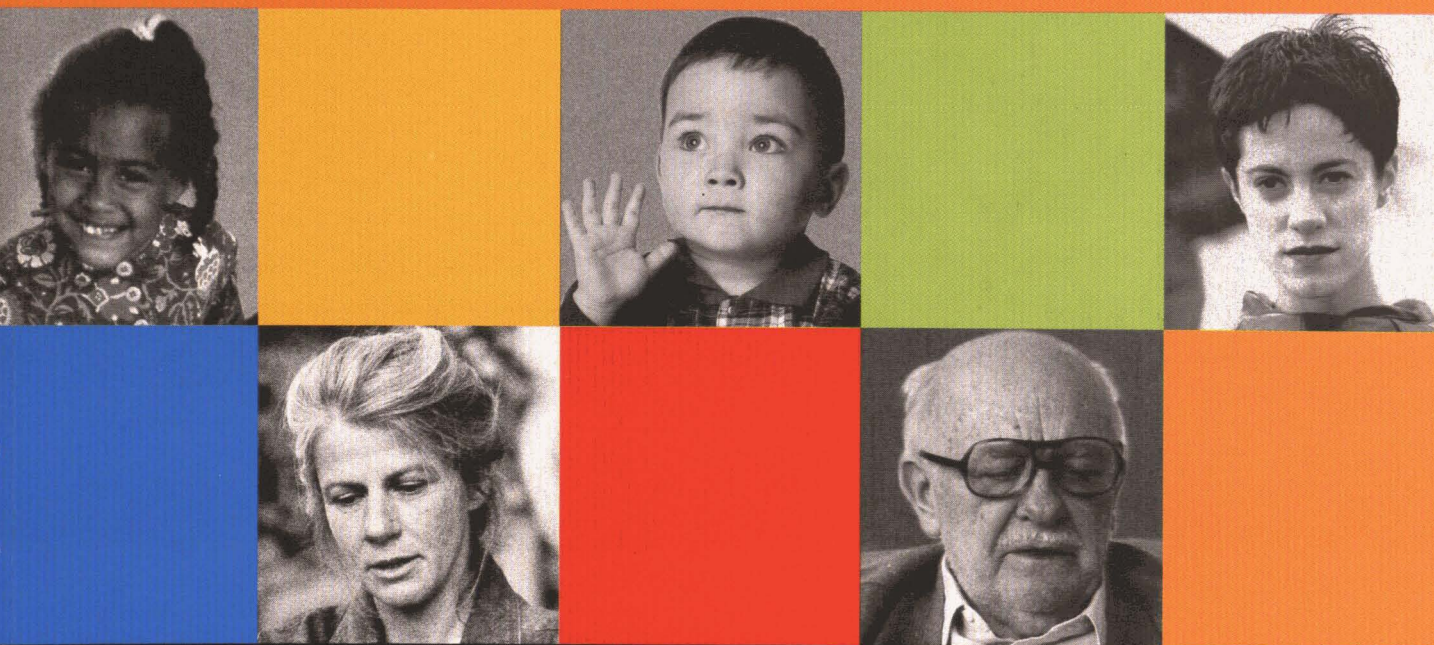


Planning For a More Inclusive Society: An Initial Assessment of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy



A report by the Combat Poverty Agency
with research by Helen Johnston and Tracey O'Brien

Combat Poverty Agency
*working for the prevention
and elimination of poverty*



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part 1



Combat Poverty Agency Overview and Recommendations

Introduction

The Combat Poverty Agency is a state agency whose mission is to promote a more just and inclusive society by working for the prevention and elimination of poverty. It pursues this through policy advice, project support and innovation, research and public education. One of its key objectives is to ensure that the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) makes significant progress in preventing, reducing and eliminating poverty.

The Combat Poverty Agency has the responsibility of overseeing an evaluation of the NAPS process, to include consideration of the views and experiences of the community and voluntary sector. The Agency has been asked to present the results of this evaluation to the government's Inter-Departmental Policy Committee on NAPS.

Part 1 of this document briefly overviews recent developments relevant to NAPS and sets out a series of policy recommendations to enhance its further impact.

The Assessment of NAPS

The Combat Poverty Agency is pleased to present this assessment of the progress of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy to date. Part 2 of the assessment, which has been prepared by Helen Johnston and Tracey O'Brien on behalf of the Combat Poverty Agency, charts progress to date, assesses key achievements, shortcomings and barriers to continued progress. On this basis conclusions are drawn on the impact of the implementation of NAPS to date. To do this, data available since the introduction of NAPS has been analysed along with the findings of a postal questionnaire survey, undertaken for the purposes of this assessment.

Since the launch of NAPS in 1997 Ireland has experienced a period of unprecedented economic growth. This has led to substantial reductions in the levels of unemployment and poverty. These are very welcome developments. It is difficult to assess the exact extent to which the NAPS process has contributed to these reductions, however it is clear that it has played an important role in raising awareness of the need for anti-poverty and social inclusion policies within the political and administrative systems. This has resulted in greater priority being given to such policies within the system. Examples of this include the increased focus on tackling educational disadvantage in education policy and a greater emphasis on issues of literacy and numeracy.

Similarly, there is a greater focus on tackling poverty and social exclusion in the reform of local government and local development, in the National Development Plan, in the new national agreement *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF)*, in the White Paper on Rural Development and in health policy. Other initiatives – anti-drugs work, the integrated services process, homelessness initiatives and the continuing growth in support for community development – also reflect the desire to tackle poverty and social exclusion. On tax and social welfare issues there have also been changes: social welfare rates have increased significantly in recent years and the move to tax credits has been to the benefit of those on low pay. The work of the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in the border counties is also evidence of the increased emphasis on combating poverty.

The above developments reflect a much more co-ordinated approach to public policy in this area. The Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion has taken a lead role in this regard.

However, while much has been achieved, much remains to be done. Although levels of consistent poverty have fallen significantly, relative income poverty has increased. NAPS, while making an important contribution in many areas, has been slow to develop in some respects and needs to be further strengthened if it is to achieve its full potential. Many commentators have argued, and it is now broadly accepted, that a rising economic tide does not lift all boats. In the current economic environment the nature of poverty is changing. NAPS and associated anti-poverty and social inclusion policies need to reflect these changing circumstances.

