group hosted a half day seminar, ‘The Impact of Poverty on a Changing Ireland’ on Tuesday the 7th September 2010.

The seminar focussed on the experiences of those affected by poverty, those affected by long term poverty and social disadvantage: “Families and communities who are socially excluded, through low income, poor education, poor accommodation or inequality, are continuing to deal with these challenges, in a changed environment”, and those who are struggling as a result of the downturn in the economy: “Families and communities who were comfortable are now finding it difficult to meet mortgage payments and find jobs”. The seminar also had the aim of exploring interventions that can be made by the community sector and the statutory sector to support those living in poverty in the county.

In particular, the seminar explored the nature of poverty in Sligo and investigated what measures the sector can take to address poverty from the following angles– by addressing unemployment, through education provision and providing supports to families and communities.

The seminar was aimed at the general public, including people who are affected by social exclusion or decreased incomes: The unemployed, people with disabilities, lone parents, older people, younger people, Travellers and other ethnic minorities, and families who are struggling. It was also aimed at those working in the community at a local level, volunteers, public and state agencies, schools, colleges, County Councillors and officials. 47 delegates from the voluntary and statutory sector in Sligo attended.

## 1.1 Seminar Programme

9.30	Registration, tea and coffee
10.00	<b>Welcome Address:</b> Margaret Conlon, Chairperson Sligo County Community Forum
10.20	Keynote speaker: Fergus Finlay (Chief Executive Barnardos) – <b>The impact of poverty and social exclusion on families and communities.</b>
11.30	Maeve Whittington, Development worker, Sligo Social Services Ltd: <b>Is there poverty in Sligo?</b>
11.45	Pauline White, Western Development Commission: <b>Overview of Sligo's Employment and Unemployment Challenge</b>
12.15	Break out to workshops addressing issues of unemployment, education and community/family supports. Feedback from workshops
1.30	Lunch

## 2. Summary of Presentations

The seminar organisers were fortunate to attract very high calibre speakers to the event: Fergus Finlay, CEO Barnardos, Pauline White, Policy analyst with the Western Development Commission and Maeve Whittington from Sligo Social Services. This section outlines a summary of the presentations made.

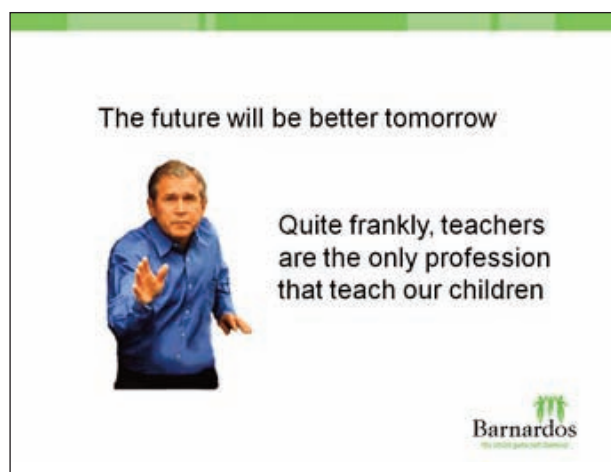


*Keynote speaker Fergus Finlay addressing the gathering. To the right, Margaret Conlon, Sligo County Community Forum, Pauline White, policy analyst Western Development Commission and Maeve Whittington, Sligo Social Services Ltd.*



### 2.1 Fergus Finlay: The impact of poverty and social exclusion on families and communities.

Fergus Finlay opened his speech talking about a whole range of factors that can affect families, for example poverty with a small 'p' can mean domestic violence, education disadvantage and other things that get between families. If we add to that disadvantage of a community, then children and families can face an Everest. Those are the children that Barnardos work with.



Although the speaker was not a fan of this American president, quotes (more accurately misquotes!) from George Bush were used to lighten the presentation.

[Misquotes from Mr. Bush continue through the presentation]

**We are ready for any unforeseen event  
that may or may not occur  
(how we see things right now)**

<b>Life Goes On</b>	Despite everything, people are getting on with things pretty well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorter-term focus</li> <li>• Kids</li> <li>• Personal achievements</li> <li>• Fighting Irish</li> </ul>
<b>Fear &amp; Loathing</b>	Faith in our institutions is at an all-time low, we don't think much of our values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of faith in leaders</li> <li>• Sense of betrayal</li> <li>• Fear on the street</li> <li>• Losing our way</li> </ul>
<b>Authentic Experiences</b>	More than ever we need things we can trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater appreciation of family and friends</li> <li>• Local/community</li> <li>• Home entertainment</li> </ul>

Barnardos

In a recent survey of Irish people the majority felt that 'life had to go on' despite the recession and they were coping by putting faith in themselves and focussing on family. However, people have lost faith in their leaders and feel hurt and betrayed by them. The response to this is for people to concentrate on communal and family values, with an upsurge in volunteerism. New poverty has told us we need to find strength within ourselves.

**I think we agree, the past is over...  
(emerging trends for 2010)**

- Conspicuous restraint
- Home Treats
- Discount chic
- Nesting
- Big Night In
- Pulling Together
- Opting out

Barnardos

Responses to having less money generally have been to 'show' we are spending less – being more thrifty, not buying showy cars - ie conspicuous restraint. Having nights at home and small treats are more common now - 'nights in are the new nights out'. there is also a stronger sense of pulling together.

**I know how hard it is to put food  
on your family...**



**1,056,947**  
(A quarter of our population  
compared to a fifth across the EU)

Barnardos

There are 1,056,947 children in Ireland. This is a quarter of the population – we are unique in Europe as we still have the youngest population in Europe.

**Families is where our nation finds hope,  
where wings take dream...**

- Most have great relationships with their families
- Most are happy, healthy
- Most have 3 or more friends
- Good readers (girls better than boys) except in disadvantage
- Most take enough exercise, love sport
- 90% feel safe where they live
- They like school – some even love it
- They believe they have a good future ahead of them
- They know how to make choices
- One-fifth live in lone parent families
- One in nine in consistent poverty
- One in ten (primary) and one in 6 (secondary) has 20 days or more absent from school
- A quarter have been bullied
- 8,000 have an intellectual disability
- 5,000 in care
- One in 12 smoke young, twice that at older ages
- At 15+, one in three drink to excess, 25% have used cannabis
- 55 suicides in the last decade


Barnardos

From Barnardos research 'Tomorrows child' on the plus side, in the main, we retain strong family relationships, most have friends, health and go to school. Most are literate, expect in disadvantaged areas where the figures have not changed since the 1970's.

