

AIEB

ALL IRELAND ENDORSEMENT BODY FOR
COMMUNITY WORK EDUCATION & TRAINING

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY WORK, STANDARDS, EDUCATION, PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SYMPOSIUM REPORT 2022



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INTRODUCTION

The Symposium in November marked a key point in time in the journey from Covid 19 to ongoing challenges for communities, community work, community work practitioners and for community work education and training. Around 100 people came from a variety of projects and backgrounds and included representatives from Northern Ireland as well as the South. The Symposium provided an opportunity for considerations, conversations and contributions including from Joe O'Brien TD, Minister for Rural and Community Development who gave generously of his time on the day. In addition to substantial small group and plenary discussions involving all present we also had a number of International speakers including Colin Ross formerly of the Community Learning and Development Standards Council, Scotland, Professor Sarah Banks, Durham University, Dr Daniel Muia, Kenyatta University and Anne Jennings, Vice President of the Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA).

The purpose of the day was to reflect on the contribution of community work and community work education to addressing the issues experienced by communities and to create a space for discussing and developing the links between community workers, employers, educators, funders, policy makers and the work of AIEB on these issues. The complex and challenging context, the demand for and growing acknowledgement of the contribution of community work and community workers across the island of Ireland, as well as globally, provided a useful starting point. At a time when new community work programmes are being developed (e.g., the Community Development Programme), existing programmes are being renewed and North-South initiatives are being reinforced and actively encouraged for example through the Shared Island Initiative, the Symposium provided an opportunity to discuss and critique them all.



OPENING REMARKS

Anastasia Crickley, AIEB Chairperson opened proceedings, thanked the Minister for his participation, thanked Joe Donohue and colleagues at Fatima Groups United for hosting the event and provided an overview of AIEB's early years. Its development journey began in 2004 with the establishment of a working group which came together to develop the *Towards Standards for Quality Community Work: An All-Ireland Statement of Values, Principles and Work Standards*ⁱ document published in 2008. AIEB emerged from that working group in 2010 with a remit as an all-island body tasked with promoting and ensuring standards in community work education, and community work practice. This led to the formal endorsement of the first community work degree programmes in 2011. As with other social professions, endorsement benchmarked by national and global standards is a key approach in building recognition for the community work discipline, leading to better outcomes for communities and all stakeholders.

Building on *Towards Standards* and following extensive consultation with community work practitioners in the Republic and in Northern Ireland, across urban and rural contexts and with minority groups, the *All-Ireland Standards for Community Work*ⁱⁱ were published in 2016. The promotion of these Standards informs and forms a key pillar of AIEB's work in ensuring quality standards in community work education, supports better policy development informed by them eg; *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities, A Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland 2019*ⁱⁱⁱ and better policy implementation through a well constituted workforce equipped with analysis, skills and resilience.

Up until December 2020, AIEB was funded through one off grants and support from Community Work Ireland (CWI). In December 2020, AIEB secured financial support from the Department for Rural and Community Development (DRCD). Work since then has included mapping current community work





qualifications and education provision, undertaking an assessment of community work education and training needs, developing a recognition process for associated community work programmes below undergraduate level, establishing a framework for continuous professional and practice development, working to ensure pathways for people to access professional qualifications and developing an individual recognition route to support those without professional qualifications but with significant experience to gain professional recognition for that experience.

Future priorities were also outlined including the need to develop initiatives for minority communities to become professionally qualified thereby ensuring that this diversity is reflected in the profession. The need to consider how best to support a community work approach in other professional disciplines such as social work for example, was also seen as important, as was the ongoing concern about terms and conditions for community workers. Finally, she said, in response to a number of requests, there are plans to revisit Working for Change: The Irish Journal of Community Work.