This assessment of the first phase of implementing NAPS concludes that it can be further strengthened to respond to this rapidly changing economic environment. In particular, its findings reinforce some of the new priorities set for NAPS in the new national agreement *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*. Learning from this assessment can provide important guidance for achieving these priorities and for developing a clear programme of action for the next phase of NAPS.

NAPS and the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness

This NAPS Assessment reviews the progress of NAPS from 1997 to the end of 1999. The new national

partnership agreement *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* was agreed in January 2000. The PPF sets out measures to reduce poverty and social exclusion over the next three years.

General Objectives

The main objectives in relation to NAPS in the PPF are as follows:

- to pursue policies which reduce poverty and social exclusion, build an inclusive society, reduce marginalisation and strengthen recognition of citizenship obligations;
- to create the conditions where people can achieve economic independence;
- to develop the process of poverty-proofing as a means of mainstreaming poverty issues and to strengthen the institutional arrangements which are in place to support NAPS;
- to review the original targets set under NAPS;
- to promote cross-departmental action and integration in addressing poverty issues comprehensively, using the SMI process to develop cross-cutting agendas;
- to provide relevant data and data collection systems for the monitoring and evaluation of poverty, including systems of measuring poverty among groups not currently included; and new studies to complement the current Living in Ireland and Household Budget surveys, and address the gender dimensions of poverty;
- to promote broader awareness and understanding of the issues to be addressed by the proofing process.

(Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, 2000, p 78.)

By 2003 the Government is committed to spending £1.5 billion on social inclusion measures, plus an additional £200m on measures other than social welfare and child care. The framework for addressing poverty and social exclusion will have regard to citizenship rights which encompass not only the core civil and political rights and obligations, but also social, economic and cultural rights.

Specific NAPS Actions

Actions specific to NAPS set out in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* are:

- in consultation with the relevant actors, NAPS is to be updated, the underlying methodology reviewed, the existing targets revised where appropriate, and possible new targets considered in consultation with the social partners, under the themes of child poverty, women's poverty, health, older people and housing/ accommodation. This process is to be completed within the first eighteen months of the agreement;

- NAPS' analysis is to be updated to include the emerging causes of poverty;
- the Employment Action Plan, the National Development Plan and other relevant policy documents are to be made consistent with the strategies to be pursued in addressing poverty;
- funding for Anti-Poverty Networks is to be continued and its level reviewed; and
- mechanisms for strengthening the involvement of the social partners in NAPS are to be considered.

In addition, the current, pilot poverty-proofing arrangements are to be reviewed and poverty-proofing is to be extended to the local authorities and the health boards. NAPS is to be embedded in local authority actions, policies and initiatives and the Department of the Environment and Local Government, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the Combat Poverty Agency will jointly introduce the NAPS initiative to local authorities. Social inclusion units are to be piloted in five local authorities.

Other relevant and related measures include:

- the establishment of a working group to examine the issue of relative poverty, to look at benchmarking and indexation issues and to develop a yardstick for adequacy of adult and child welfare payments;;
- the establishment of an Inter-Departmental committee to identify and clarify the range of existing and proposed social inclusion measures in the National Development Plan from which integrated, targeted intervention measures can be developed;
- the establishment of a Working Group on developing a NAPS framework within the health sector;
- to support the community and voluntary sector and to be informed by its views and experiences when formulating and devising strategies to tackle disadvantage, exclusion and poverty;
- to poverty-proof Budget tax packages;
- to advocate an ambitious response to Article 137 of the Amsterdam Treaty and to encourage civil dialogue at EU level through a more structured role for European NGOs with EU institutions;
- to promote joint North-South consideration of human rights issues and the reinforcement of a human rights culture on the island of Ireland. This would be done through educational and awareness programmes in the areas of economic, social and cultural rights, involving anti-poverty strategies.

Many of these issues are analysed and discussed in this assessment and should help to inform the development of the measures outlined in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*.

The National Development Plan

A fundamental objective of The National Development Plan (NDP) is the promotion of social inclusion, and this is reflected in a dedicated chapter within the plan. The plan notes the substantial progress made in poverty reduction recorded through progress on NAPS targets, yet states that:

"it is clear that not everyone has benefited proportionately from this new-found prosperity – indeed, the disparity between higher income earners and the socially excluded may even have widened... If the fruits of Ireland's economic progress are to be more widely spread, the promotion of social inclusion as a key objective of socio-economic development must form a central component of the Plan ... [It] requires that all sections of the community have a stake in Ireland's future development".

(National Development Plan, undated, p188).

Social inclusion initiatives include measures on affordable housing, enhanced access to improved health services, education and training, the promotion of a social economy scheme, equality measures, child care initiatives, support for community development and family support, services for the unemployed, youth services and measures to prevent crime. Co-ordinated implementation of these measures can make a substantial contribution towards the reduction of poverty in Ireland in line with NAPS.

European and International Developments

The establishment of NAPS in Ireland emerged from a commitment given at the UN Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995. In June 2000 the UN will meet in Geneva to assess progress on this and other commitments. Therefore, this NAPS assessment is timely, reflecting on what has happened over the last five years with regard to poverty reduction in Ireland and looking forward to the next five years.

European developments are also relevant. Under the Amsterdam Treaty there is an increased focus on the reduction of poverty and the promotion of social inclusion among EU member states. NAPS has attracted considerable interest amongst policy makers at European level, as has its emphasis on partnership agreements which place poverty and social exclusion as a central concern of national policy making.

Building on the experience of NAPS, the Combat Poverty Agency has argued for the development of EU guidelines on social inclusion which could include setting common objectives for action on poverty by member states and setting targets and a clear time scale for the reduction of poverty across Europe. At the February 2000 Informal Council of Labour and Social Affairs Ministers meeting in Lisbon, the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Dermot Ahern T.D. argued for a strategic approach at European level and supported the establishment of common objectives for social inclusion projects and the introduction of a system of social impact assessments for EU policies.