On the challenges, a large minority of children live in consistent poverty. 5000 are in care, however due to unclear records we cannot be sure of that.

### Tomorrow's Children at home (If we don't succeed, we run the risk of failure)


- ❑ Live to the year 2100.
- ❑ Born to parents in their thirties, who will be in their 40s when the child is in secondary school and 50s when the child leaves home.
- ❑ Be a single child or have one or two siblings, but probably not more.
- ❑ Grow up in a stable family environment. Most will live with both parents and the chances of their parent's marriage breaking up are low.
- ❑ Car transport will be an important feature in the child's life.
- ❑ Grow up in a family in which both parents work until their 60s. Mother will stay working for her lifetime.
- ❑ Be part of a growing, ageing and more diverse population. More schools will be needed.
- ❑ Will probably live in a suburban home in the arc around Dublin or one of the other cities, or in a ribbon development or in once-off housing. It will probably be newly constructed premises.
- ❑ May live in an apartment in new medium-rise, intensified urban developments.



Presentation of trends for children living today and into the future.

### Tomorrow's Child and the Environment (I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully)


- ❑ Live in a cleaner world with improving air and water but with bio-diversity in decline. Fish may finally disappear from the menu.
- ❑ Find the environment a more important issue in daily life: climate change, house design, energy use, waste disposal, carbon footprint.
- ❑ Pay more for environmentally costly products (waste, water) and oil-based products.
- ❑ Participate in the transition to the post-carbon economy.
- ❑ Probably not be a farmer, but may live in a rural area.



Presentation of trends for children living today and into the future, in regards to the environment.

### Tomorrow's Child and Education (Rarely is the question asked: Is our children learning?)


- ❑ Will go to an early childhood education or care service, in a variety of possible settings - if provision is universal and parents can afford it.
- ❑ If born poor, likely to be poor throughout life, with limited educational and labour market opportunities.
- ❑ If raised in disadvantage, will leave school early, with no or minimal qualifications. Literacy or numeracy may be marginal.
- ❑ Will study for longer, probably completing the Leaving and go to university. Exit from the education system will be around 21.
- ❑ If a girl, will greatly out-perform boys.
- ❑ Will probably take part-time work from mid-teens.
- ❑ May take grinds to improve exam results.
- ❑ Will probably be driven to and from school, which may be further from home.
- ❑ Will probably have women teachers.



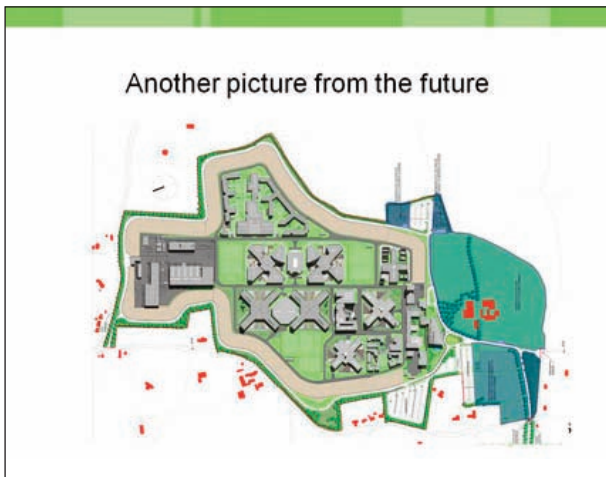
In this state, due to the policies we pursue, children who are born poor are most likely to remain poor. If you are born into a disadvantaged area or community you are more likely to leave school early.

### Tomorrow's Child's Grows Up (You work three jobs? ... Uniquely American, isn't it? I mean, that is fantastic that you're doing that.)

- ❑ Is likely to be interested in taking Leaving Cert english, geography, biology and creative subjects like art and music. Less likely to follow science or languages.
- ❑ May be attracted into business and creative careers and is less likely to be interested in traditional professions such as teaching, the public services, the bank or police.
- ❑ Consider himself or herself as Irish and proud of it, but will also have a sense of European identity as well as further overlapping sets of identities and loyalties.
- ❑ Be preoccupied with technology and very literate in all its forms.
- ❑ Is likely to travel more frequently and may work abroad for a while out of choice.
- ❑ Is unlikely to attend mass or religious services, but will be aware of and formally affiliate with a religious denomination.
- ❑ Be expected to work till 70 and give early consideration to funding a pension or part of one.



Likely life expectations for the majority of today's children.



This is a map of the proposed new prison Thornton Hall. While Mountjoy is grossly overcrowded, a large number of men held there are there for petty crimes and one quarter of all inmates have an intellectual disability. If we changed our approach in how we deal with, manage and punish crime, we could actually succeed in emptying Mountjoy fairly fast. We need to consider other options such as proving the therapy support needed and dealing with minor crimes in alternative ways.

### What do we mean by poverty?

**Relative versus Consistent Poverty**

**Relative Poverty (or at risk of poverty)**  
*'Is defined as having an income that is below 60% of the median income (the median is the mid-point on the scale of incomes in Ireland). In 2007, that was an income of below €11,900 per annum for an adult.'*

**Consistent Poverty**  
*'Is defined as having an income below 60% of the median and also experiencing enforced deprivation. This means being on a low income and not being able to afford basic necessities.'*

**New Poverty Drive-by Poverty**

**N.B.** The Government prefers to quote the Consistent Poverty figure (5.1%, 2007) as it is always lower than the Relative Poverty figure (16.5%, 2007)

Ghettoisation of poverty as a policy response exists in Ireland - this is what I am calling drive by poverty. However, one in nine people in Ireland live in consistent poverty; therefore it is also a rural phenomenon. Mental health is a huge issue in areas where there is poverty and it serves to perpetuate the cycle of poverty. What poverty means for families is not just lack of income, but, their emotional and physical health suffers.