Before inviting inputs from Ciara Shanahan and Anna Clarke, she thanked them both for their unstinting contribution to AIEB including the Symposium preparations. She thanked Sarah Banks for taking the time to travel to share her internationally recognised perspectives; Colin Ross and friends in the CLD Standards Council for their ongoing collaboration over an extended period; Daniel Muia for joining us from Kenya and Anne Jennings from Australia, noting that even across continents and contexts many of our challenges and commitments resonate. Anastasia in particular welcomed Joe O'Brien TD, Minister for Rural and Community Development, noting his willingness to address the Symposium and thanked him and his Department for their continued support for AIEB and community work overall. The conditions are such, she said, that we have fertile ground to continue our collective work.

MINISTER'S ADDRESS

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY WORK, STANDARDS, EDUCATION, PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“We recognised the value of true community work and the specific nature of it, and we want to continue and support it into the future.”

Joe O'Brien TD, Minister for Rural and Community Development congratulated AIEB on its work to date and welcomed today's event and the opportunity *'to address this Symposium with an international dimension, celebrating the past and current contribution of community work and community workers and highlighting the value of community work education to communities and society overall.'* He noted that it was fitting to be in the F2 Centre again, as in 2019 it was here that the launch of *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities A Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland 2019-2024^{vii}* took place. He noted too that the Symposium was taking place in a community where community work has made a difference and has had a long and impactful tradition.

Minister O'Brien pointed out that the five-year strategy renewed the government's commitment to working in partnership with the community sector and supporting community work as a specific strategy to address social exclusion and inequality. Speaking about the direct links between key objectives in the strategy and government's recognition of the specific nature of community work he noted AIEB's ambitious programme of work that he and DRCD have been happy to support, with a proposal to continue supporting AIEB's work also being considered. The Minister also referred to the fact that community work values are reflected in the Strategy and other policy documents such as the *Values and Principles for Collaboration and Partnership Working with the Community and Voluntary Sector, 2022^{viii}*, and that initiatives such as the Civic Forum contribute to strengthening the conditions for collective approaches for the benefit of all

Addressing the distinct nature of community work the Minister referred to the reality that it can be the difference between communities having a real opportunity to flourish, empowering groups to identify needs and bring about the changes required

“Community Development is fundamental to government approaches to tackling societal issues.”



to improve their lives. Community work can be key to breaking the cycle, addressing intergenerational trauma and levelling the playing field. He was glad, he said, to support the autonomous community work recommended in the Strategy through launching the Pilot Community Development Programme which he hopes to expand.

On a recent visit to Limerick the Minister met with and was impressed by Limerick Traveller Network meeting Traveller women determined to fight for better outcomes for their community. The women spoke passionately about their vision and it being one based in a grassroots community work approach. In the North he was struck by the importance of a community development approach there also, particularly evident in the impact of the work of the Shankill Women’s Centre and how they cut through the sectarian divide to tackle the cross-community issue of poverty.

In his closing remarks Minister O’Brien spoke to the need to celebrate and acknowledge the contribution, skills and experience of community workers and to recognise the importance of the All-Ireland Standards for Community Work which set out a way of working and a set of values for community work. He noted the quiet work of AIEB in the background supporting, engaging and working to further the community work discipline, through support for community workers and the Standards for community development education. Finishing his input, the Minister spoke about continuing to champion community development approaches at government level and thanking attendees for the passion and commitment brought to the work on a daily basis.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY WORK THROUGH ENDORSED EDUCATION AND STANDARDS

Ciara Shanahan, AIEB Coordinator highlighted two of the key priorities for AIEB to develop and support community work i.e., the All-Ireland Standards for Community Work and the AIEB professional endorsement process. The All-Ireland Standards, she said, provide the foundation and guiding framework for community development on the island of Ireland and set out the key values and the associated, interdependent knowledge, skills and qualities required for quality community work education and training, and practice. They are reflective of International and other national Standards for community work such as the *UK Community Development National Occupational Standards*^{iv} and the *International Standards for Community Development*^v published by the International Association for Community Development (IACD).