The European Commission is now in the process of putting in place an action programme on poverty and social exclusion under Article 137 of the Treaty. In this regard, the Social Affairs Commissioner, Anna Diamantopoulou, has proposed a set of targets for the reduction of overall poverty and of child poverty. She has called on Heads of State to give a commitment to "a full and comprehensive, integrated strategy to stamp out social exclusion" and has called on Member States to develop common objectives on poverty. In this increasingly positive EU context Ireland can learn from Europe and Europe can learn from Ireland on how best to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

Issues identified at EU level on which there could be mutual learning include:

- the development of guidelines on social exclusion, setting objectives and targets;
- the development of a well funded action programme;
- a mainstreaming focus through the operation of poverty proofing;
- the development of a Charter of Fundamental Rights; and
- support for the role of non governmental organisations.

Next Steps

This NAPS Assessment forms one part of an ongoing process of evaluating NAPS. To assist it in its continuing role, the Agency will establish a NAPS Evaluation Advisory Group. This Group will consider this NAPS Assessment and will identify issues for further evaluation. Membership of the Group will include representatives from the community and voluntary sector, the statutory sector, the social partners, the National Economic and Social Forum, the National and Economic Council and the research community.

Key Recommendations

Having carefully considered this NAPS assessment and on the basis of its own involvement in NAPS, the Combat Poverty Agency makes a number of recommendations for the future development of NAPS. These recommendations take into account the great opportunities offered by the current very rapid rate of economic progress in Ireland. In developing its recommendations, the Agency has identified six key priorities for the development of NAPS. These are:

- **Strengthen the role of NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee.**
- **Establish mechanisms for the involvement of the community and voluntary sector and people living in poverty in the ongoing implementation and monitoring of NAPS.**
- **Extend NAPS to local government.**
- **Revise existing targets to take greater account of the rapidly changing economic environment.**
- **Set targets in new areas, for particular groups (children, older people and people with disabilities) and issues (housing/ accommodation, homelessness and health).**
- **Develop and strengthen poverty-proofing, ensure it is applied to all key Budgetary decisions including taxation, and extend it to the local level.**
- **Further embed NAPS in the administrative system.**
- **Enhance and resource data collection and analysis to inform the monitoring and evaluation of NAPS.**

Issues relating to these priorities are further elaborated upon in the full recommendations set out below.

The year 2002 will mark the half-way period for NAPS. The Agency proposes that these recommendations be implemented as soon as possible and reviewed in 2002. Further assessments will be produced, by the Agency, in the interim.

Overall Recommendations¹

- 1 Review NAPS in the light of the changed economic, social and cultural circumstances now prevailing in Ireland.** Such a review should take into account the model of economic development operating in Ireland and examine issues of wealth creation and redistribution. *To be led by NAPS IDPC.*
- 2 Provide additional resources for policies, programmes and actions to reduce poverty.** There should be specific resource allocations to implement NAPS policies, programmes and actions. NAPS has relied to date on the redistribution and reprioritisation of resources within government departments to deliver on the strategy. Thus, the £1.5 billion social inclusion package in the PPF is an important step forward in this regard. *To be actioned by the Department of Finance.*
- 3 Further embed NAPS into the political and administrative systems** through active promotion and training and through the extension of NAPS to state agencies and local government. (See recommendations 11 to 18 and 42 to 46). *To be actioned by departments, state agencies and local government, led by NAPS IDPC.*
- 4 Revise some of the existing NAPS targets and set new ones in key areas.** (For further details see recommendations 19 to 23). *To be actioned by NAPS IDPC and agreed by government.*
- 5 Strengthen the main implementing bodies, the IDPC and NAPS Unit.** (For further details see recommendations 13 and 14). *To be actioned by the Government.*
- 6 Improve consultation and involve people experiencing poverty and those who represent them in the implementation of NAPS.** (See recommendations 16, 17, 21, 29 and 40). *To be actioned by NAPS IDPC.*
- 7 Improve monitoring of the implementation of NAPS.** (See also recommendations 23, 36 to 41, 52 and 53). *To be actioned by NAPS IDPC, in conjunction with the Combat Poverty Agency and the NESF.*
- 8 Further embed poverty proofing into the administrative system through training and guidance and extend it to state agencies and local government.** (See recommendations 26 to 35). *To be actioned by NAPS IDPC in the first instance.*

- 9 Raise the profile of NAPS.** The Government should regularly emphasise that poverty is unacceptable in Ireland today and undertake a proactive public awareness strategy to emphasise the key importance of NAPS. (For further details, see recommendations 47 to 51). *To be actioned by the Government and NAPS IDPC.*

- 10 In the context of Article 137 of the Amsterdam Treaty, contribute to the development of an overall EU Strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion and promote exchange and learning between member states on the development of national anti-poverty strategies.** (See recommendation 17). *To be led by the Government.*

Recommendations on Institutional Mechanisms

- 11 Maintain a high level of political commitment to the elimination of poverty and the promotion of social inclusion through the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion.**

The Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion has ensured that poverty reduction and social inclusion have been high on the political agenda. It is important for this Committee to continue to provide a political impetus to NAPS and to champion the elimination of poverty. *To be actioned by the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion.*

- 12 Give the Senior Officials Group an official role in the implementation of NAPS.** The Senior Officials Group is relatively recently established and provides an important link between NAPS IDPC and the Cabinet Sub-Committee. However, the roles and links with NAPS IDPC could usefully be clarified. *To be actioned by the Senior Officials Group in consultation with NAPS IDPC.*

- 13 Enhance the role of NAPS IDPC.** This could be done through:
 - raising the status of the Committee, eg. by the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs attending some meetings of the Committee and ensuring attendance by senior officials from all relevant departments;
 - the development of a clear annual work plan, timetabled with areas of responsibility clearly outlined;
 - meeting more regularly than four times a year;
 - initiating strategic work areas for NAPS;
 - engaging in consultative work, eg. visiting local projects, regularly meeting community and voluntary sector representatives and other social partners;

- contributing to the development of strategies at local level;
- continue to engage in cross-departmental working on key poverty initiatives. Clearer reporting relationships between cross-departmental groups and NAPS IDPC could usefully be established;
- developing and resourcing a public education and media relations function and publishing documents on a regular basis;
- ensuring that NAPS IDPC members and liaison officers are adequately resourced and supported to fulfil their roles;
- considering extending the membership of the Committee to include the social partners.