### Is there poverty in Ireland ... really?

In 2007:

- **5.1% or 216,000** of the population was living in Consistent Poverty
- **16.5% or 700,000** of the population was living at Risk of Poverty (Relative Poverty)
- **11.1% or 110,000** children were living in Consistent Poverty
- **23.4% or 230,000** children were living in Relative Poverty  
 - 6<sup>th</sup> highest in the EU25

Sources: Barnardos, Combat Poverty Agency, Child Poverty & Well Being, European Commission, 2008

The evidence shows that people are affected by poverty in Ireland and that we have some of the highest levels of poverty in the EU.

### Is there poverty in Ireland ... really?

Patterns of poverty can be mapped geographically – "where I live"

**The forgotten 55**

**Where I live - most deprived areas in Dublin**

- The inner city
- In north Dublin: Coolock, Darnale, Cabra & Finglas
- In west Dublin: Inchicore, Clonsilla, Blanchardstown & Ballyfermot
- In south west Dublin: Cherry Orchard, Tallaght, Crumlin & Walkinstown


Highest number of young people in low income areas as a percentage of county youth population and highest rate of deliberate self-harm

Highest number of young people in low income areas as a percentage of county youth population

Counties with the highest rate of young people living in low income areas versus the rest of the country


There are areas that we know to have a higher concentration of poverty than others.

### Is there poverty in Ireland ... really?




- Children
- People with disabilities
- Older people
- Lone parents
- Unemployed people
- Those at work, on low incomes

Source: Combat Poverty, OECD (2008)




Families in Ireland do experience Poverty. However people in certain categories are more likely to experience poverty than others.

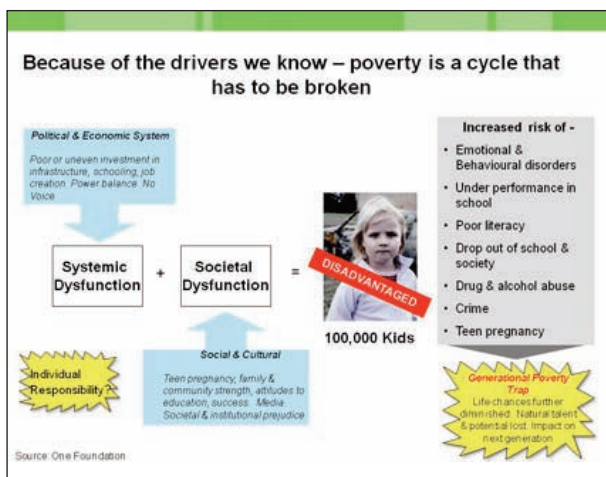
### Poverty for families means in real life...



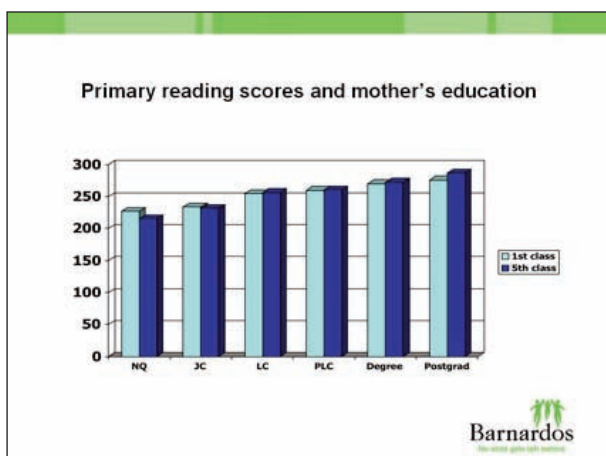
- Struggling to make ends meet on an inadequate income
- Living in poor housing
- Getting into debt
- Feeling discriminated against
- Suffering from poor health; physical or psychological
- Having fewer educational opportunities
- Surviving on an inadequate diet



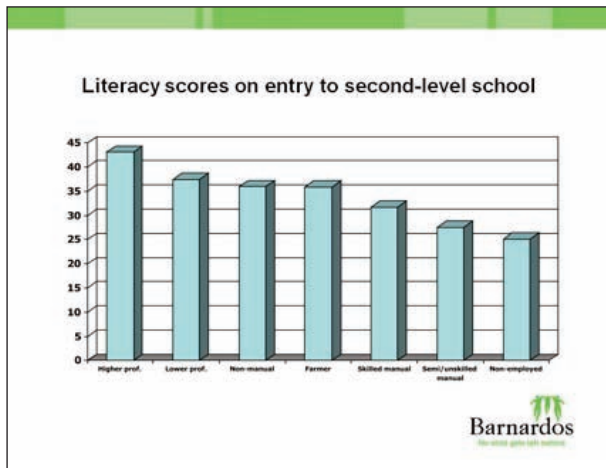
How poverty impacts on the lives of families.



Poverty is not a natural state; there are cultures that don't tolerate poverty. The power differential in our society can be attributed to dysfunctions in the system. This systemic dysfunction leads to societal dysfunction. This is about where we choose to make our investments in our our society, if we don't invest in disadvantaged areas or communities or accessible education, then we won't change the nature of poverty in our society.



This graph shows the correlation between a mother's education level and the reading scores of their children. It is clear that the higher the education level of the mothers the higher the reading score of the child. Mothers, especially those experiencing disadvantage, are under huge pressures in our society and there is an absence of support for them. This has never been addressed as a matter of policy in Ireland.



Data tells us that children of parents with higher education levels have higher literacy scores on entry to second level.