To ensure quality community work practice based on the All-Ireland Standards, AIEB has developed the associated inclusive and supportive *Guidelines for Endorsement of Community Work/ Development Education and Training Programmes*^{vi} informed by them. The endorsement process aims to enhance the quality overall of community work education and training and sets out to ensure that providers adhere to a set of guidelines for delivery and that the programme content provides opportunities for participants to acquire the requisite knowledge, skills, and qualities for professional practice. In line with EU provisions the benchmark for community work is at honours degree level and work placements are central and essential to the professional programmes.



In 2022 AIEB carried out a needs assessment in a number of regions to assess the education and training needs of the workforce. At the time of the Symposium there had been 176 responses to the needs assessment. It found that 1 in 5 of the respondents had professionally endorsed community work qualifications and that there was interest in the pursuit of them amongst those not professionally qualified. Most but not all of those without professional qualifications hold undergraduate degrees in other disciplines. The financial burden of pursuing endorsed professional community work qualifications and the lack of available and accessible opportunities were identified as the key barriers.

What emerges is the clear need for resourcing of and support for access to full professional qualifications in particular, but not only at postgraduate level. It is clear that AIEB needs to work with various stakeholders to build recognition for the importance of Continuous Practice/Professional Development (CPD) and extend the range of opportunities and initiatives to support the development of an agile and responsive workforce.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY WORK PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESPONDING TO EMERGING NEEDS

Anna Clarke, AIEB gave an overview of the mapping research work she conducted for AIEB in 2021. This work involved desk and website identification of community work education and training providers, and analysis of programmes as outlined which incorporated a nationally recognised, regulated qualification and which had community work or community development in the title. Sixty-six programmes were identified, across all levels from introductory through to post-graduate. Of the programmes at higher education level, seven are professionally endorsed by AIEB.

Analysis of the available information identified a complex and often confusing array of qualification type and size across levels and many of the qualifications are dated and in need of review. In several instances programme titles did not reflect the

underpinning qualification and levels of community work content varied often amounting to less than 20% of the overall

content. The research also engaged with other

professional community work bodies in the UK

and internationally. This underlined the extent

to which such professional bodies play a

critical role in championing community work with education and training providers,

employers and policy makers, a role that

AIEB is now undertaking in Ireland.



Reflecting the emerging needs identified by practitioners and the issues highlighted by the mapping research AIEB has developed a range of initiatives. These include a quality assurance framework to formally recognise learning across all levels; a framework that will support community work practitioners in continuous practice and professional development through a variety of intentional processes and working with interested providers and stakeholders

to quality assure CPD initiatives; and a Pilot

Route to Individual Recognition of Professional

Community Work Experience and Practice for

experienced CWK practitioners who have been employed

in community work roles prior to the introduction of professional

endorsement of community work qualifications. Mechanisms such as these have been

helpful in other social professions and AIEB believes they will contribute to building

further awareness, shared understanding and collective commitment to community work

practice across the island of Ireland.

COMMUNITY WORK PRACTITIONERS PERSPECTIVES

Joe Donohoe, Project Manager, Fatima Groups United welcomed everyone to the F2 Family Resource Centre and shared his experience as a professionally qualified community work practitioner. *'I am going to take the opportunity to talk about how I landed here. I went to Maynooth University to study community and youth work in 1989. I was brought up in Dolphin House and was one of only a small few who went to 3rd level at the time. Landing in Maynooth on the course I found myself surrounded by boisterous individuals and it was a real eye opener. I was very young at the time, so it was all new. What really struck me was the community development framework that we were taught, specifically the idea of collective action and participation. There was a lot of talk about values in those early years, so I spent time talking with Aidan Lloyd and Jim Lawlor and those conversations helped me to develop my understanding of values being what you feel and what you think.'*

Graduating in 1991, I worked in Ballyfermot and Blanchardstown which for someone from the inner city was a new experience, and I really got a sense of the work. I worked alongside great community workers and campaigners who were involved in a drugs campaign. I saw the challenges faced by being a worker in the community in which you live or operate in when you have to deal with the issues causing problems.