To be actioned by NAPS IDPC, with the support of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion and the Senior Officials Group.

- 14 Enhance the role and raise the profile of the NAPS Unit.** This could include the following:

- the position of Head of the NAPS Unit being full-time and NAPS-dedicated ;
- additional staff resources including the ability to bring in staff from other departments to form a cross-departmental staff team, putting SMI theory into practice;
- the ability to draw in external expertise on a seconded basis e.g. to enable staff to take a more proactive and supportive role in relation to poverty-proofing;
- additional budgetary resources to provide materials and support to departments on the implementation of NAPS.

To be actioned by NAPS Unit with the support of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, along with other Government departments, particularly the Department of Finance.

- 15 Provide additional support for Liaison Officers.** This could include:

- integrating the role of liaison officer into the decision-making process in the relevant departments;
- ensuring that liaison officers have dedicated time to undertake NAPS work and that it is explicitly part of their work plans;
- liaison officers having a dedicated budget within their departments for NAPS work;
- a "job role/description" being drawn up for liaison officers, outlining their main tasks;
- regular training on NAPS work;
- a network for NAPS liaison officers to meet and exchange experience and information on NAPS-related work.

Departments to action, supported by NAPS Unit.

1. These recommendations are not listed in any order of priority.

16 Establish appropriate consultative and participatory structures for the involvement of the community and voluntary sector, people living in poverty and the social partners in the planning, implementation and evaluation of NAPS. This could be done through:

- the NESF. The NESF includes representatives from the community and voluntary pillar and its Assembly, in particular, could play an important role in the ongoing implementation of NAPS. The NESF, as a whole, has a particular role to play in evaluating the effectiveness of policies which are being implemented within the framework of social partnership agreements and of NAPS. To date it has played an important role by commenting regularly on social policy issues;
- greater use of working groups which involve both officials and the community and voluntary sector to oversee the development, co-ordination and implementation of specific initiatives;
- the White Paper on the relationship between the community and voluntary sector and the state;
- representation of the sector on a Evaluation Advisory Group, to be established by the Combat Poverty Agency
- greater involvement of the social partners in particular initiatives as was the case in the development of poverty proofing;
- placing greater emphasis on user participation needs;
- involvement at local level in the County Development Boards;
- a commitment to supporting the involvement of excluded people.

To be actioned by NESF, NAPS IDPC, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, the Combat Poverty Agency, the County Development Boards and the community and voluntary sector.

17 The IDPC should consider adopting the learning and guidelines being developed by the EU Transnational Project on involving excluded persons and the organisations that represent them in anti-poverty policy development and implementation. *To be actioned by NAPS IDPC, in consultation with the Combat Poverty Agency, NAPS Unit and the National Anti-Poverty Networks.*

18 Put in place and resource a programme of support for local government and state agencies to assist them in developing and implementing anti-poverty strategies and to ensure that local people and community and voluntary sector representatives are involved in the design and delivery of anti-poverty programmes at local level. *To be actioned by central and local Government and by the Combat Poverty Agency.*

Recommendations on NAPS Targets and Principles

19 Re-set some of the original/revised NAPS targets. This would include:

- re-basing the global target regularly, eg. every five years, and assessing a number of components underlying the target - actual income, non-monetary indicators of deprivation, and income relative to the whole population. The relevance of the deprivation indicators should be reviewed on a regular basis;
- considering and re-setting the education target: (i) based on a broader-than-purely-academic view of education; (ii) by measuring literacy and numeracy levels at primary school and (iii) including an adult literacy component;
- re-setting the new unemployment target, in the first instance in line with the Employment Action Plan - i.e. to reduce unemployment to 5%, and long-term unemployment to 2% by end year 2000 - and in the longer term, by 2005, to eliminate long-term unemployment. The development of the social economy could play an important role here;
- re-setting the income adequacy target on the basis of relative income levels. The Working Group examining the issue of relative poverty under the PFF should contribute to the setting of this target;
- re-setting the urban disadvantage and rural poverty targets based on data, to be collected if necessary, at local level through local development or local government sources. *This work to be led by the NAPS IDPC, through the use of working groups involving the social partners, the Combat Poverty Agency and other relevant groups/individuals.*

20 Set additional targets. Groups and issues which the Agency considers a priority are: children, older people, people with disabilities, housing/accommodation, homelessness and health. The need to keep the Strategy focused on key poverty issues should be borne in mind. *To be led by the NAPS IDPC, through the use of working groups involving the social partners, the Combat Poverty Agency and other relevant groups/individuals.*

21 Engage in a consultative process for arriving at targets. This should include inclusive discussions, involving the social partners, on issues to be taken into consideration and the broad parameters within which targets should be framed. It should also take into account approaches to setting targets and indicators in other EU countries. *To be actioned by NAPS IDPC.*

22 Consider the time-frame for which particular targets should be set, and within which targets

should be achieved eg. three years, five years, ten years, as appropriate. *To be actioned by NAPS IDPC, through the consultative process.*

23 Put in place performance indicators and review dates to measure progress towards meeting the targets. Consider how targets might be met and ensure appropriate policies and measures are put in place which will work towards the achievement of targets. *To be actioned by NAPS IDPC.*

24 Undertake a systematic review of the application of the NAPS principles, with a view to proactively encouraging and supporting the implementation of the principles in the application of all anti-poverty and social inclusion measures. *To be actioned by NAPS IDPC.*

25 Consider how NAPS can better reflect Ireland's European and international commitments to promoting human and social rights, in line with obligations under the UN and the Council of Europe. *To be actioned by the Government.*

Recommendations on Poverty-Proofing

26 Consider how poverty-proofing can operate at various levels within and across government departments. For example, at departmental section level, at departmental level and between departments. Poverty-proofing could and should take place at these different levels, and there needs to be a system to ensure that the information is fed through the system and is taken into consideration at all levels of decision making. *To be considered in the Poverty-Proofing Review.*