### So what works to break the cycle?

- Parental Employment at a decent wage**
  - The risk of poverty for children where one or both parents are working is only 9.4% but for children in jobless households it is 61.6%
- Social welfare - Child Benefit**
  - €1,992 p.a. for the first & second child
  - €2,436 p.a. for third & subsequent children
- Life-skills**
  - Good choice making
  - Resilience to life's challenges
- Education (for both child & parent)**
  - Education** is considered the greatest vehicle for lifting oneself out of poverty, however in disadvantaged areas, 1 in 3 pupils have serious reading or writing difficulties

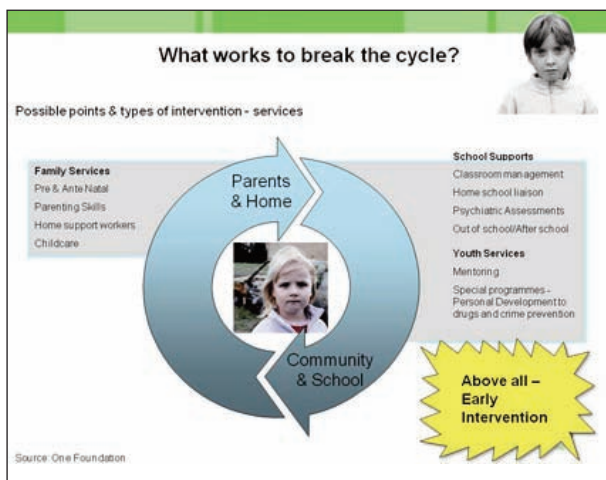
Barnardos  
The national children's charity

Source: Nolan (2000), McKeown & Clarke (2004)

What is needed is early intervention. Out of all of these things the one we can actually implement is education.

The well-being of mothers is critical to support children's education and the education of their mothers.

*"Absence of support for mothers is having a profound effect on the education of children"*



Above all what is needed is early intervention to give kids the best start possible.

### What we spend (US\$ per head)

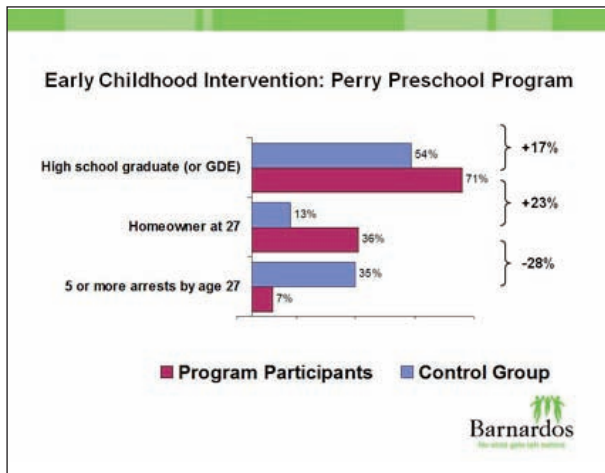
- Third level – \$10,468 (OECD average \$11,512)
- Second level – \$7,500 (OECD average \$7,804)
- Primary level - \$5,732 (OECD average \$6,250)
- Pre-school – Almost nothing at all
- In 2005 we spent 4.6% of our national wealth on educating our children. Ten years earlier (1995) it was 5.2%

Barnardos  
The national children's charity

Contrary to popular belief, investment in education actually went down in the last 10 years.

However the new pre-school intervention introduced last year is crucial.

There is a need for greater political accountability at all levels, but especially in the HSE.



This graph demonstrates a longitudinal study of the Perry preschool programme. It tracked the life experiences of those who had taken part in the pre-school programme as opposed to those from the same neighbourhoods who had not. The research shows that children, who experience quality pre-school services, will retain better scores and opportunities throughout their lives.

In conclusion, we have to accept that poverty is not inevitable, but it is brought about through policy decision that are made and unwillingness to break the cycle.

## 2.2 Maeve Whittington: Is there Poverty in Sligo?

Thank you to Sligo County Community Forum for inviting me here today. Sligo Social Services Council Ltd. is a voluntary company, limited by guarantee, established to respond to the needs of individuals, families and communities in the Sligo region, with a view to promoting justice, equality and the dignity of the human being. We provide a range of services including Social Work Service Counselling; Community Development Support; Home Management Advice; Meals on Wheels; accomodation for homeless people and many other supports.

From our experience of working with families and individuals in Sligo, the answer to your question, is there poverty in Sligo, has to be an emphatic 'Yes'. Approaches made to our organisation on issues to do with poverty have increased greatly in the last 12 months. Some of the key issues we have come up against in supporting families dealing with poverty in Sligo are:

- **Fuel poverty:** This has been a real experience with many people we encounter. People are having their electricity cut off. This can be due to a delay in getting a social welfare payment or a delay in wages. People don't have access to credit in the way that they used to, so they go to organisations like St. Vincent de Paul or us for support and advice.
- **Mental health:** We have come into contact with families where mental health issues have had a huge economic impact on the family. This may have been due to the main income provider being hospitalised due to mental health difficulties, or an inability to control current circumstances to manage debt.
- **Going back to school:** The cost of returning to school puts untold pressure on families with low incomes. For many, the only access they have to money is to go to money lenders, and many families have gone down this route. The interest that money lenders charge is very high and people who are caught up in this trap experience a high level of intimidation.
- **Stress:** Many families contact us who are experiencing a high degree of stress which is directly related to the economic situation in the home. Some people we have come in contact with are unsure about how they will find the means to provide a meal for their families due to meeting debt repayments.
- **Increase in looking for supports:** St. Vincent de Paul in Sligo have reported higher numbers looking for food and furniture and have reported increasing requests for food, and support with the payment of utilities. MABS have also reported a high increase in the numbers using its services. Collectively these agencies, Sligo Social Services and other, sit on a group called the community task force against illegal money lending. We are supporting families to look at how they can look at saving instead of borrowing.



## 2.3 Pauline White: Overview of Sligo's Employment and Unemployment Challenge

**Western Development Commission**

- ▶ 7-county Western Region
- ▶ State body under DCEGA
- ▶ WDC Act 1998
- ▶ *'... foster and promote the economic and social development of the Western Region'*

[www.wdc.ie](http://www.wdc.ie)    [LookWest.ie](http://LookWest.ie)

Thank you to Sligo Forum for inviting me here today, first some background on the role of the Western Development Commission.

**4 Main Work Areas**

1. Informing policy-making on key **social & economic issues** through analysis
2. Promoting benefits of living, working & doing business in West – **LookWest.ie**
3. Supporting sustainable development of **rural economy** – renewable energy, creative
4. Providing risk capital to SMEs & social enterprises – **WDC Investment Fund**

[www.wdc.ie](http://www.wdc.ie)    [LookWest.ie](http://LookWest.ie)

These are the four main areas of work of the commission. Some key Policy reports have been related to Enterprise & Employment in the Western Region; we also make submissions to national consultations and have recently completed 'Work in the West'.

