

# Evaluation Report on the Inclusion Programme

Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

In December 2007, the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) established an 'Inclusion Programme' and allocated grants to seven selected organisations, which represent or support young people who might be considered 'marginalised' or 'hard to reach'. The grants were offered to the organisations so that they could support marginalised young people to become involved in youth participation structures and processes. An independent evaluator was appointed to assess the impact and effectiveness of the Inclusion Programme.

Olivia McEvoy
Cnag ar an Doras – Consultancy & Lifecoaching

February 2009

#### **CONTENTS**

- FOREWORD
- ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
- ABOUT THE AUTHOR
- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
- INTRODUCTION
- METHODOLOGY
- INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT OF EACH ORGANISTION UNDER:
  - Project Outline, Objectives & Outcomes
    - Involvement in Youth Participation Structures
      Benefits to Young People

  - Impact on Organisation
  - Child Protection
  - Value for Money
- MAIN FINDINGS
  - o Participation of and Benefits for Young People;
  - o Strengths & Benefits of the Inclusion Programme;
  - o Challenges of the Inclusion Programme;
- KEY RECOMMENDATIONS
- CONCLUSION

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The OMCYA and the author would like to acknowledge the time and commitment from both the young people involved in the projects and the staff from the organisations who gave freely of their time for interview.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Olivia McEvoy, **Cnag ar an Doras**, was appointed as the independent evaluator of the Inclusion Programme in December 2007. She is also the independent evaluator of the OMCYA's Comhairle Development Fund. She has written numerous other evaluation reports as well as the *Report on Teenagers' views on solutions to Alcohol Misuse* (2007), the *Report on the consultations with teenagers on the issues to be considered by the Minister for Children when examining the age of consent for sexual activity* (2006) for the OMCYA and the youth-friendly versions of *Teenspace: The National Recreation Policy for Young People* (2007)

She is a freelance consultant and lifecoach in the youth and community sectors and works with a variety of government and non-government organisations. Further details are available on <a href="https://www.cnagarandoras.ie">www.cnagarandoras.ie</a>

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In December 2007, the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) established an 'Inclusion Programme' and allocated grants to seven selected organisations which represent or support young people who might be considered 'marginalised' or 'hard to reach'. The grants were offered to the organisations so that they could support marginalised young people to become involved in youth participation structures and processes.

An independent evaluator was appointed to assess the impact and effectiveness of the Inclusion Programme. This resulting report concentrates on a number of main findings in the key areas of;

- Participation of and Benefits for Young People;
- Strengths & Benefits of the Inclusion Programme and the
- Challenges of the Inclusion Programme

An individual assessment of each organisation is also provided under the headings:

- Project Outline, Objectives & Outcomes;
- Involvement in Youth Participation Structures;
- Benefits to Young People;
- Impact on Organisation;
- Child Protection and
- Value for Money.

Ultimately, it assesses the impact of the Inclusion Programme on improving access to 'youth participation structures' for members of the participating organisations as well as making recommendations for the future under the following headings;

- Information;
- Wider Involvement;
- Inclusivity;
- Supports & Resources and
- Logistics.

There is simply no doubting that the Inclusion Programme has been a success in having a positive impact on the inclusion of marginalised young people in the youth participation process. In addition to the eighty six young people involved in the projects in the programme, the recounted personal stories of the young people are testament to a programme that was well organised, well supported and meaningful.

While this represents a great deal of progress in a very short space of time, it is important not to stop there. There is much work to do to ensure that young people from these organisations and others become involved in a plethora of youth participation structures on an ongoing basis. It will take the continued commitment and drive from the OMCYA and the participating organisations to ensure that this happens.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In December 2007, the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) established an 'Inclusion Programme' and allocated grants to seven selected organisations which represent or support young people who might be considered 'marginalised' or 'hard to reach'. The selected organisations included those who represent young people with disabilities, members of the Travelling Community, members of the LGBT community, young people in care and young people from economically disadvantaged areas. The grants were offered to the organisations so that they could support young people from these backgrounds to become involved in youth participation structures and processes such as the OMCYA's Children and Young People's Forum (CYPF) and Comhairle na nÓg as well as any other youth participation structures or consultation processes seeking the views of young people.

