



FINGAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD

FORBAIRT FHINE GALL

# Equality Works

Fingal Development Board  
Forbairt Fhine Gall

**BUILDING EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN FINGAL:  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE REPORT TO THE SOCIAL INCLUSION MONITORING COMMITTEE**

DECEMBER 2003

PREPARED BY KERRY LAWLESS FOR THE SOCIAL INCLUSION MONITORING COMMITTEE



---

## Acknowledgments

The Fingal Development Board would like to thank various people for contributing to the completion of this report and the work behind it. Linda Curran, as chair of the Social Inclusion Monitoring Committee showed leadership and enthusiasm throughout 2003 and ensured that the work of the SIMC is relevant to the rest of the work of the Board. Councillor Anne Devitt, as chair of the Fingal Development Board gave immense support for this project and was instrumental in ensuring that Social Inclusion remained at the core of the Fingal Development Board. Kerry Lawless as the author of this report is to be commended for her expertise and tireless work and focus on best practise in this area. Caroline McCamley should be thanked for making this material come alive in the training sessions with the SIMC members.

**Fingal Development Board**  
Forbairt Fhine Gall  
Fingal Development Board  
Forbairt Fhine Gall  
Mainscourt • 23 Main Street • Swords • Fingal • Co. Dublin  
Phone +353 1 890 5095  
Fax + 353 1 890 6259  
Web: <http://www.fdb.ie>  
Email: [info@fdb.ie](mailto:info@fdb.ie)

### 1. Introduction

This document summarises the report Building Equality and Social Inclusion in Fingal, as prepared, for the Social Inclusion Monitoring Committee (SIMC) of the Fingal Development Board (FDB), by Kerry Lawless (Independent Consultant), in 2003.

The report details a research initiative undertaken over 2003 to support Fingal Development Board's efforts to develop practical approaches to equality proofing. This included the design and development of a proofing model, training for SIMC members in social inclusion proofing, the implementation of an equality impact assessment on 50 selected actions and the development of a set of recommendations to underpin a future equality strategy for Fingal.

A great deal of work and effort went into the initiative and thanks must go to all who participated – and gave so generously of their time – in order to make the project a success. Kerry Lawless, the consultant who developed the 3 R model and implemented the equality impact assessment and Caroline McCamley, who developed and delivered the training programme, endeavoured to ensure that the equality proofing process provided practical tools for advancing the equality agenda. Ciaran Staunton, of the Development Board staff, provided huge levels of support, encouragement and expertise. Linda Curran, Chair of the Social Inclusion Monitoring Committee and Senan Turnbull, Director of the Development Board, must also be commended for having the vision and determination to see the project through<sup>1</sup>.

### 2. Policy Context

The Fingal Development Board is a partnership of Local Government, Local Development Agencies, State Agencies, and Social Partners. It is one of 34 organisations of its type established to coincide with the geographic remit of local authorities.

The concept of City and County Development Boards emerged from the 1999 Report of the Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems, and is provided for in the Local Government Act, 2001.

Central Government's ambitions for City and County Development Boards are set out in a document titled Shared Vision. Central to this vision is the belief that democratic planning at local level could ultimately lead to re-invigorated local governance, better local integration in the public service, community ownership and, ultimately, a better quality of life for all citizens.

The cornerstone of this work was the publication, by Development Boards, of a Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development, combining the efforts of all stakeholders and ensuring an integrated implementation of the strategy, to facilitate locally identified needs.

Underpinning the vision was the promotion of social inclusion at local level. To ensure social inclusion is at the heart of the Strategies developed, each Development Board is required to establish a Social Inclusion Monitoring Group (SIMC), in order to generate a more co-ordinated approach by agencies to social inclusion at a local level.

SIMC is, therefore, the only mandatory structure within the Development Board and the only theme to receive support from Central Government.