I stayed involved in my own community voluntarily, then came back to work in Fatima which was one of the most problematic housing estates in the country at the time. That was really challenging and is where I really got to understand the meaning of collective action and participation, and this informed our work with State agencies. As a manager here there are plenty of challenges – services versus combative responses. We have a major problem in relation to voluntary boards, people will not participate in boards if the ask is too much. There is a challenge as to how to keep people engaged if they have been around for a long time.

In 2011 I went back to Maynooth to do a Masters in Applied Social Studies and that was an amazing year. The framework taught to me in Maynooth then and earlier has guided me throughout my working life.'



**Chloe Ní Mháille,
Bainisteoir, Inis Oírr
Comhar Caomhán Teo,**
graduated from Maynooth University in 2020, with a BSoc Sc in Community and Youth Work. She shared her experience as a community work practitioner on the island of Inis Oírr as the Community Development Officer and Manager of Comhar Caomhán Teo, the island co-operative.



'My journey to Inis Oírr began as a student on placement. Inis Oírr is the smallest of the three Aran Islands in the Gaeltacht so we work through Irish. My work is diverse and can include advocacy, negotiating, trading, social media, tourism, public relations, renewable energy, sustainable living, promotion and preservation of the Irish language.'

My community work education has helped me to bring a new dynamic to a rural Gaeltacht Island. I am determined to use the skills I learned in class and on placement to positively impact rural Ireland. I am passionate about using a community work approach to achieve social justice and while this is challenging, I strive to do it. For anyone interested in working as a community worker I recommend professional community work education. Without my professional training I would not be emotionally or socially equipped for the front line of serving the communities I work in. In addition to community work, modules such as social analysis and group work are crucial to learning how to work with groups, to understand yourself and your relationship to the communities you work with. The fieldwork placements allow you to develop the skills needed to work as a community worker.

Being a member of Community Work Ireland and of the International Association for Community Development has opened my heart to the national and international scale of the impact we can have when we work together from grassroots to glass ceilings for a more just and equal world.'

ETHICS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Professor Sarah Banks has a background in community development and worked in the voluntary sector and local authority social services before joining Durham University. Her research interests include professional ethics, community development and community based participatory research. She is a co-founder of the *Centre for Social Justice and Community Action, Durham University*^x.

Speaking to the theme of practicing ethically in an unethical world Sarah explored the question of what it means to practice community work through an ethical lens and how this can be done in a way that is true to the values, enabling practitioners to promote civil liberties and to challenge oppression. In doing this, she looked in more detail at the role of the All-Ireland Standards for Community Work in supporting ethical practice.

'Practicing ethically in accordance with community work values of collectivity , community empowerment, social justice, sustainable development, human rights, equality, anti-discrimination and participation is a big ask, as is to work with empathy, solidarity, respect, compassion and the other qualities outlined in the All-Ireland Standards document. I do not need to say anything to any of you about the levels of inequality, unfairness, untruth and violence that exist in the world we live in. It is one where we see people pursuing self-interest, meanness and grandiosity every day in our professional lives. At the same time, we have witnessed inequity with the Covid 19 crisis, and climate change and what that is doing to people in various parts of the world, as well as our biodiversity and the ecosystem. We daily witness food poverty, and now the impacts of war in Ukraine. These are the challenges for community workers in our daily practice.

So, what can community work standards offer? They cannot solve the world's problems, but can they be useful to the community worker? The All-Ireland Standards are framed by a set of five core values and the distinctive community work values come first, differentiating them from other social professions



such as social work or social care. Collectivity, collective action and collective analysis and community empowerment mark out community work as a distinct field of practice. It is also good to see sustainable development in here too as this does not always feature.'