An independent evaluator was appointed to assess the impact and effectiveness of the Inclusion Programme. This resulting report considers the strengths and benefits of the programme as well as any challenges. Ultimately, it assesses the impact of the Inclusion Programme on improving access to 'youth participation structures' for members of the participating organisations as well as making recommendations for the future. An individual assessment of each organisation is also provided.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The seven organisations participating in the Inclusion Programme were asked to complete a 'First Progress Report' in March 2008 and a final report by November 2008. Site visits were conducted in six out of the seven organisations between September and December 2008. Face to face interviews as well as a number of phone interviews were held with key stakeholders in all seven organisations. The key stakeholders included young people participating in the projects, youth leaders, project leaders, steering committee representatives and directors of organisations, where appropriate. The key points from all of the interviews are provided in Appendices One and Two. The following table **(Table 1.0)** illustrates the number of stakeholders interviewed in each organisation:

Table 1.0

	Number of Young People Interviewed	Number of Adult Stakeholders Interviewed	TOTAL
Barnardos	2	1	3
BeLonG To	1	1	2
FDYS	3	3	6
IAYPIC	2	2	4
Inclusion Ireland	2	1	3
IWA	9	2	11
Pavee Point	2	1	3
TOTAL NUMBERS	21	11	32

All of the information gleaned from the documented reports, site visits and interviews has been analysed to provide a final evaluation report.

## **MAIN FINDINGS**

#### 1. PARTICIPATION OF AND BENEFITS TO YOUNG PEOPLE

#### **PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

Sixty eight young people were involved in projects specifically related to the Inclusion Programme although more than half of this figure is accounted for by the significant numbers involved in the FDYS project. A further eighteen young people from the seven organisations participating in the programme are involved in other youth participation structures including the:

- Headstrong Youth Advisory Panel;
- Ombudsman for Children's Youth Advisory Panel and the
- Wexford Youth Cabinet.

The table below (Table 1.1) illustrates the number of young people involved directly in Inclusion Programme projects and in other youth participation structures.

**Table 1.1** 

	Number of Young People involved in Inclusion Programme projects	Number of Young People involved in other Youth Participation Structures	TOTAL
Barnardos	21	0	2
BeLonG To	1	2	3
FDYS	37	10	47
IAYPIC	4	0	4
Inclusion Ireland	2	0	2
IWA	12	1	13
Pavee Point	10	5	15
TOTAL NUMBERS	68	18	86

The numbers involved in the programme is a simple and important criterion of success. There is no doubt that having eighty six young people from seven organisations involved in youth participation structures after one year represents remarkable success for the programme. All seven organisations ensured that at least one of their members were involved in at least one of the participation structures and the young people involved demonstrated outstanding commitment in their attendance and contribution to these same structures. In a few instances there was exceptional output most notably in FDYS where some thirty seven young people from four separate geographical

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Three young people were involved at the outset of the project but only two completed the project

areas were involved in the project. The IWA and Pavee Point also had twelve and ten people involved respectively.

However, there are instances where as little as one person is involved directly in an Inclusion Programme project or as few as two from any one organisation are involved in general youth participation structures. It should certainly be a goal of the programme and of each organisation to increase both the numbers of young people involved and the diversity of opportunities available to those young people. But it is also important to look beyond numbers and recognise that this first year of the programme represented a first opportunity for many of the organisations involved to engage with the youth participation process. In these instances it is important that time was given to learning about the structures and processes and ensuring that the young people that were involved had an empowering and supported experience. It will now be important to build on this learning and to afford the opportunities to an increased number of young people in these organisations.

#### **BENEFITS TO YOUNG PEOPLE**

The interviews with the participants in the various projects served to highlight the numerous benefits that young people identified for themselves. When asked 'what does the project involve for you?', 'what was good about the project?' and 'what does the project mean to you personally?' a number of benefits were identified which can be themed under:

#### **INVOLVEMENT**

- Chance to be involved (2)
- Something to do;
- Getting to go out;
- Better than hanging around the street;
- Escape from everyday life;
- Opportunity to make an input into society;
- Having a chance.

#### **HAVING A VOICE**

- Having my voice heard (2)
- Opportunity to give my ideas and thoughts (2)
- Having a voice on youth issues;
- Getting point across;
- Giving our perspective and views in CYPF;
- Talking about issues;
- Having own say;
- Being able to give our points;
- Throwing in your idea and getting feedback so that the OMCYA know what young people think;
- It is about sectors of society coming together to give their opinions on matters that affect young people;
- It is very educational and interesting allowed to voice our own opinions;
- Brought young people in the community together to give opinions on topics they were interested in.