The proofing strategy developed and outlined in this report will ensure that the Fingal Development Board continues to work – and is seen to work – towards the elimination of social exclusion and inequality in Fingal.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>It should be noted that the independent report resulting from this process conveys the analysis and opinion of Kerry Lawless, Research and Training Consultant, and not necessarily that of the SIMC or the Fingal Development Board as a whole.

<sup>2</sup>Guidelines on the Co-ordination of Social Inclusion Measures at Local Level by CDB Social Inclusion Monitoring Committees, LG.66/20.69.

### 3. Proofing Obligations and Commitments

The Shared Vision of the County Development Board outlines how

“...the CDB strategy will itself need to be proofed against both the wider national policies, and against wider national and regional strategies and plans. In relation to national policies key ones will be those relating to poverty and exclusion, rural development, equality, social, economic and cultural policies and environmental sustainability...”

Each Strategy is required, by Government, to be examined in the context of national, regional and European policies. This requirement also inculcates a special emphasis on the issues of social inclusion, rural development, equality and environmental sustainability.

Commitments at national and European level reinforce this commitment to localised equality proofing. At European level, articles 136 and 137 in the Amsterdam Treaty emphasise that the elimination of social exclusion should be one of the European Union's social policy goals. In 2000, the Lisbon Council mandated Member States and the European Commission to develop common approaches and compatibility in regard to indicators of social exclusion. To date, the range of indicators developed recognises the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion and inequality. This work is reinforced by commitments within the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion, 2003-2005 (NAPs/ incl.).

At national level, equality and poverty proofing are tied into current practice through commitments such as the implementation of the National Anti Poverty Strategy, Social Partnership agreements, existing equality legislation and infrastructure, and the National Development Plan (NDP), among others.

Assessment of policies for their impact on poverty, a practice known as poverty proofing, was formally introduced in Government Departments in 1998, following the publication of the National Anti Poverty Strategy (NAPS). It is now a requirement that memoranda for the Government involving significant policy proposals are poverty proofed. The memoranda clearly states that this is an obligatory requirement, even if some departments' remit may not seem to impact directly on poverty and even where some departments are not directly involved in direct service delivery.

Irish equality legislation exacts a legal obligation to equality proof policies in the preparation of the NDP and the design of the Memoranda for Government on policy proposals.

The NDP 2000-2006 established the promotion of social inclusion as one of its four key national objectives, citing the County and City Development Boards as key players in forwarding this objective at local level.

Starting with Partnership 2000, successive Social Partnership agreements have included a commitment to the principle of equality, poverty and social inclusion proofing as well as a commitment to developing the infrastructure to carry this out.

In short, equality and social inclusion considerations are becoming obligatory at every level of decision-making, requiring Fingal Development Board to actively pursue its work in this area.

### 4. The Interface between Poverty, Inequality and Social Exclusion

Equality proofing means different things to different people. Most narrowly defined, it is seen as a mechanism for ensuring adherence to legislation, specifically the nine grounds currently protected by equality legislation. At its broadest, it is tied into anti-poverty and social inclusion developments, working to promote a more equal, more inclusive society.

In recognising the complex and multi-faceted nature of social exclusion, effective proofing strategies, such as the 3 R model developed in Fingal, are inextricably linked to the equality agenda, reflecting the intersection between poverty, inequality, and social exclusion

However, proofing is not without its difficulties. The NESF Review<sup>3</sup> of the poverty-proofing guidelines highlighted constraints on its effectiveness, including a lack of common understanding regarding what is meant by poverty proofing, an absence of data, the need for more training and support to develop more expertise in the area and, crucially, a lack of political will to bring about structural change.

The mid-term review of the NDP<sup>4</sup> has also shown an equally low level of understanding and enthusiasm for equality proofing, as proofing continues to be seen in terms of obligations and increased workloads, rather than as an opportunity for better planning and more effective working methods.

Manifold proofing requirements, creating administrative overload and undermining the real value of the process, create legitimate concerns for policy makers and implementers. In this climate, it is all too easy to slip into a “tick and dash” approach to proofing.