**Live Register in Co Sligo**

August 2008 = 3,231  
+71%  
 August 2009 = 5,512  
+8%  
**August 2010 = 5,945**

[www.wdc.ie](http://www.wdc.ie)    [LookWest.ie](http://LookWest.ie)

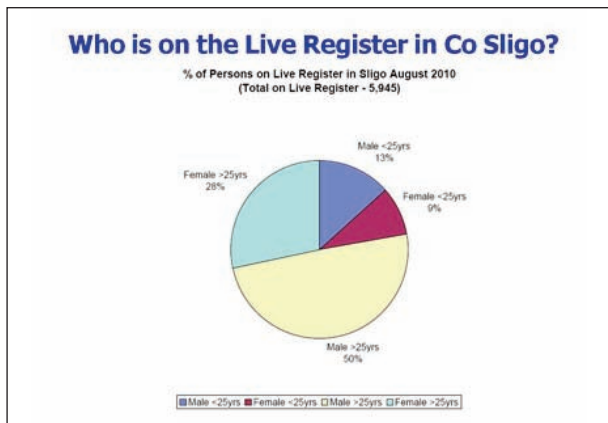
There have been huge increases in unemployment in Sligo in recent years.

**Sligo has 5<sup>th</sup> highest share of women on the Live Register in the State**

**Sligo = 37.2%**  
**State = 35.8%**

www.wdc.ie    LookWest.ie    WDC

A high proportion of those unemployed are women, higher than the national average



This is the breakdown of those on the live register in Sligo

It is to be expected that the over-25 is a larger group as it is a far larger category

**Occupations on Live Register**

- ▶ Largest occupation groups on Live Register (national)
  - ▶ Craft & related
  - ▶ Plant & machine operatives
  - ▶ Personal & protective services
  - ▶ Clerical & secretarial
  - ▶ Sales
- ▶ Largest recent increases
  - ▶ Professionals
  - ▶ Clerical & secretarial
  - ▶ Sales

www.wdc.ie    LookWest.ie    WDC

This shows a breakdown of the occupations of those on the live register in Sligo

There is a lot of media coverage on the increases of professionals on the live register, but in absolute terms the lower skilled occupation groups dominate the Live Register

**Notified Redundancies in Sligo**

Year	Total	Men	Women
2009	626	375	251
2010 (end Aug)	269	148	121

**Highest share of women in redundancies in Region**

www.wdc.ie    LookWest.ie    WDC

Sligo experienced the highest share of redundancies for women in the region

## Unemployment in Western Region

Unemployment Rate - **12.4%**

No. Unemployed - **44,300**

Long Term Unemployment Rate - **4.6%**

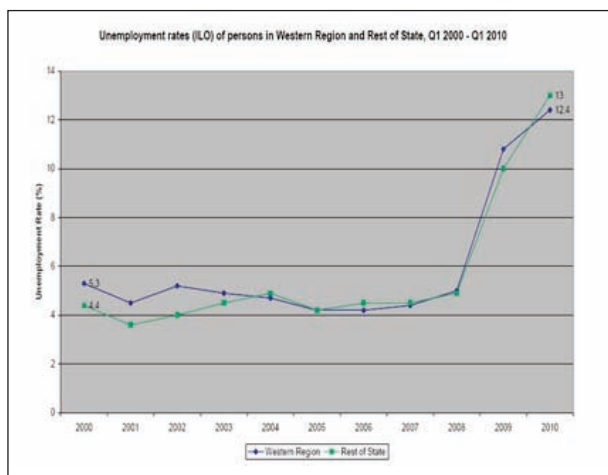
No. Long Term Unemployed - **16,300**

www.wdc.ie

LookWest.ie



Unemployment figures for the Western Region



Comparison between unemployment in the state and unemployment in the Western Region

## BUT Unemployment Rate varies by...

Education	Gender	Age
Junior Cert or lower 21%	Male 16%	15-24 yrs 24%
Third level 9%	Female 8%	45+ yrs 8%

www.wdc.ie

LookWest.ie



Those with a higher education level are more likely to be in employment.

35% of male 18-24 year olds who left school early were unemployed in the Western Region

Only 15% of male 18-24 year olds who did not leave school early were unemployed in the Western Region

## Sligo's Employment Profile 2006

▶ Number of people 'at work' in Sligo in 2006

▶ **27,328**

▶ Main sectors

- ▶ Health
- ▶ Manufacturing
- ▶ Wholesale & Retail
- ▶ Construction

www.wdc.ie

LookWest.ie



Number of people at work in 2006 gives context for the numbers on the Live Register

## Top Employment Sectors in Western Region 2010

### Top 5 employment sectors

- ▶ Wholesale & Retail (15%)
- ▶ Industry (14%)
- ▶ Health (14%)
- ▶ Education (9%)
- ▶ Accommodation & Food service (8%)

**Higher share** in Western Region than Rest of State

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

[LookWest.ie](http://LookWest.ie)



The County level data for the employment profile is only available for Census 2006. This is 2010 data for Western Region, up to date. The region tends to be more reliant on more traditional, lower value sectors of employment than elsewhere in the state. Large employers are not the 'smart economy' Sectors. Large employers are services - private and public as well as industry.

## Lowest Employment Sectors in Western Region 2010

### Lowest 5 employment sectors

- ▶ Administrative & Support services (2%)
- ▶ Financial, Insurance & Real estate (3%)
- ▶ Info & Communications (3%)
- ▶ Transport & Storage (4%)
- ▶ Professional, Scientific & Technical (4%)

**Lower share** in Western Region than Rest of State

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

[LookWest.ie](http://LookWest.ie)

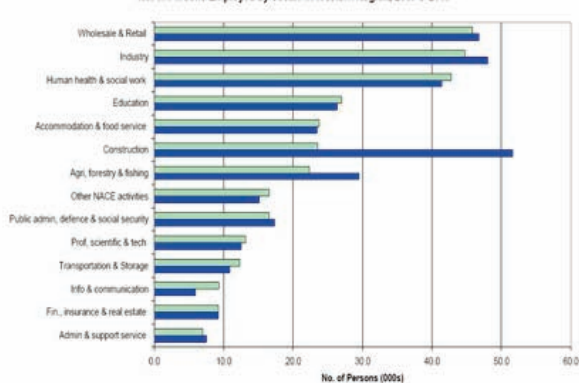


Linked to 'knowledge economy' or 'smart economy' but WR has lower share.