#### MEETING AND MIXING WITH NEW PEOPLE

- Meeting and making friends (3)
- Meeting new people (2)
- Youth Councillors can make changes and improvements for young people;
- Getting to see people your own age;

- Mixing together;
- Getting to know people from different backgrounds;
- Understanding points of view;
- Meet and bring different sectors of society together;
- Hear about other people's experiences.

#### **IMPROVED SKILLS**

- Feel confident about speaking up now (4)
- Made me a lot more confident;
- Building up confidence & courage;
- Going from shy to confident;
- Learning new things (2)
- Getting ready to go to Comhairle na nÓg getting prepared;
- Working together/as a team;
- Team-work & team building;
- Making a DVD;
- Acting;
- Production & editing;
- Makes CSPE more interesting and relevant;
- Doing the presentation & speaking in front of everyone that was amazing;
- Learning how to be organised to get to meetings & the residential.

## HAVING A CHANCE TO REFLECT

- Reflecting;
- Giving scenarios and life stories;
- Good to see what others had to say about schools (one of the topics being discussed)
- Reflection on place in world.

## **SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT**

- Memory of having done it;
- Sense of achievement:
- Makes me very proud.

#### **MISC**

- Happiness;
- Getting other people involved.

Having 'something to do' and 'the chance to be involved' was one of the first benefits cited by the young people. Some people voiced this from a negative standpoint in that it 'was better than hanging around the streets' whereas others framed it positively and as an 'opportunity to make an input into society'. Being involved in the various projects led to 'having my voice heard' and ultimately having an opportunity to give views and perspectives on various issues which was afforded enormous importance. Meeting and mixing with new people, particularly those from 'different backgrounds', was considered a very valuable experience and benefit as the young people explained that this helped them understand 'other points of view'. In addition to this, the participants listed numerous new skills that they had the opportunity to improve including public speaking and basic skills such as 'learning how to be organised to get to meetings'. However, the increased sense of confidence and courage was undoubtedly the most remarked on skill with almost every young person citing the fact that their involvement helped them build confidence in themselves and in giving their opinion in public. The projects also afforded young people the opportunity to reflect 'on their place in the world' as well as kindling an enormous sense of achievement.

It is obvious that in the opinion of the project participants themselves that the various projects and involvement in same has had immeasurable and a wide diversity of benefits. In addition to those benefits cited by the young people it was also observed by both some of the adult workers and the evaluator that involvement in the project often *challenged young people to look at their own issues* and seek help or advice as necessary in order to resolve that issue. This may have stemmed from the *youth led* nature of some of the projects which afforded a level of responsibility to the participants which was both remarked on and appreciated by the young people.

In addition to what is both stated and easily observed it is also vital to acknowledge the more subtle benefits of the Inclusion Programme to young people, most remarkably the sense of security and trust that young people felt on the projects and their resulting involvement in the Comhairle but particularly the CYPF. These environments are clearly some of the few places where these young people feel safe, valued and most notably, not judged. Throughout the interviews with young people they constantly remarked on how 'you are not judged on your background' and that 'people don't treat you differently'. When asked what advice they would give their friends if they were becoming involved in the Inclusion Programme they advised to:

- Have confidence to come forward;
- Don't be scared about what other people think;
- Don't be shy;
- Don't be afraid;
- People don't treat you differently;
- Say what you are thinking and
- You never know if you don't try it.

It is clear that the projects funded by the Inclusion Programme and the structures that they became involved in as a result of the programme are extremely important, safe and fun places for the participants. The ultimate benefit is that young people feel empowered and valued in the various projects but are inspired to use the benefit of that experience in their wider environment.

#### 2. STRENGTHS & BENEFITS OF THE INCLUSION PROGRAMME

In addition to the numerous benefits to young people, outlined above, the Inclusion Programme has a number of strategic and organisational benefits and strengths, which can be categorised under:

- Structural Supports;
- Wider Involvement and the
- Diversity of Projects.

#### STRUCTURAL SUPPORTS

## **OMCYA STAFF**

Both the young participants and the organisations' leaders felt very welcomed and supported by the OMYCA staff. Young people who were involved in the CYPF and as a consequence the consultations on mental health felt that they were warmly welcomed, encouraged, supported and listened to by the OMCYA. Likewise the adults who were involved on the Steering Committee and who attended the first meeting of the CYPF also referred to being given a real sense that this project was important and meaningful by the staff in the OMCYA.