Recognising this, Fingal Development Board were looking for a less convoluted, more substantive way to take equality, poverty and social inclusion into account. Social Inclusion Proofing, using approaches, such as the 3 R model outlined in this report, involves the development of an integrated and systematic approach to ensure that equality, social inclusion, and poverty are no longer seen as the exclusive concern of specialised equality bodies or initiatives.

This report builds on a growing awareness of the links between poverty, inequality and social exclusion, as articulated by the NESF<sup>5</sup>, Equality Authority and Combat Poverty Agency<sup>6</sup>. It is clear that there is a demand for an integrated system of proofing to lessen the administrative requirements – the “burden” of proofing – to, as NESF puts it: “facilitate the recognition of the interactions across bases of exclusion in a way that could enhance the effectiveness of policy”.

The ultimate objective and potential of the 3 R approach is to promote the development of a more equal society by assisting the Fingal Development Board and its partner organisations to thread social cohesion, equality and fairness through the entire county development strategy and planning process.

## 5. Progress in Fingal: How Far We Have Come

The Fingal Development Board held its inaugural meeting in March 2000 and, following a detailed planning process, its Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development in Fingal 2002-2011 was published in April 2002.

In its Principles of Social Inclusion, Fingal Development Board has recognised that equality is achieved through a multi-layered approach, requiring legislation, the challenging of existing discriminatory structures and practices and, most importantly perhaps, the necessity of changing attitudes to ensure the recognition and celebration of diversity. Correspondingly, the Board is committed to the principles of proofing (FDB, 2002:87).


Initially, a working group on social inclusion was set up in 2000, to ensure a commitment to social inclusion permeated the Strategy. In January 2001, the group split into two new groups that would individually contend with the two themes of Life-Long Learning and Health and Social Services, in order to further refine and direct the Strategy's implementation.

<sup>3</sup> Review of Poverty Proofing Process, the National Economic and Social Council, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> The Mid-Term Evaluation of the National Development Plan and Community Support Framework for Ireland, 2000 to 2006: Final Report to the Department of Finance, ESRI, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> A Strategic Policy Framework for Equality Issues, National Economic and Social Forum, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Poverty & Inequality: Applying an Equality Dimension to Poverty Proofing, Combat Poverty Agency and Equality Authority, 2003.



---

While this course of action ensured a strong social-inclusion emphasis within the framework of the two themes, the over-arching focus on social inclusion was, nevertheless, lost within the Strategy. In many instances, positive outcomes of the Strategy emerged, not from a formulaic approach to actions (as would be advised, for example, in equality proofing steps devised by the Equality Authority), but from somewhat arbitrary, intuitive reactions on the part of individuals. This ad hoc approach highlighted the need for a standardised methodology, a framework for social inclusion proofing, within which the FDB could function more inclusively.

The SIMC came to the view that there were three main deficiencies with this approach:

- It related to strict agency remits and did not focus on client groups.
- It addressed mainstream concerns with service delivery NOT the specific needs of socially excluded groups.
- It shifted emphasis away from core social inclusion issues like poverty and inequality.

In order to address these deficits, the SIMC formulated a work plan in 2003, to address equality concerns, incorporating:

- a research initiative aimed at developing a model for effective equality-proofing;
- training days for SIMC members;
- the selection of a range of actions to be put through an equality impact assessment;
- development of a set of recommendations to underpin an equality strategy for Fingal and
- a Social Inclusion Seminar to raise awareness of the issues.

In developing the 3 R model, the SIMC considered a range of existing models and approaches to equality proofing and impact assessments. The objective was to learn from best practice, within and outside Ireland, in order to develop an adaptable, practical, user-friendly model, with both short-term and long-term applications.

## 6. Moving the Social Inclusion Agenda Forward: Terms of Reference

The terms of reference apply to the work of the Social Inclusion Monitoring Committee (SIMC), the external contracts of work and the role that the SIMC will have, on an ongoing basis, to drive the Social Inclusion agenda.