In employment terms these sectors do not employ large numbers.

Will not be full solution to unemployment or poverty

No. of Persons Employed by Sector in Western Region, 2007 & 2010



Decline of 28,100 in the number working on construction between 2007 and 2010

## Work in the West: The Western Region's Employment & Unemployment Challenge

▶ **Challenge 1: Adjusting to the Decline in Construction Employment**

▶ **Challenge 2: Return of the Brain Drain?**

▶ **Challenge 3: Delivery of Education & Training**



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

[LookWest.ie](http://LookWest.ie)




### Challenge 1: Adjusting to Decline in Construction

**Boom:**

- ▶ Construction **'absorbed'** other job losses
- ▶ Young men, p/t farmers & migrant workers
- ▶ 2007 peak – **1 in 4 men** in Region in construction

**Bust:**

- ▶ 2007-2010 – **28,100 fall** in construction emp. in Region
- ▶ **Men in rural areas** first hit by unemployment
- ▶ Risk of long term unemployment & poverty
- ▶ Lower **male education levels**
- ▶ Relevance of **skills & experience** for new jobs?
- ▶ **Knock-on impacts** – retail, real estate ...

[www.wdc.ie](http://www.wdc.ie)    [LookWest.ie](http://LookWest.ie)    

Long term unemployment – 16,300 in Western Region.

LTU rate 4.6%

28% of men in Western region have 3rd level vs 35% of women

26% of men in Western region have 3rd level vs 29% in the rest of the state

### Challenge 2: Return of the Brain Drain?

**Boom:**

- ▶ Emigration reversed, high **inward migration**
- ▶ New graduates from Sligo getting first job in Sligo – 21% to 35% (1998-2008)
- ▶ 28% of Sligo's population with **3<sup>rd</sup> level** (2006)

**Bust:**

- ▶ 2009 first net emigration nationally since 1995
- ▶ **22% on live register in Sligo under 25yrs** – most likely to emigrate
- ▶ Difficult for **new graduates** to find first job
- ▶ Return to large scale **out-migration?**

[www.wdc.ie](http://www.wdc.ie)    [LookWest.ie](http://LookWest.ie)    


30.2% in the Western Region have a 3rd level qualification in 2010

Indications of out-migration from the Western Region in 2010, but there was immigration in 2009, maybe people returning home after becoming unemployed elsewhere?

In 2010 the Region has more people that it had in 2008 or any other year of this decade. No clear picture yet. In 1980s it took several years between unemployment increasing before emigration began.

### Challenge 3: Delivery of Education & Training

- ▶ New unemployed mainly **lower skilled**  
E.g. 18-24 year old males in Region
  - Early school leavers – 35% unemployed
  - Not early school leavers – 15% unemployed
- ▶ Lower skilled at higher risk of **long term unemployment**
- ▶ **Re-training construction workers**
- ▶ Delivery to **rural residents** is a challenge, but IT options
- ▶ Business skills & **Entrepreneurship** training

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16,300 people are Long term unemployed

### Tackling the Challenge Future Growth Areas

- ▶ Medical devices
- ▶ Software, Financial & International services
- ▶ Creative sector
- ▶ Green economy (renewable energy, energy efficiency)
- ▶ Caring sector
- ▶ Food
- ▶ Tourism
- ▶ Marine

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- Have to consider sectors that are large employers as well as the 'smart economy' exporting businesses and the 'jobless growth' phenomenon.

- Medical Devices - Fund Investments

- Green Economy: sustainable use of natural resources in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism and energy. Western Region has advantages in renewable energy resources - wind, ocean and biomass.

- Creative Sector: Art/antiques trade; architecture; fashion; publishing; advertising; crafts; music & arts; video, film & photo; radio & TV; internet & software; digital media; design.

## Tackling the Challenge Some Recommendations

1. **Retain skilled people** – jobs, education, training, business supports
2. Education & training system to meet **real needs of job seekers**
3. Allow **local flexibility & joint actions** to meet local needs
4. Specific strategies for unemployed & workers with **lower education levels**
5. Strategy to **re-skill construction workers** inc. programme for young men in rural areas
6. Enterprise support for locally-trading **micro-enterprises**
7. Identify & target priority **growth areas**

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

[LookWest.ie](http://LookWest.ie)



11,000 working in 4,800 businesses in WR - potential for 2,000 extra jobs.

Need for education

### **3. Feedback from Workshop Discussions**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

During the course of the seminar three discussion sessions were held focusing on the following topics:

- Community Development and Family Supports
- Responding to unemployment and poverty
- Education and Training to address poverty

15-20 participants took part in each workshop, which they had pre-selected. Each discussion session had a facilitator and note-taker. The outcomes from each session are outlined below.

#### **3.2 Community Development and Family Supports**

##### **3.2.1 How poverty affects people in our communities in Sligo?**

1. It affects people's freedom to make choices – not having choice in making decisions in our life.
  - We need to look to our decision makers
  - Poverty brings shame.
  - A participant at the workshop referred to “orange books” that she used to have from money lenders and still remembers the pain.
2. It affects people's confidence – not having what other people have – people become isolated.
  - Disadvantaged areas: when the whole community is in an area of disadvantage – you have a “Double Whammy!”
3. Increase in mental health problems – these are the hidden effects of poverty with serious consequences for future generations. This has a direct affect at a community level. It was said that this is ‘huge’ in Sligo.
4. Historical legacy of poverty and dis-empowerment
  - Institutional abuse, peoples mental health
  - We are dealing with the offshoot of 100 years – back to the famine.
5. Impact of money lending is having a very detrimental effect in Sligo – people don't break away from this very easily.
6. The Cost of school books are €420 per child at secondary school level – this has to be challenged and more cost efficient ways explored at a local and national level.