## **SUPPORT NETWORK & SUPPORT WORKER**

Every organisation without exception referred to the value of the 'support network' created by the members of the steering committee for the Inclusion Programme. Simply 'hearing what other groups are doing' helped others gauge their own project and make any amendments as appropriate. This was particularly important for organisations who were struggling with the concept of the initiative. The half day workshop on 'participation' was deemed particularly useful as it gave an opportunity to discuss the various projects and made it obvious that many of the organisations were facing similar challenges. The work of the 'support worker' was also valued as it was useful to 'get an indication that I was on the right track' and also helped to identify any training needs.

### **ORGANISATION LIASION OFFICER**

Many of the organisations had one member of staff who operated as the 'liaison officer' with the young people. Ensuring that there is a point of contact for the young people is critically important but it worked especially well when that member of staff arranged to 'check in' with the young people on an individual basis. This provided a space for the young person to discuss the learning and positives of the project as well as any challenges being faced by them.

While not all young people were clear on what role was played by what person or organisation, it is clear that there were sufficient staff in both the organisations and the OMCYA to ensure that the young people felt extremely well supported and encouraged throughout their project experience.

#### **ACHIEVEMENT DAY**

Although the evaluator was not in a position to attend the 'achievement day' it is obvious from the comments from both the adult observers and most importantly the young people themselves that the 'achievement day' was of vast importance. While it is always nice to be acknowledged, the presentation of certificates from the Minister for Children, Mr. Barry Andrews, T.D. was considered a highlight that afforded status to the achievement. In addition, it was the first time that many of the young people spoke in public and this achievement provided an enormous boost for their confidence. The 'achievement day' was a considerable strength of the programme and the presentations which were youth-led were of particular benefit to the young people.

### WIDER INVOLVEMENT

Many of the organisations commented on how their participation in the Inclusion Programme gave rise to their involvement in other initiatives for young people. The IWA and Inclusion Ireland and now both represented on various Comhairle Steering Committees as a result of this initiative. Encouragingly, two members of the FDYS inclusion project were elected onto the Wexford Youth Cabinet dovetailing effectively with the OMCYA's Comhairle Development Fund. It is vital that the organisations involved in the Inclusion Programme strive to be represented on such wider networks and committees to ensure that the inclusion of marginalised young people is to be sustainable, accessible and meaningful.

Some organisations also reported how the Inclusion Programme caused them to re-think their internal policies in relation to young people and youth participation. It is now the intention of IAYPIC to develop a reference panel of young people for their organisation and Pavee Point was inspired to build a permanent 'participation group' as a result of the programme. Just as it is important that the organisations are represented in wider networks, it is also vital that young people are also involved in the fabric and decision making processes of the organisations that represent them.

It was also commented that the status of young people, particularly marginalised young people, as well as youth participation itself was hugely increased because the Inclusion Programme was seen as something that was important enough to be funded by a government department.

#### **DIVERSITY OF PROJECTS**

The limited criteria in granting the funds for the Inclusion Programme gave the organisations licence to be inventive and creative and address their specific needs. This gave rise to a diverse range of projects that included involvement in youth participation structures such as the CYPF and Comhairle na nÓg, making a DVD based on the lives of two participants and capacity-building. This diversity and freedom is a strength of the programme in that it allows the organisation to assess what would best serve the needs of the young people in their organisation and deliver a project accordingly.

The most obvious benefit of the programme is that it has achieved exactly what it set out to do; involve young people who are marginalised or on the periphery of society in youth participation structures. Despite the diversity of 'starting points' for different organisations, the fund allowed them to dedicate

specific resources to including young people in these structures. In the case of organisations who had not previously engaged in youth participation structures such as Barnardos, Belong To, IAYPIC and Inclusion Ireland, the fund allowed them to engage in the structures for the first time as well as learn from the experiences of the more experienced organisations in the network. In the case of the FDYS and the IWA, it probably gave an impetus and the all important specific funding stream to bring something they had wanted to do to fruition. In the case of Pavee Point which has been engaged with youth participation structures for some time, the fund allowed them to put a particular focus on participation and realise what could be achieved, eventually rethinking their participation process.