SIMC:

- is a sub committee of the Fingal Development Board and, as such, is an advisory committee;
- will decide a means of ensuring that Social Inclusion is prioritised by agencies implementing the Fingal Development Board Strategy;
- will begin the process of mainstreaming Social Inclusion concerns while continuing to show leadership and innovation on equality and poverty issues;
- will seek external advice and expertise where appropriate and
- will report back to the Fingal Development Board on a quarterly basis.

External Consultants will:

- identify and localise a proven Social Inclusion proofing template;
- ensure that the Proofing template takes adequate account of the County Development Board context;
- ensure that the Proofing template takes adequate account of the obligations to Poverty Proof and Equality Proof County Development Board strategies;
- apply the model to 50 'test-case' actions from the FDB strategy;
- show how potentially negative actions can be neutralised and suggest how neutral actions can move towards better practice;
- devise training materials that will allow the varied membership of the SIMC to learn how to apply the model;
- deliver appropriate training to the SIMC and be available to answer queries from SIMC members;
- advise on the production of brochures, leaflets and other materials to publicise the template beyond the SIMC and
- produce a final report with an executive summary.

The SIMC group will:

- advise the board on the applicability of the chosen model and
- advise the board on how best to publicise and further mainstream the model.

## 7. Equality in Action: What is Social Inclusion Proofing?

In Fingal, Social Inclusion Proofing is designed to eliminate the risk that a particular course of action may exacerbate inequality and social exclusion. It is not about being prohibitive – preventing an action being carried out – but rather about adding to its effectiveness, ensuring positive outcomes.

Equality proofing is, therefore, a basic tool of social inclusion, ensuring positive outcomes in organisational actions, so that everyone in Fingal – whatever their origins – will experience a better quality of life, culturally, socially and economically.

## 8. The 3R Model

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities developed an approach to gender proofing, known as REFLEX. The approach involves using a simple survey, made up of a series of questions, to explore the different effects policies or programmes have on men and women. It poses questions under three headings: 'Representation, Resources and Reality'. As such, it is also known as the 3 R approach. This method furnishes a series of questions designed to tease out how norms and values influence planning and identify patterns in decision making. A quantitative investigation – the first two R's, Representation and Resources – forms the basis of analysis; the third R, Reality, brings more of a qualitative component to the survey.

The practical, probing approach of the 3R method – its focus on decision-making and actual outcomes of policy and programmes – made it a good model for use at local level. Its simple approach of a survey, based on a sample set of questions, and analysis, based on local knowledge and expertise, makes it ideal for generating discussion on equality issues and what work is actually being done in Fingal.


While the Swedish REFLEX model provided the framework for the 3 R model, the development of the questions under each heading drew on the practical experience of the NAPS poverty proofing guidelines, Gender Proofing Handbook and other examples of best practice currently in use in Ireland. In this, the SIMC built on best practice and the learning and experience of others. A comprehensive analysis of these and other models may be found in the full report Building Equality and Social Inclusion.

## 9. Learning by Doing: Outcomes from the Proofing Process

A selection of actions from the Strategy were put to the test during the piloting of the model, as part of the SIMC training programme, and the worked examples, detailed in the full report, demonstrate how the model is applied in practice, the types of responses generated to it, and the level of analysis involved.

At first, SIMC members felt a little overwhelmed by the task and reported that they did not believe they had sufficient information or expertise to work through each of the questions. And indeed many of the questions can not be answered. This was particularly true of "Resources" questions, meaning either that full budgetary information had not been provided or that there were simply no dedicated resources available for the action.

In feedback from other training sessions, participants have reported spending a long time trying to understand the actual action, what it was trying to achieve and how this could be measured. However, as they worked through the training participants could see that this was not a weakness of the 3 R model, but reflective of how the actions within the Strategy had been developed.



---

While the piloting clearly demonstrated where actions were being effective, highlighting models of good practice, it also focused attention on where more work is needed. It is clear that actions were developed, with best of intentions, building on local knowledge, but not always a clear rationale and structure for implementation, meaning that the objective was not always translated into positive outcomes.