##### **3.2.2. Community Responses to Poverty:**

- We need to put greater emphasis on the mother of young families. This is a very important role and is not valued as much as it was in the past. There is a need for greater support of mothers. These supports need to include: Basic cooking skills – for ordinary meals, how to make home-made bread, cooking skills that have got lost with the modern age of fast food - ordinary country dinners skills
- Interagency working together has made a great improvement in Sligo – working together should continue.
- Pride will stop people coming for help and we must treat people with respect when helping them.
- A lot of people have never heard of MABs or Social Services – how can we reach them?
- Greater Identification of Needs (ION) needs to take place
- Life Start Proposal – 1 to 5 years – greater investment in the early years. The Key here is that the earlier you intervene the greater the chance of success to ensure that children can have the opportunities their parents didn't have.

The greatest risk in this area is that preventative funding is the first to be cut– it is essential that preventative funding is not cut.

- Sometimes the crisis situation gets all the attention – to the detriment of preventative action as Fergus Finlay referred to earlier “spend thousands now instead of stockpile of millions of euro afterwards”
- There needs to be a policy shift in Ireland to give funding to the Community & Voluntary Sector as they can respond more efficiently at local levels at weekends and after 5.30pm, when the social workers go home. The cave sector can offer flexibility and access to ‘at risk’ communities that other interventions cannot.
- There is a need to hand back a lot of the money given to institutions like the HSE – we need to take back the power back to the community.

#### **Facilitator’s summary:**

- There is a Cumulative effect on the individual of the experience of poverty – this is often hidden from public view.
- This then has a Cumulative effect in a whole geographical area.
- The Mental impact – has long term effects, particularly on family situations
- Funding on a preventative level should be restored to a local level from the large organisations –where it can be used more effectively and efficiently.

### **3.3 Responses to Unemployment and Poverty**

To begin, participants highlighted the some of the main points from speakers’ presentations which struck them, these were named as:

- More women on the live register
- More young people 18-25 on live register
- In 2006 there were approx 30,000 people in the labour force; this was qualified by the observation that this figure may be artificially high as it included those who were resident in neighbouring counties but working in Sligo, particularly as the population of Sligo is 55,000.

#### **3.3.1 What is the situation for unemployed people in Sligo?**

- There is lack of opportunities for young people
- The current view seems to overlook the long term unemployed
- There is a secondary marginalisation of the marginalised through the influx of the ‘new’ poor
- In relation to volunteering there is a huge delay in placing volunteers, in particular with regard to Garda vetting.
- There is a poor response to volunteers from organisations, they need to create viable positions for volunteers
- O Cuiv’s short-term solution to community sector/unemployed with his ‘workfare’ idea is an inadequate response

#### **3.3.2. What supports need to be in place for unemployed people**

- There is a sense that the supports are being withdrawn from community sector, as exemplified by the closing down of the CDPs
- Quality training should be provided
- Childcare services are becoming unsustainable or threatened due to loss of revenue through free provision
- Re-training and or education to be directed more towards individual needs: e.g. employment needs of the individual and emerging opportunities.
- There should be more supports towards micro-enterprises through grants and mentoring
- Concepts such as ‘local responses’ and ‘flexibility’ need to be actually implemented rather than merely referred to as an aspiration

- Provision needs to be made towards schemes that encourage creativity and community co-operatives
- A shorter working week could make way for the employment of more people

### **3.4 Education and Training to Address Poverty**

#### **3.4.1 What are the barriers to moving into education and training for people experiencing poverty?**

- Poor self-image – low expectations in relation to education from self and from others. This is also linked to the value placed in the home on education – how important it is seen to be.
- The costs of education at all levels can be prohibitive. This is true at primary and secondary level in relation to books, uniforms, etc., and at third level in relation to registration fees, books, transport, etc.
- Lack of information and guidance as to where to go in relation to education. It was acknowledged that there are services in relation to this issue, but sometimes people are not aware of these services or do not know where to start.
- Cap on the number of available third level places, PLC courses, etc. This restriction is highlighted in light of the general economic environment where there are now more people than ever seeking places on third level courses.

#### **3.4.2 What opportunities exist in Sligo to use education as a means of tackling poverty?**

The overall sentiment that came from the discussion was that education must be utilised in a wide-ranging way – it cannot just focus on the individual, requiring a person to fit in with the existing system which has sometimes failed. It was felt that:

- Education services should link in with the family in an accessible way – for example, by working with the mother in the child's school.
- Service providers must work with the whole family – for example, parents with literacy difficulties will find it hard to support their children with their homework.
- Sligo town could be used as a central access point for service provision.
- Agencies should seek better ways of working together in relation to education services.

## 4. Concluding Remarks from Sligo Forum Chairperson

Today has enabled us to have a broad discussion about the nature of poverty in Sligo and its effect on our communities. From our discussions, we can see that while it is important to give attention to the needs of the ‘new’ unemployed, our disadvantaged communities now face greater challenges than they did during the so-called ‘boom’ years. One of the issues that came out strongly to me from the discussion was the need to focus on mothers – as the primary educators of our children and the need to give them support at a community and policy level. Another issue that stood out for me was the need to reach out to those who have lost their jobs as a result of the drop off in construction and the need to provide specific training in potential growth areas for them. Another remarkable statistic is the ongoing need for basic skills and back to education type provision for those who have left school early.

We are used to hearing the frightening statistics on the radio about the numbers who are unemployed; however this seminar has allowed us to look at the human face of poverty. Agencies, if they want to address its legacy, need to consider the mental health impacts that many people are facing. People need a holistic approach to help them gain access to the job market and build up their self confidence. Seeing people solely as ‘economic units’ does not build the community or the individual, and I believe that the community sector has a key role to play in this respect.

I would like to thank all of our speakers who have enlightened us so much here on this subject this morning: Fergus Finlay, Pauline White, and Maeve Whittington. I would also like to thank our facilitators: Camilla Smyth, Trevor Sweetman and Pamela Andison, and our note takers: Gabriel Browne, Jonathon May and Mary Brodie.