As well as detailing knowledge, skills and competencies, the All-Ireland Standards also detail the list of qualities required of the worker under each value – e.g., empathy, discretion, solidarity, honesty. These qualities bring self-consideration of who I am as a community worker, or on the moral qualities I need to be a good practitioner? This is really helpful, and not just ticking boxes about competencies.

It is also very important to see the section on the application in practice by employers, funders, policymakers and programme implementers. This is important because however good the community worker is, if the conditions are not there to enable them to facilitate positive practice, challenge oppression and injustice, then they are not going to get very far. Community work needs to be adequately supported and resourced and that is down to employers and others who control resources and decision making. Employers need to take on board the contexts and conditions within which community work takes place. It is also very positive to see the recognition of this by the Department of Rural and Community Development to resource and support community work, and to see that the values are reflected in national policy developments and being used national strategies.

The really valuable thing is that the All-Ireland Standards clearly highlight how community work values help workers tackle the ethical challenges in community work, through their complex all-embracing range of roles. Some of these challenges include; negotiating conflicting rights, needs and interests of different communities, groups and individuals; balancing a desire to achieve social change (ends) against ensuring a democratic process (means);

mediating between employer demands and community participation; maintaining vigilance to identify and challenge injustices, and counteract co-option by the state or private corporations; deciding on tactics that are both effective in achieving aims but also egalitarian and involve people as much as possible.

At the beginning of the All-Ireland Standards document is a section on professional commitment and integrity, and this is absolutely crucial to supporting practice. How do you balance multiple accountabilities? How do you go about maintaining professional boundaries (personal, political, religious, business interests)? How do you practice self-awareness and regular reflection?

If I was to have the temerity to recommend to you where you might go next, in taking some of this work forward, I would say it is in this area, seeing professional integrity as an overarching value. Integrity is about wholeness and seeing the whole picture. It is about upholding the values and working to them and holding the values together and integrating them into practice. Sometimes they do conflict. Sometimes we may need to prioritise values – achieving a socially just end against the democratic participation of some people who aren't yet ready to take part. Other times we may experience conflicts between values leading to re-evaluating and re-prioritising values. It is important that we don't treat them as static but re-assess as contexts change. For example, perhaps extending to ecological justice and consideration of where humans sit in the ecosystem. Coming back to my theme of practicing ethically in an unethical world, the All-Ireland Standards are clear, accessible, usable, practice-driven, and policy-relevant. This is a great starting point for taking community work practice forward. I would commend these Standards to all community work employers, education and training institutions, all ministers and civil servants to look how they can be taken forward and used by more people in more institutions and environments.'

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

Following the morning's inputs, participants were invited to reflect on what they had heard and give their initial responses to reflect on what they had heard, consider what community work education does and can contribute to the complex challenges facing communities, community work, community workers and the community sector, and identify how community work education and AIEB initiatives can help strengthen community work practice, including other measures that may need consideration.

Initial Responses

- **Space for collective reflection and discussion.**
Attendees responded positively to the opportunity to come together from diverse backgrounds, work and locations to reflect on and discuss current issues and opportunities for the community work discipline and welcomed the fact that AIEB is developing support and structure to promote learning, upskilling and professionalisation. They said that opportunities such as the Symposium are welcomed, needed, and that employer support for workers to attend such events is vital.
- **State recognition and strategic support**
The Minister's input and his support for AIEB was warmly received as was his explicit recognition that community development informed by the All-Ireland Standards is fundamental to Government policy, approaches and implementation. Attendees also welcomed the Minister's acknowledgement of the State's recognition of the importance of community development as evidenced in Values and Principles for Collaboration and Partnership; Working with the Community and Voluntary Sector. The need to see community work values and principles mainstreamed and embedded in local government structures and approaches was highlighted and in particular the need to have them reflected in how financial support is administered.
- **Standards, qualifications and recognition**
Having the All-Ireland Standards and professional qualifications mapped to them is very important. There is a need to recognise that workers face ongoing challenges in their work environment and therefore require access to regular Continuous Practice/ Professional Development(CPD) opportunities before and beyond having attained a professional qualification to ensure they remain agile and responsive to emerging issues and challenges.
- **Work environment**
Attendees expressed concerns regarding the project nature of funding for programmes with a community development focus and funding stagnation for staffing. Community workers are frequently dealing with fundamentally challenging issues within communities yet have little if any job security themselves. This has led to significant challenges with recruiting and retaining workers in community work posts.