The strength of the model is that it can work effectively even if full information is not available. The 3 R Model is not about finding the right answer, but more about asking the right question.

### Applying the 3 R model produced useful learning in the area of:

#### Representation

Working on the model, it was clear that, while efforts were made to consult the public on actions within the FDB Strategy, on many occasions, the “wrong”, or too general a public was consulted.

For instance, in the childcare actions, the users of the services were not consulted about the development of actions. Where there was more effective consultation, for example with people with disabilities, this was very often due to the contingencies of the working groups’ membership rather than a result of a targeted approach. The specific needs of other interest groups, such as gay men and lesbians were simply not considered of at all.

It was also clear that policy-makers did not have a uniform interpretation of the term “consultation”. For some, this purpose was adequately served by an ad in the local paper announcing a public meeting. For others, “consultation” demanded that key interests be involved in the development and implementation of actions.

The piloting of the 3R model clearly demonstrated that a common understanding of consultation, and all its levels, is essential, as is a systematic approach to identifying relevant stakeholders.

#### Resources

It was noted that the actions within the FDB Strategy do not always have secure, dedicated costings or commitments behind them. Very often the “Resources” questions could not be answered, which was telling in itself. With no clear information on resources, there is little likelihood of an action actually being implemented, or making it beyond a paper commitment.

Some actions within the Strategy are tied into an agency’s own, pre-existing work plan, and have simply been “piggy-backed”, making it hard to see how the objectives behind an action, specific to the Strategy, can be isolated and measured for their impact on social inclusion. Additionally, it was often difficult to see how resources from a specific action would benefit Fingal in particular, especially the actions of those agencies with a remit geographically wider than, or different to, Fingal’s own boundaries.

#### Reality

It was clear that the 3 R model asks hard questions about what is actually being done, stripping away the aspirations, however well intended, behind each action, to focus on actual outcomes. This was hard for people, especially for those who had contributed a lot of time and effort to developing the actions in the first place. It showed that proofing needs to be approached with an open mind and with a view to seeking improvements

In practical terms, the SIMC group found that practice made the process easier and quicker. They discovered that there is no perfect place or time to start using the 3 R model. It is more important to actually start. SIMC also felt it was best to work in groups and share ideas. They also indicated that it is best to work on the proofing within a short time frame to maintain focus as proofing is an evolving process and not an end in itself.

The 3R model was found to be flexible, practical and easy to use. Its direct, questioning style and focus on real outcomes brought real clarity to the proofing process. As one participant put it, it “strips away the woolly bits” and focuses on what is actually being achieved to advance the social inclusion agenda in Fingal.

The 3R model was shown to have add-on benefits. For example, it provided recommendations to the data strategy within the Development Board. In this, it is clear that the learning and outcomes were transferable to other aspects of an agency's work. It can be used at all levels and all stages of the proofing process. The 3 R model was seen as being easy to adapt and multi-functional, in that it can be used as a planning tool for policy writing, an implementation tool, and/or an evaluation tool to look at the success of policies, programmes or services.

## 10. Mainstreaming the 3R Approach: Next Steps

Equality proofing recognises that no policy or programme is discrete; that a holistic approach is best. Every action within the Strategy is affected by and affects other actions. With this in mind, the following are a set of initial recommendations for integrating the learning from the social inclusion proofing research and training across the FDB as a whole:

- Raise awareness of the 3R approach and its benefits.
- Roll-out proofing training across the FDB, to include Monitoring groups, the FDB Board, policy makers within Implementing Agencies and Managing Authorities.
- Produce a range of training and technical supports.
- Develop guidelines and best practice models for future work on consultation, research, training, information, representation, and staff appointments.
- Request that Lead Agency provide full budgetary information on each action to Monitoring Committees.
- Each implementing organisation should demonstrate to its Monitoring Committee how all relevant voices are represented in each individual action.
- With under-represented groups, such as youth, older people, gay men and lesbians, refugees and asylum seekers, it is recommended that each Lead Agency identify what voices are missing or drowned-out within each action.
- Link actions to exploit natural linkages, save resources and maximise synergy.
- Develop and adopt a clear strategy for data collection, sharing and storage.
- Conduct an audit of research carried out in Fingal, in order to share expertise and learning and improve data gathering.
- Ensure close co-operation and sharing of learning between SIMC and the proposed Social Inclusion Unit (SIU), in the short and long-term.