27 Consider introducing a screening mechanism to assess whether a policy or programme should be proofed or not. In the absence of screening a large number of policies might be proofed in detail unnecessarily, with the risk that policies that have significant adverse impacts on poverty may not be adequately considered. In this context it will be important to ensure that key taxation measures are poverty-proofed, as proposed in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*. *To be considered in the Poverty-Proofing Review.*

28 Identify information and data gaps required to undertake poverty proofing and put in place actions to address these. *To be considered in the Poverty-Proofing Review.*

29 In the process of poverty-proofing undertake

consultation with the key poverty groups. This may be time consuming if undertaken in isolation, however, if consultation with people living in poverty and the groups which represent them was a key feature in the ongoing implementation of NAPS this information could automatically inform poverty proofing. Under such arrangements it may be possible for the community and voluntary sector to contribute to, or participate in, poverty-proofing. *To be undertaken by departments and supported by NAPS IDPC. To be considered in the Poverty-Proofing Review.*

30 Resource departments, state agencies and local authorities to undertake poverty-proofing. This will require staff resources, training and resources to obtain the required data and to undertake consultation. *To be actioned by the Government through the Department of Finance.*

31 Publish examples of poverty-proofing, and in particular make publicly available poverty proofs of key policy documents eg. the annual budget. Making applications of poverty proofing publicly available will demonstrate the seriousness of the initiative and assist in building good practice. While valuable in its own right this would be very much in the spirit of the Freedom of Information legislation. *To be actioned by the individual departments. Alternatively, the information could be collated by the NAPS Unit and published by the NAPS IDPC.*

32 Set an explicit time-frame for the extension of poverty-proofing to state agencies and local government. The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* states that poverty proofing will be extended on a phased basis to a local level through the local authorities and health boards. The review of poverty-proofing, to take place early in 2000, should consider how this might be done. On the back of this it would be useful to develop poverty-proofing guidelines for the local authorities and health boards. In addition, they will need to be adequately resourced and supported to undertake poverty proofing. *To be actioned by the Government.*

33 Consider how an integrated proofing system might be developed to incorporate the various proofing elements eg. poverty, gender, equality, environment, and rural elements. Within such an integrated approach it will be important to maintain the focus on proofing policies for poverty. *To be considered in the poverty-proofing review.*

34 Identify relevant examples and approaches to poverty proofing within the EU and promote exchange and learning between member states on poverty-proofing. *To be led by the NAPS IDPC.*

35 Examine the “pros and cons” of putting poverty-proofing on a legislative basis. *To be considered in the poverty-proofing review.*

Recommendations on Assessing the Impact of NAPS

36 Continue to undertake and support regular data collection and analysis on the extent and nature of poverty in Ireland.

- (i) the Living in Ireland survey data to:
- ensure results on the extent and nature of poverty are made available annually;
 - undertake longitudinal analyses of the survey data;
 - undertake detailed analyses of specific poverty issues;
- (ii) to analyse additional available data sources, eg. the Household Budget survey and to enhance other data sources. The new national social science data archive being established jointly by UCD and the ESRI has the potential to provide a source of social science data for wider analysis. The Census pilot income questionnaire may also make available an additional source of information on the income levels of the population;
- (iii) to ensure that the proposed new national survey on the well-being of children has a strong focus on child poverty;

- to ensure that adequate resources are made available to enable ongoing data collection and analysis on poverty. This should include resources to ensure that results are produced in as timely a manner as possible.

To be actioned by NAPS IDPC, in association with the Combat Poverty Agency.

37 Undertake additional complementary data collection to ensure that the impact of NAPS on the most marginalised groups can be assessed, particularly for groups not living within traditional household circumstances eg. Travellers, homeless people, refugees and asylum seekers, and people living in institutions. *To be actioned by NAPS IDPC, in association with the Combat Poverty Agency.*

38 Ensure that the nature and causes of poverty continue to be researched and analysed. Good analysis has assisted our understanding of poverty in Ireland to date, but this work needs to be continued and substantiated, particularly in rapidly changing economic, social and cultural circumstances, for example, emerging trends indicate a potential increase in the working poor, refugees and asylum seekers. These trends need to be fully explored and analysed. *To be actioned by NAPS IDPC, in association with the Combat Poverty Agency.*

39 Link Irish poverty analysis to international poverty assessments, where relevant, and support moves within the EU and the Council of Europe for more extensive measuring and monitoring of trends in poverty and social exclusion. *To be actioned by the Government, NAPS IDPC, and the Combat Poverty Agency.*

40 Involve the community and voluntary sector and people who are living in poverty in assessing the impact of NAPS. This is critical since anti-poverty and social inclusion policies are seeking to improve the position of those who are most disadvantaged and marginalised. *To be actioned by NAPS IDPC, in association with the Combat Poverty Agency.*

41 Put monitoring and evaluation structures in place to assess the impact of NAPS on poverty reduction in Ireland. *To be actioned by NAPS IDPC, in association with the Combat Poverty Agency and NESF.*

Recommendations on Departmental Actions

42 Through the SMI process, departments and local government should state in their strategic statements and business plans the contribution they can make to poverty reduction. The emphasis should be on how NAPS objectives get operationalised into departmental policies and programmes. The possibility of a pilot is suggested where the Combat Poverty Agency and NAPS Unit could work with one or two departments on a pilot basis with a view to arriving at practical ways in which anti-poverty policies can become integral to departmental planning and implementation. *To be initiated by NAPS IDPC through departments and actioned by the Combat Poverty Agency and NAPS Unit.*

43 Departments and local authorities should clearly state in their NAPS Baselines documents and Annual Work Plans, what actual policies and programmes they will implement in that year

which will directly contribute to poverty reduction and the resources they are committing to this. *To be actioned by departments and local authorities, supported by the NAPS Unit and the Combat Poverty Agency.*

44 The IDPC, supported by the NAPS Unit should play a more active role in supporting departments and local government to develop policies and programmes to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion. In assessing departments' annual work plans the IDPC should support them to develop cross-departmental anti-poverty initiatives, where appropriate. *To be actioned by NAPS IDPC.*

45 Departments should be resourced to undertake anti-poverty work as specified in their annual work plans. This should be a key consideration in the Annual Estimates process. *To be actioned by the Department of Finance, in consultation with other departments.*