There is no doubting that without deliberate efforts such as this that the young people who have got involved as a result of this initiative would simply not have had the opportunity to do so. As a direct result, some forty-eight young people became involved in the CYPF or a local Comhairle na nÓg and a total of eighty six young people are involved in youth participation structures of some nature. Despite some reservations from the organisations at the outset at the pace at how this might happen, this represents significant success in a relatively short space of time.

#### 3. CHALLENGES OF THE INCLUSION PROGRAMME

#### LACK OF INFORMATION

## **INCLUSION PROGRAMME CRITERIA**

While most adults representing the participating organisations understood the objectives of the Inclusion Programme – to include marginalised young people in youth participation – there was considerable confusion as to how this would translate in practical terms and what exact steps needed to be taken to become involved in the various processes. Organisations with limited to no experience of the youth participation process or structures were at a particular loss while organisations such as Pavee Point or the IWA who had previously been involved in Comhairle na nÓg or the CYPF were quicker to understand the programme. It seems that it was only after a number of meetings of the Steering Committee and particularly after the 'information-sharing' day and workshop on participation that the programme became clear to a number of organisations involved.

The lack of understanding was not helped by the fact that very little criteria was provided by the OMCYA. While there was appreciation of the fact that the criteria was loose in order to facilitate a diversity of projects many organisations reported that they would have preferred more information and more criteria around what was expected as part of the funding, the financial upper limits and reporting procedures.

It would seem that for many organisations, particularly those new to youth participation processes and structures, that the information disseminated by the OMCYA in relation to the Inclusion Programme was not detailed enough. However, over the course of the programme and especially since the workshop on participation, organisations now have a much clearer idea about the objectives of the programme and have made appropriate amendments to their own projects particularly in relation to 2009.

#### INFORMATION ON COMHAIRLE NA NÓG

It is true to say that there was particular confusion about Comhairle na nÓg including the role of the structure and the participating young people, how young people became involved in the first instance and the benefits of the structure for any young person who chose to get involved. In fact, many organisations were sceptical of Comhairle na nÓg and were not convinced that the structure would hold any appeal for or benefit their members in any way. In one instance, it was only when an organisation invited a young Comhairle member to conduct a presentation to their membership that the notion of Comhairle na nÓg became real and accessible. While the information given on the CYPF was more accessible and understandable there was also a preference to have information on both structures and the process of getting involved documented in writing.

# **INCLUSIVITY**

A total of seven organisations were invited to apply for the grant. These seven organisations represent a diverse group of young people and were also at varying starting points in their understanding and involvement in youth

participation practices making it a very good 'pilot' group. However the group

is limited in that it is quite 'Dublin-centric' and does not represent all marginalised young people, most notably young people from ethnic minorities.

#### **LOGISTICS**

The logistics to ensure that the young people are well prepared and supported can sometimes be time consuming and not without difficulty. Seemingly 'simple' practices such as securing consent forms for attendance can be made difficult by the care and social work system.

The CYPF has limited capacity and can only recruit new young people at certain stages throughout the year. There was some frustration that when young people in the organisations felt ready to become involved this was not always logistically possible at this time. As more young people from the Inclusion Programme become interested in being involved in the CYPF the logistics of this become more of a challenge.

## **CAPACITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

The capacity of young people within the organisations can vary considerably and this makes elements of the Inclusion Programme hard to pitch. For some the idea of joining a Comhairle may be very acceptable but for others it may simply be too difficult. It is a challenge for some of the organisations to pitch the project appropriately for all skills levels particularly in relation to disability.

#### **RESOURCES**

It is well acknowledged that working with marginalised young people is resource intensive and indeed can be emotionally draining and time-consuming.

## **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### 1. INFORMATION

## **INCLUSION PROGRAMME CRITERIA/GUIDELINES**

In the interest of clarity and transparency, criteria and guidelines should be documented for the grant scheme. The guidelines should outline information on:

- What the grant is for and what is expected;
- Financial thresholds;
- Reporting Procedures and
- Logistical information such as point of contact in the OMCYA.

While it is important to provide clear information and guidelines on the grant scheme, it is also important to remain open to a diversity of projects so that each organisation that applies can tailor the grant to their specific needs.

# **INFORMATION ON COMHAIRLE NA NÓG, CYPF & OTHER STRUCTURES**

A written or downloadable information pack on Comhairle na nÓg, the CYPF and other participation structures should be made available. This pack should include guidelines for the organisations on how to get involved in each structure. Youth-friendly information should also be included in the pack to make 'selling' the idea to young people an easier task for the organisations.