# APPENDIX

## Social Inclusion Proofing: 3R Method

---

### 11. Growing Obligations: Meeting the Challenge Ahead

Equality, poverty and social inclusion proofing are here to stay.

Equality obligations will increase over time. Societal changes, the increasing diversity of Irish society and moves to rights-based approaches to equality will lead to increasing numbers of people seeking to be protected against discrimination, a trend which is evident across the EU. This will bring equality proofing well beyond the nine grounds currently covered by legislation in Ireland. Policy and decision makers at local level need to prepare for these developments.

For this reason, it is essential that, as local development and planning processes strengthen, new voices are heard and new perspectives put forward. In addition, as Ireland gradually moves towards a stronger system of Local Government, policy development at local level will take centre-stage. This will, in turn, lead to new lessons regarding equality and social inclusion. For Fingal to move ahead with its social inclusion agenda, a clear equality strategy needs to be developed. The recommendations detailed above are the first step in this process.

### 12. Conclusion

The work of the SIMC over 2003 outlined in this report clearly demonstrates how proofing is an integral part of the planning process, not an end in itself. Social inclusion is everyone's business and the 3 R model helps to show how it can be incorporated in all work at all levels and all stages.

It is particularly good at challenging resistance to the concept of proofing and bringing about the attitudinal change needed to move the social inclusion agenda forward.

The results of the research initiative show how, at its best, proofing and equality impact assessments bring add-on benefits to the planning process, adding to their effectiveness through the development of indicators for evaluation and monitoring.

The outcomes and learning are the first step in the development of an equality strategy to underpin work on social inclusion with Fingal.

**Representation -**

Questions about Representation will show if effective consultation has occurred with the direct beneficiaries of a policy, programme or service.

- Who is the target group?
- How were the priorities arrived at? Was a needs assessment used?
- What is the rationale behind the policy, programme or service?
- Whose voices are heard and NOT heard?
- Was consultation used?
- What balance of representation/influence was achieved?

**Resources -**

Questions about resources will show if the allocation to the policy, programme or service is sufficient.

- What is the resource allocation to this policy, programme or service?
- What percentage is that of overall resources?
- Who is committing the resources and what types of resources are these ?
- Are the resources secure, from core funding and ring-fenced?
- How much of the budget is for preparatory work and how much for delivery?

**Reality -**

Questions about Reality will show if the policy, programme or service can change anything for the target group and if so to what degree.

- What is taken for granted in the logic of the policy, programme or service?
- What is implied?
- What is NOT considered a problem?
- Are there any contradictions or resource conflicts?
- Who benefits from this description of reality?
- Will this policy, programme or service perpetuate different outcomes?
- Will this policy, programme or service change anything for the target groups?
- Are other approaches possible?

**3R Method What is it?**

The 3R Method of Social Inclusion proofing was devised for the Fingal Development Board and the Social Inclusion Monitoring Committee in order to proof the implementation of the County Strategy 2002 - 2011.

This method was first developed by local government agencies in Sweden and is known as 'REFLEX'. The method has been used here in Ireland, but only in the area of gender proofing. The method is dynamic and can be used as:

- A planning tool for policy writing
- An implementation tool
- An evaluation tool to look at the success of policies, programmes or services.

**Fingal Development Board Policy on Social Inclusion**

Fingal Development Board in its Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development has set out its principles of Social Inclusion which include:

- Creating awareness
- Recognising diversity
- Addressing equality issues
- Overcoming inequalities that perpetuate exclusion
- Mainstreaming equality

The responsibility for driving this agenda has been given to the Social Inclusion Monitoring Committee.



## NOTES

---