46 The extent to which departments meet the commitments contained in their annual work plans should be monitored both internally and independently. The independent dimension could be built into the evaluation of the NAPS. The internal monitoring should be undertaken in the context of the SMI. *To be actioned by the Combat Poverty Agency and the Department of the Taoiseach.*

Recommendations on Raising the Profile of NAPS

47 NAPS should be promoted in a more proactive way through the media. Through the Information and Public Education Strategy for the National Anti-Poverty Strategy a framework is in place through which the profiling of NAPS and increased awareness of poverty can be developed. *To be led by the Government.*

48 More actively promote NAPS within the public service. NAPS should be a key element of induction and in-service training and should be incorporated as a key training module in its own right, for example on the implementation of poverty proofing. Other mechanisms should be explored for raising awareness of NAPS, including better mechanisms of dissemination of information e.g. through use of electronic systems, seminars, newsletters and staff secondments. *To be initiated by the NAPS Unit.*

49 Promote NAPS within state agencies and local authorities. The provision of accessible materials and training should be key components of this

process. The work being developed by the Combat Poverty Agency, in conjunction with the Department of Environment and Local Government and the NAPS Unit to extend NAPS to local government, should be prioritised. *To be actioned by the Department of the Environment and Local Government, the NAPS Unit and the Combat Poverty Agency.*

50 Provide information on NAPS to anti-poverty and community groups working at local level. The Combat Poverty Agency should play a lead role in this and should be further resourced to do so. *To be actioned by the Combat Poverty Agency.*

51 Engage with the social partners on NAPS. This should be done through the implementation of the national partnership agreement, at both national and local levels. *To be actioned by the Government.*

Recommendations on the Future Evaluation of NAPS

52 The Combat Poverty Agency should establish an Evaluation Advisory Committee as soon as possible to consider this assessment and to identify areas for further evaluation. The Advisory Committee will advise the Agency's work in the evaluation of NAPS on an ongoing basis. The Committee will develop clear and concise terms of reference. Membership of the Committee will include local people, representatives from the community and voluntary sector, the statutory sector, the social partners, the research community, NESC and NESF. The Agency will liaise with the NESF in respect to its monitoring role. *To be actioned by the Combat Poverty Agency.*

53 The NESF should monitor the implementation of NAPS, within the framework of the new national agreement. Given the NESF's representative structure, and the project team approach it has adopted to identify the scope for policy improvement at both local and national level, it is particularly well placed to comment on the implementation of NAPS. *To be actioned by the NESF.*

Conclusion

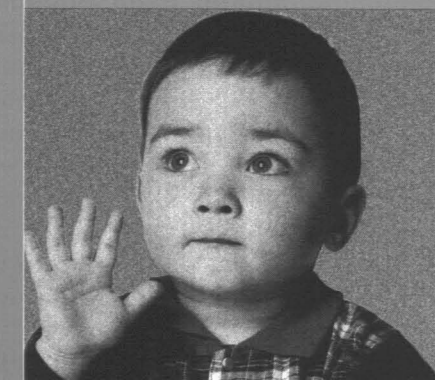
In its first phase NAPS has made a significant contribution to placing poverty and social exclusion at the centre of public policy making. Important steps have been taken to embed NAPS in the political and administrative system. However, given the extraordinarily rapid economic growth of recent years there is now an exceptional opportunity largely to eliminate poverty in Ireland. The resources are available to do so. The Combat Poverty Agency believes that if the

lessons of this assessment are taken on board, and if its recommendations are implemented, NAPS can play a critical role in ensuring that these resources will be used to the best effect and that poverty will be eliminated.

Combat Poverty Agency

May 2000

part 2



RESEARCH BY HELEN JOHNSTON AND TRACEY O'BRIEN

part 2

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Helen Johnston & Tracey O'Brien

Combat Poverty Agency

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

The publication of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) report *Sharing in Progress* in April 1997 was a critical landmark in the development of Irish social and economic policy. NAPS set a ten-year target for poverty reduction in Ireland and identified five key areas as needing particular attention in tackling poverty: income adequacy, unemployment, educational disadvantage, urban concentrations of poverty and rural poverty.

The Combat Poverty Agency has been given responsibility by the government for overseeing an evaluation of the NAPS process, which will include consideration of the views and experience of the community and voluntary sector. It will present the results of the evaluation to NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee (IDPC).

This assessment forms part of the Combat Poverty Agency's role in the evaluation of NAPS. It sets out to chart progress to date, to assess key achievements, shortcomings and barriers to progress, and on this basis draws conclusions on the issues to be addressed in the future implementation of NAPS. The assessment draws on data and material available since the introduction of NAPS: on research reports produced by the ESRI, *Monitoring Poverty Trends* in particular, and on the *Social Inclusion Strategy: Annual Report of the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee 1998/99*. The assessment also contains an analysis of Dáil Debates on NAPS and press coverage of the Strategy. Records of meetings and other similar documentation are also drawn upon.

The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) also has a role in monitoring NAPS. The NESF was re-constituted in 1998 and is currently considering the nature of its role in relation to the Strategy. Given its representative structure and focus on policy analysis and monitoring, it would seem to have a key role in assessing major social policy initiatives, such as NAPS. Its fourth pillar will have an important contribution to make in this regard.

The development of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy involved an extensive consultation exercise. In undertaking this assessment it was decided that it would be useful to garner the views of a range of people who had been involved in the development of NAPS through a postal questionnaire survey. Questionnaires were issued to the community and voluntary sector, to the other social partners, to the statutory sector, to researchers and academics, to political advisers, to the media and to local government groups. The questionnaire responses provide extremely valuable insights into the implementation of

NAPS to date and how it is seen as a tool to tackle poverty and exclusion in Ireland.

NAPS is a ten-year strategy, with 2002 marking the mid-way point. Further evaluation of the Strategy should work towards producing a substantial mid-term report on its achievements to 2002. The new partnership agreement, the *Partnership for Prosperity and Fairness* should seek to achieve its objectives by end 2002 – the mid-way period for NAPS and the end of the partnership agreement.