## **INFORMATION SHARING DAY**

The 'information-sharing' day was not just a success but a lifeline for many of the organisations involved in the programme. The information day allows the organisations to share ideas, discuss common challenges and successes and operate as a support network to each other. At least one half day event should take place every year of the scheme.

### 2. WIDER INVOLVEMENT

The Inclusion Programme needs to be further aligned with other participation projects in the OMCYA. With the advent of the proposed 'participation unit' in the OMCYA it should be easier to ensure a cyclical and harmonious relationship between the Inclusion Programme and the CYPF, Comhairle na nÓg and any other youth participation structures. Indeed it is important that such structures maintain 'inclusion' as a focus and dovetail with the Inclusion Programme wherever possible.

It is already the case that some organisations on the Inclusion Programme are represented on Steering Committees of Comhairlí na nÓg. This is to be greatly welcomed as membership of these committees and others provide one of the better places to ensure methodologies and practices used in participation structures are more suitable for marginalised young people. As the organisations become more involved and invested in the participation process, representatives of the organisations should make every effort to become members of these committees and others.

#### 3. INCLUSIVITY

If funding is available to continue the Inclusion Programme grant scheme, consideration should be given to extending the 'invitation to apply' to other agencies or having an 'open call' for applications. It is important that the Inclusion Programme is transparent, open and fair and includes organisations representing as many different types of marginalised young people as possible. Special consideration should be given to 'nationalising' the process to include more groups from outside Dublin.

#### 4. SUPPORTS & RESOURCES

There is no doubt that the meaningful inclusion of 'hard to reach' young people in 'youth participation' structures can be a challenge. There is evidence to suggest that this is best achieved when there is a commitment to capacity build and devise a partnership approach with any agencies that work with 'hard to reach' young people. It is clear that the partnership between the OMCYA and the agencies that work with 'hard to reach' young people is working very well. It is important to acknowledge that this working partnership involves significant effort and commitment from both the organisations and the government department and that it will take continued commitment from all parties to ensure sustained success.

#### 5. LOGISTICS

The logistics in relation to young people from the Inclusion Programme becoming a member of the CYPF and Comhairle na nÓg need to be reviewed. It is important that the recruitment process for the CYPF in particular takes account of the Inclusion Programme but also that the Inclusion Programme is mindful of the limited capacity of the CYPF and that membership is limited to a certain number of people from each organisation and is only possible at various stages of the cycle. Organisations should be encouraged to increase the numbers involved in a variety of youth participation structures including any relevant internal structures such as a reference panel or 'board'. All such logistics should be reviewed and communicated to all parties at the outset to prevent any confusion or frustration.

It is very important when contacting young people about projects in relation to the Inclusion Programme that direct contact by phone or in person is made with them. Almost all of the young people referred to the fact that they felt extremely supported in getting involved in the projects but that being contacted directly made them feel 'important and valued'.

#### CONCLUSION

There is simply no doubting that the Inclusion Programme has been a success in having a positive impact on the inclusion of marginalised young people in the youth participation process. In addition to the significant numbers involved in the projects in the programme, the recounted personal stories of the young people are testament to a programme that was well organised, well supported and meaningful.

It is perhaps not that surprising that the Inclusion Programme has been such a success. There has never been a programme where organisations representing marginalised young people were allocated a specific stream of funding to ensure that the young people they represent are involved in youth participation structures. What is perhaps more surprising is that in a relatively short space of time, many organisations have come from a place of not being engaged with youth participation structures to one where they not only have awareness and knowledge of those structures but are functioning ably, some with significant numbers, within them.

While this represents a great deal of progress in a very short space of time, it is important not to stop there. There is much work to do to ensure that young people from these organisations and others become involved in a plethora of youth participation structures on an ongoing basis. Continued strategic and structural development of the process is needed. Participation in and development of the process currently involves and will continue to demand significant commitment and 'buy-in' from the participating organisations. It will also demand continued commitment and funding from the OMCYA for it is this funding and commitment that gives the impetus and means to the process.

It is important to acknowledge that without a specific drive to include marginalised young people in youth participation structures and processes, it is quite simply very unlikely to happen. It is that stark. It is the partnership of committed organisations and the commitment of the OMCYA to drive the Inclusion Programme that can ensure marginalised young people continue to be meaningfully included in youth participation structures, now and in the future.