- **Positive emphasis on all island/Ireland focus**

The All-Island focus of AIEB's work was welcomed and reflected in attendees from across the island and the desire for more cross-border support and engagement was noted. The challenges of working in an all-island context were also noted, in particular with the absence of a functioning Assembly in the North.

Participants were also invited to discuss how community work education and AIEB initiatives can help to address the complex challenges facing communities and strengthen community work practice.

- **The role of community work in addressing complex challenges**

Attendees noted and welcomed the Minister's acknowledgement that a community work approach has a significant role to play in addressing a broad range of issues affecting communities, such as poverty and racism.

- **Supporting pathways to professional qualifications**

Support was expressed for meaningful and accessible routes to professional education opportunities, facilitating learning and skills development from initial community work education to full professional qualifications. There was particular concern to ensure the creation of pathways that support people from diverse backgrounds and communities. For example, blended approaches ensuring geographical reach.

- **Supporting essential CPD**

Attendees highlighted the pressures on practitioners' time and the importance of protecting spaces for ongoing CPD including reflective practice, dialogue and consciousness raising. There was agreement that AIEB had a key role to play in this.

- **Supporting professional formation in community work education**

Professional community work education was seen as an empowering process as well as one that builds competence and skills. It builds awareness, understanding and critical analysis. The value and central importance of fieldwork placements on professional programmes was discussed, and the particular role they play in supporting the links between theory and practice, challenging perspectives and strengthening practitioner critical awareness.

- **Enhancing recognition of the community work profession**

Following concerns expressed in relation to the variable terms and conditions of employment for community work practitioners, the need to address this issue in parallel with increasing the number of professionally qualified community workers, (from its relatively low base as reflected in the needs assessment), was highlighted. In other professional fields of practice, professionally qualified status supports enhanced terms and conditions of employment.

AFTERNOON WORKSHOP

In the afternoon participants took part in a workshop entitled “Global Experiences, Local Questions, Sharing Community Development Experiences and Challenges’ Building Recognition for Community Work’ which included inputs from community work colleagues based in Scotland, Australia and Kenya.

COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS COUNCIL (CLDSC) SCOTLAND

Colin Ross, former community development practitioner and fieldwork educator has worked in policy and practice roles in Scottish local and national government and with the CLDSC^x, the professional body for community workers in Scotland. He is a Trustee on the Board of the International Association for Community Development^{xi}.



Colin noted that the need to build recognition for community work was one of the key motivations behind the establishment of the CLDSC and has continued to be an essential focus for it. Community Learning and Development (CLD) in Scotland includes community development, community-based adult learning, and youth work. The CLDSC was established in 2008, and its remit is for quality assurance of CLD education; developing a system of practitioner registration; and supporting continuing professional development (CPD).

He noted that decision makers’ often consider that doing things for people through direct service delivery is the way to achieve results and use money effectively. This perception has been a significant challenge, as has been ensuring that community development is understood and recognised consistently as an essential element of CLD.

The CLDSC has developed not as a practitioners’ association or a top-down regulatory body, but as a standards body rooted in its field of practice, combining its commitment to standards with a strong focus on inclusion. It has been vital to combine support from government with ownership by the field, reflected in a committee structure representative of practitioners and CLD educators.

Equally important has been the development of a framework of values, ethics and competences. This supports the CLDSC's focus on the difference good practice makes with communities and enables the field to demonstrate its commitment to standards of practice, and accountability.