2. Economic and Social Context

Since 1997, when NAPS was first introduced, Ireland has experienced unprecedented economic growth. The results of this economic growth have been a substantial fall in unemployment, including long-term unemployment, which is known to be a key cause of poverty. Secondly, the numbers of those in consistent poverty had substantially fallen, to under 10% of the population in 1997. Reductions in unemployment and poverty which might only have seemed aspirational in the early 1990s, have now been achieved. So the context in which NAPS is operating has changed, bringing with it new issues and challenges.

One such challenge is that the nature of poverty is changing. While consistent poverty is falling, income inequality is increasing as the gap widens between those in work and those not in work. This increase in relative income poverty may have broader implications over the longer term. The challenge for NAPS, in the current favourable macro environment, is to tackle both the remaining consistent poverty and to address increasing income inequalities.

The changing nature of poverty may have other implications which require attention. Other emerging issues are:

- while many long-term unemployed people have found work, there remains a group of very long-term unemployed people who have not yet been able to avail of the increased employment opportunities;
- the risk of poverty for older people, particularly older women, has increased;
- while still relatively small, there is an increasing risk of poverty for low paid employees;
- large families and children, in particular, continue to have a high risk of poverty;
- people with disabilities continue to have a high risk of poverty;
- vulnerable groups such as Travellers, people who are

homeless and refugees and asylum seekers have a very high risk of poverty.

A key issue is the extent to which recent economic and social development has left behind a group of households that experience cumulative or multiple disadvantages and exclusion from the rest of society in a way that has not happened previously. The increased costs of housing, lack of accessible and affordable childcare, and the lack of availability and access to primary health services are particular features of the current economic and social environment for people who are poor.

In the present economic climate there is now the opportunity largely to eliminate poverty in Ireland. The resources are available and the mechanisms are in place, through NAPS, to deliver the policies and programmes. What is now required is the allocation of resources and the political and institutional will to ensure that this aspiration can become a reality. This assessment highlights some of the modifications which might be made to NAPS to enable this to happen.

The United Nations context for NAPS is also important. It was at the UN World Summit in Copenhagen in March 1995, that the Irish Government agreed to the development of an Irish National Anti-Poverty Strategy. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has observed that Ireland has made good progress on meeting its commitments and noted with satisfaction the adoption of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy for 1997–2007 and related mechanisms such as the poverty-proofing of policy proposals.

However, the UN Committee is concerned that NAPS does not explicitly adopt a human rights framework. The Committee is also concerned about the persistence of poverty among disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, in particular people with disabilities, the Travelling community, older women, lone parents and children.

The UN General Assembly will meet in Geneva in June 2000 to assess progress on the commitments made in 1995 – referred to as Copenhagen +5. Copenhagen +5 presents an opportunity for Ireland to further strengthen NAPS, involving consideration of a greater focus on human and social rights.

NAPS also operates within an European context. Eurostat figures show that 18% of the EU population live in poverty. The European Social Affairs Minister has asked the European Heads of Government to agree the following targets:

- to reduce those living below the 60% poverty line from 18% today to 15% by 2005 and 10% by 2010;

- to reduce child poverty throughout Europe by 50% by 2010.

Ireland has interacted in a very positive way with European social policy developments and has made many important contributions. With the introduction of Article 137 of the Amsterdam Treaty there is now a much stronger basis for the European Union to give an increased focus to poverty and social exclusion. Ireland now has an important opportunity to advocate that the EU should:

- promote policy exchange and learning for policy makers, the social partners and all those involved in anti-poverty action;
- put in place better data and reporting on trends in poverty and social exclusion;
- regularly monitor and report on approaches that may have been developed in each member state;
- introduce a system of social-impact assessments for EU policies;
- promote the development of minimum income standards in key areas of anti-poverty policy;
- increase support for the role of non-governmental organisations.

There is a growing emphasis by the European Union on addressing issues of social exclusion through enhancing human and social rights. Under its preparatory actions to combat and prevent social exclusion, the EU is funding the Combat Poverty Agency, the NAPS Unit and the National Anti-Poverty Networks, along with transnational partners in Northern Ireland, Finland, the Netherlands and Portugal to develop guidelines for the involvement of excluded persons and the organisations which represent them in the development, implementation and evaluation of social inclusion and anti-poverty strategies.

3. Institutional Mechanisms

The first two years of NAPS has seen the establishment of a number of institutional mechanisms for its implementation, as envisaged in the NAPS Strategy statement. These are illustrated in Figure 3.1, Chapter 3.

The structures established include the following:

- a Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion, chaired by the Taoiseach;
- a Senior Officials Committee to advise the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion;
- an Inter-Departmental Policy Committee (IDPC);
- a NAPS Unit in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs;
- NAPS Liaison Officers;
- the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) has responsibility for monitoring the social inclusion

element of Partnership 2000;

- the Combat Poverty Agency has a role in monitoring and evaluating NAPS;
- the National Anti-Poverty Networks have continued to be funded, and the community and voluntary sector has been involved in monitoring Partnership 2000;
- preliminary work is in progress on the development of local anti-poverty strategies.

It is notable that two months after the launch of NAPS there was a change of government. The Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrat government has progressed NAPS and has consolidated various structures for its implementation.

This assessment compares the structures which have been established against what was envisaged in NAPS's Statement of Strategy. The analysis also attempts to assess the extent to which the institutional structures established have been effective in the implementation of NAPS and to identify improvements which could be made.

Key structural achievements include:

- the institutional structures envisaged in NAPS's Strategy Statement have mainly been put in place;
- a Cabinet Sub-Committee has taken on a key role in promoting social inclusion policies;
- references to NAPS have increased in the Dáil;
- the NAPS IDPC has continued to progress NAPS;
- the NAPS Unit has progressed a substantial body of work;
- the Combat Poverty Agency has progressed the Strategy through its work;
- poverty proofing has been introduced.

However, a number of weaknesses have been identified as follows:

- there has been insufficient involvement of key organisations and sectors, including the social partners and organisations working with people who are experiencing poverty;
- the over-centralisation of the structures to deliver anti-poverty policies and programmes;
- inadequate resourcing of the NAPS Unit and anti-poverty work in general;
- the need for more proactive support from the political system;
- inadequate public-awareness raising and education;
- lack of ongoing evaluation.