### 1. Analysis of Evaluation Questionnaires

The following pages set out the responses to the evaluation questionnaire given out at the end of the day, before the lunch break:

#### How satisfied were you?:

Responses:	Very satisfied	😊	😐	😞	Very dissatisfied
With the booking process and pre-event organisation?	22	1	2		
With the venue and facilities?	22	4	1		
With the arrangements and quality of the catering	13	5	1		
With the presentations that were delivered at the venue?	18	8			
With the workshops?	15	6	5	1	
With the panel discussion?	9	4	3	1	
That the pace of the event was sustained?	8	6	7	3	

*The scoring indicates that overall people were very satisfied with the elements of the event, most notably the speakers and the organisation of the event.*

#### What is your overall assessment of the event?

Please circle appropriately

Very good	1	2	3	4	5	Very poor
Responses	11	13	2			

*The responses to this question indicate that overall people assessed the event positively*

## Appendix 1: Biography of Speakers

### **Fergus Finlay, Chief Executive, Barnardos**

Since June 2005 Fergus Finlay has been Chief Executive of Barnardos, Ireland's largest children's charity. For twenty years prior to that he was employed as Senior Adviser to the Labour Party, serving in three Governments and working for the Party in opposition. He was one of the drafters of the Downing Street Declaration and was centrally involved in the election of President Mary Robinson in 1990, together with other political events of the period. Fergus Finlay is the author of three best-selling books. He has founded a number of organisations that campaign for the rights of people with disabilities, and also served a four-year term as Chairperson of Special Olympics Ireland. He is currently Chair of Volunteering Ireland. He broadcasts regularly on radio and television, and contributes a weekly column to the Irish Examiner.

### **Pauline White, Policy Analyst, Western Development Commission**

Pauline has worked as a policy analyst with the WDC since 2003. Key responsibilities include analysis of employment, unemployment, labour market, infrastructure, regional policy and rural issues in the Western Region, as well as preparation of submissions to national policy consultations in these areas. She also wrote the recent WDC report *Work in the West: The Western Region's Employment & Unemployment Challenge* (Dec 2009).

**Maeve Whittington** has been working with Sligo Social Service Council Ltd for over 25 years and has a dual role in the organisation, as Home Management Advisory Worker and as a Development Worker. Her work involves working with families and individuals who are experiencing financial difficulties. Her work as a Development Worker has been in supporting marginalised communities to identify and address needs.

**Margaret Conlon** is the Chairperson of the County Community Forum and a voluntary community worker in her native Easkey. She is also the Company Secretary of West Sligo Forum Limited. In addition to this she is the Chair of the County Structure of the North West Regional Drugs Task Force and a representative for Sligo Forum on the Sligo County Child Care Committee.

## Appendix 2: Evaluation Questionnaire

### Impact of Poverty in a Changing Ireland: Evaluation Form

Please help us to evaluate how successfully the aims of this event were achieved by completing this questionnaire, indicating how satisfied you were with our performance in each area (by circling the appropriate number, using the scale 1:5) or by writing in the boxes. How satisfied were you:

	Very satisfied	😊	😊	☹️	Very dissatisfied
With the booking process and pre-event organisation?	1	2	3	4	5
With the venue and facilities?	1	2	3	4	5
With the arrangements and quality of the catering	1	2	3	4	5
With the presentations that were delivered at the venue?	1	2	3	4	5
With the workshops?	1	2	3	4	5
With the panel discussion?	1	2	3	4	5
That the pace of the event was sustained?	1	2	3	4	5

### What is your overall assessment of the event?

Please circle appropriately

Very Good    1    2    3    4    5    Very Poor

If you were not satisfied with any aspect (i.e. you rated 4 or 5 in the grids above), please indicate the reason:

If any, what were the main strengths of the event?

If any, what were the main weaknesses of the event?

What changes or improvements should be made?

What more could be done by the Social Inclusion Measures

Group or Sligo Forum to support those affected by poverty in Sligo?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this evaluation form. Please leave at the registration table on your way out.

### Appendix 3: List of Attendees

<b>Name of Attendees</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Ann Donegan	Sligo Northside Resource Centre
Bairbre Tiernan	St Angela's College
Camilla Smyth	Sligo Leader Partnership Company
Catherine Brennan	Sligo Community Forum
Cecilia Dunleavy	Retired School Teacher
Christina Mc Taggart	Sligo Social Services
Claire Dineen	Ballymote FRC
Claire Galligan	Support Worker Sligo Community Forum
Dolores McDonagh	St Angela's College
Dr Maria Gallo	St Angela's College
Fergus Finlay	Barnardos
Gabriel Browne	Sligo County Council
Joan McGrath	Sligo Social Services
Jonathan May	Sligo Leader Partnership
Josette Newman	Sligo Leader Partnership
Kathleen McHugh	Donegal FRC
Kathryn McSweeney	St Angela's College
Kitty Youds	Active Retirement
Lisa Conlon	Community Centre MCR
Maeve McDermott	Primary Care Development Unit, HSE West
Maeve Whittington	Sligo Community Forum
Maire McCallion	Dept. Of Applied Science
Marcella McGarry	MCR Community Centre
Margaret Conlon	Sligo Community Forum
Margaret Harrigan	Family & Children's Therapist
Marian Sweeney	Social Work Department
Mark Askey	Ballymote FRC
Martina Butler	Sligo Family Support Ltd
Martina Doyle	The Forge Family Resource Centre
Mary Brodie	Sligo VEC
Mary Kilroy	Tubbercurry FRC
Maureen O'Hara	Lios na nOg, Sligo
Michael Glennon	Sligo Leader Partnership
Niamh Wilson	Domestic Violence Advocacy Service
Pamela Andison	Rapid
Patricia Murray	Sligo MABS
Pauline White	Speaker
Seamus O Boyle	Sligo Northside Centre
Terry Hayes	Sligo Athletic Club
Thomas McMcGettrick	Sligo Community Forum
Trevor Sweetman	Co. Sligo VEC
Viola Craig	Sligo County Childcare Committee
Evana Schorderat	Tir Boghaine Teo
James Cullen	Tir Boghaine Teo
Martin Jocrgensen	Sligo Family Support Ltd
Marian McGovern	MCR