The CLDSC has placed a strong emphasis on communication and engagement with a range of stakeholders and potential partners. It has needed to be assertive in a variety of ways to build recognition for CLD. It has established a degree of autonomy from government, developed its profile in policy discussions and with decision-makers and influencers, and worked to shape how the field of practice defines itself and is seen by others.

Securing and building recognition for community work is a continuing challenge for the community development field. The experience of the CLDSC in Scotland has demonstrated that a professional body rooted in its field of practice can play an important positive role in meeting this.



THE ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS – KENYA (ACDP-K)

Daniel Muia is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya. His academic and research interests are Community Development and Empowerment processes. He is Chair of the Association of Community Development Practitioners-Kenya^{xiii} and a Trustee on the Board of the International Association for Community Development.

ACDP-K is a registered national network for professional community development practitioners in Kenya, established in November 2017 in response to the recognised need for coherent national support for community development as a discipline and practice. Its purpose is to provide a professional association for community development practitioners and offer institutional leadership in ensuring professional standards in the practice of community development and in curriculum and training. The Association seeks to safeguard public interest by ensuring adherence to professional standards, ethical conduct and professionalism by practitioners.

In relation to education and training the issues identified by ACDP-K include an uncoordinated multiplicity of community development curricula and trainers including a Master's degree, a Doctor of Philosophy and stand-alone Bachelors of Community Development accredited by Kenya's Commission for University Education.

Other issues such as lack of recognition of community development as a profession and lack of clear career pathways for community development practitioners exist. In Kenya most community development graduates are employed in the civil service and are categorised as non-professional - a job-grade lower than other graduate professionals. This was recognised as unfair treatment arising from the failure to recognise community development as a profession. As an interim measure ACDP-K gives a Certificate of Membership to its members – as evidence of belonging to a professional body enabling them to earn credit when they go for job interviews.



In light of these issues, ACDP-K's current five year strategic plan (2020-2024) gives focus to; creating a forum that brings together trained community development practitioners; facilitating networking and partnerships for sharing and learning of best community development practices; facilitating continuous education and knowledge exchange for community development practitioners; providing the voice and platform for advocacy and advancement of the community development agenda across Kenya; and influencing policy direction in the development of community development. A National Community Development Policy has recently been developed and is now awaiting Cabinet approval.

Some challenges faced in Kenya are similar to those discussed here at the Symposium, for example the slow pace in enactment of enabling policy and the slow growth of the Association's membership – inevitably the immediate benefits are not yet seen as the policy framework is not yet in place; and low subscription issues due to low earning power.

Community development as a practice in Kenya is about the heavy lifting, often working with disadvantaged communities on self-organisation to address many of the needs governmental authorities are not able to address due to budgetary issues. Consequently, the need for trained community development practitioners is huge, but this comes with an enduring challenge of ensuring standards in the discipline and practice a call that ACDP-K is responding to by seeking a legal mandate for self-regulation within the practice – and in partnership with other duty bearers.



THE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY WORKERS ASSOCIATION (ACWA)

Anne Jennings is Vice-President of ACWA^{xiii} the professional body for qualified community workers in Australia. Anne has been involved in community development as a hands-on practitioner, researcher, and educator in regional and remote areas of Western Australia for 30 years. She is Editor of the Australian Journal of Community Work.

ACWA was set up over 50 years ago, as a membership body to ensure members benefit from belonging to a recognised profession, and that the community benefits from an ethical and well-qualified community work force. From setting educational standards through to determining an ethical practice framework, ACWA supports community workers in every sphere of their work life.

ACWA promotes community work as a dynamic profession, encouraging young people who believe in social justice and equality, and older workers considering change to consider a career in community work, supported by membership of a professional association. ACWA works closely with education providers to ensure aspiring community workers have access to high quality training and the public have confidence in the profession.

Throughout its 50 plus year history, ACWA has undertaken many projects and campaigns to promote, standardise and advance the profession of community work. Today ACWA leads the development, identity, registration and recognition of the community work profession in Australia. As a not-for-profit membership organisation, ACWA represents the interests of members and advocates collectively on their behalf. Among its achievements are:



- Developing the profession's code of ethics and practice guidelines to ensure ethical practice by members.
- Working with education providers to raise the quality of community work courses.
- Successfully advocating for minimum standards to be included in the Community Services Training Package (CSTP).
- Representing the profession on government Industry Reference Committees.
- Developing the ACWA Research Agenda^{xiv} to promote enquiry into the community work profession, framed around 3 main areas of engagement: minimum qualification requirements for professional practice and recognition, the workplace environment, and public policy and legislative frameworks that impact on professional practice.
- Ensuring ACWA membership is included as a selection criterion by major state government departments when recruiting for relevant roles.
- ACWA has also revitalised its peer reviewed journal - the Australian Journal of Community Work.

While diversity is a strength of community work it can create fragmentation that undermines the ability of the sector to present itself as a coherent profession. This limits the ability to advance professional recognition, career development, appropriate pay, and good employment conditions due to workers holding a variety of titles and coming into the work from numerous disciplines and educational backgrounds. The journal is one tool adopted by ACWA to place the spotlight on the profession by promoting and supporting research that provides insight into the community work labour force, and highlighting issues or factors impacting on the professional identity of community workers, and public acknowledgement of their professional skills.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

Following the afternoon inputs, participants were again invited to reflect on what they had heard, consider the shared challenges with building recognition of community work globally, and what more could be learned from sharing global perspectives on practice

- **Shared understanding of community work as a discipline and professional field of practice**

There was acknowledgement of frequently expressed tensions about what community work is and who does it and how these tensions contribute to the challenges of building recognition. Attendees noted that across different global regions, efforts to build recognition have included measures such as professional registration and membership of professional community work bodies that require evidence of professionally endorsed qualifications. The unifying role of professional bodies was seen as valuable, particularly in volatile times of ongoing fragmentation.

- **State, recognition, support and maintaining independence**

Reflecting on the contributions from Australia, Kenya and Scotland participants identified that across global regions there is a common challenge of ensuring State bodies understand what community development is and how it can contribute to improving outcomes for communities. Linked to this was also recognition that securing support yet maintaining independence is also a challenge globally, as are issues of working collaboratively with Government departments whilst maintaining autonomy.

- **Pathways to professional status and recognition**

The creation of training and education pathways that enable people to work towards and gain a professional qualification need to address barriers that people experience. While emphasis on building competence and meeting standards is necessary, the processes also need to be inclusive to ensure that the workforce is as diverse as the communities they work with.



The final part of the afternoon discussion invited participants to discuss what more we could learn from sharing perspectives on practice. The participants expressed interest in exploring the following areas in more details:

1. Opportunities for going deeper into the issues shared during the symposium, through smaller working groups each with a focus on a particular topic to examine in more detail and share.
2. A global space for national professional community development associations to strengthen shared understanding and approaches, for example through the sharing of strategic plans that set out common visions, goals, visions and actions.
3. Exploring further opportunities for collaboration between the national community work associations in Kenya, Scotland, Australia, and Ireland (through AIEB and CWI).
4. Exploring how professional bodies such as the CLD Standards Council, ACDP-K and ACWA work to build practitioner membership of their associations in inclusive ways, and how they work with employers and State bodies to recognise professional body membership.
5. Building formal employer support for agreeing minimum requirements for employee engagement with CPD.
6. Processes for verifying qualifications held by migrant workers and for embedding extra support for training migrant workers in community work through subsidised training.
7. Encouraging practitioner engagement with for an Irish Community Work Journal.

Anastasia Crickley brought the meeting to a close by thanking everyone for their participation and engagement and wishing all a safe journey home.

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