This assessment shows that there is a need for a concerted effort by all involved to ensure that the mechanisms put in place to implement NAPS can deliver on its commitments in a consistent way. In particular, there is a need for

continued explicit recognition that anti-poverty policy is a key policy area within the political and administrative system. The actions which are undertaken by these systems should provide evidence that this is the case.

In addition, there are a number of other actions which would help to strengthen the institutional mechanisms to implement NAPS. These include:

- an enhanced role for the NAPS IDPC;
- additional resources and supports for the NAPS Unit and Liaison Officers;
- the establishment of appropriate consultative and participatory structures for the involvement of the community and voluntary sector, people living in poverty and the social partners in the planning, implementation and evaluation of NAPS;
- acceleration of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy to local government and state agencies.

4. NAPS Targets and Principles

One of the most important and novel features of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy is that it sets specific **targets** for poverty reduction. Indeed Ireland is the first European Union member state to adopt a global poverty target. NAPS contains six targets – a global target and a target for each of the five themes: unemployment, educational disadvantage, income adequacy, urban disadvantage and rural poverty. NAPS is also underpinned by the seven principles outlined in Chapter 1 and in Chapter 4, Section 1.7

The original NAPS **global** target was a reduction of the numbers of those who are consistently poor from 9–15% to less than 5–10% (based on 1994 data) by 2007. By 1997 the numbers in consistent poverty had fallen to 7–10% of the population. Based on this information, in June 1999 the Government set a new global target that consistent poverty be reduced to below 5% by 2004.

Substantial progress has also been made in reducing **unemployment**. The original target was to reduce the rate of unemployment from 11.9% to 6% by 2007; and to reduce the rate of long-term unemployment from 7% to 3.5%. In June 1999 the Government set new unemployment targets that unemployment be reduced to below 5% and long-term unemployment to be reduced to 2.5% by 2002. By September 1999 the unemployment rate was 5.7% and long-term unemployment rate 2.1%. Thus, the target set by Government in June 1999 to reduce long-term unemployment to 2.5% by 2002 had already been met by September 1999. The Employment Action Plan has more ambitious targets for unemployment reduction – to reduce unemployment to below 5% and long-term unemployment to below 2% by end-year 2000.

The new national agreement contains an objective to effectively eliminate long-term unemployment and to seek that mass unemployment does not recur.

The **educational disadvantage** target is to eliminate the problem of early school leaving before the junior certificate and to reduce early school leaving so that the percentage of those completing the senior cycle will increase to at least 90% by the year 2000 and 98% by the year 2007. The target also states that there should be no students with serious literacy and numeracy problems in early primary education within the next five years. Various issues are arising in attempting to achieve this target in relation to the educational options available and chosen by young people who may not necessarily follow these traditional routes. In addition, adult illiteracy is a particular problem which was not included in NAPS's education target. A new target has not yet been set, but various commentators have suggested that it should be reviewed.

The **income adequacy** target restated the global target and set out a short-term goal of reaching the minimally adequate social welfare rates set by the Commission on Social Welfare. These were reached in 1999. The **urban disadvantage** and **rural poverty** targets were less specific, and thus progress on these has been more difficult to measure. These three targets have not been re-set.

The seven principles are an important component of NAPS. While there has been some progress on recognising NAPS principles and trying to progress aspects of these in an effort to reduce poverty and inequalities, much remains to be done. There is thus the need to reinforce all the principles of NAPS across the civil service and to put in place mechanisms to ensure that they underpin all anti-poverty policies and measures.

This assessment discusses a number of issues in relation to NAPS targets. A number of points are made in relation to the review and revision of NAPS targets. These can be summarised as:

- the need to re-set some of the original NAPS targets;
- the need to set additional targets, eg. in the areas of housing/accommodation and homelessness, health, and to address poverty among children, older people and people with disabilities;
- the need to engage in a consultative process for arriving at targets;
- the need to consider how targets can be operationalised within government departments;
- the need to consider the time-frame for which particular targets should be set, in both the short-term and the long-term;
- the need to put in place performance indicators to measure progress towards meeting the targets. This will require additional data collection and analysis.

There is also a need for a more systematic review of the application of the principles.

In relation to the current NAPS targets there is a need to:

- re-base the global target regularly, say every five years and to explicitly assess a number of components underlying it – real income, non-monetary indicators, relative income;
- re-consider and re-set the education target, based on a broader view of education, measuring literacy and numeracy levels at primary school and including an adult literacy component;
- re-set the new unemployment target – to eliminate long-term unemployment;
- re-set the income adequacy target on the basis of relative income levels;
- re-set the urban disadvantage and rural poverty targets based on disaggregated national data, and additional local information data, to be collected, if necessary, perhaps through local development or local government sources.

5. Poverty-Proofing

The introduction of poverty-proofing has been one of the most significant developments under NAPS to date. This is a process by which government departments assess policies and programmes at design and review stages in relation to the likely impact that they will have or have had on poverty and inequalities which are likely to lead to poverty, with a view to poverty reduction.

Poverty-proofing is currently being implemented on a pilot basis in civil service departments only. Following a Government decision in July 1998, poverty-proofing has been included as a requirement in the Cabinet Handbook which states that Memoranda for Government should, inter alia, "indicate clearly, as appropriate, the impact of the proposal for...persons in poverty or at risk of falling into poverty, in the case of significant policy proposals."

What this means in practice is that major economic or social policy proposals be assessed for their effects on poverty. The assessment includes the following questions:

- a. Does it help to prevent people falling into poverty?
- b. Does it contribute to the achievement of NAPS targets?
- c. If the proposal has no effect on the level of poverty, what options might be identified to produce a positive effect?

Poverty-proofing should be undertaken in the following circumstances:

- in the preparation of SMI Statements of Strategy and Annual Business Plans;
- in designing policies and preparing Memoranda to

Government on significant policy proposals;

- in the preparation of the Estimates and Annual Budget proposal – this also includes expenditure reviews and programme evaluations;
- in the preparation of the National Development Plan and other relevant EU Plans and Programmes; and
- in the preparation of legislation.

This assessment discusses some of the issues which arose in the development of poverty-proofing and describes some of its applications in terms of the annual budget, some policy reports, the National Development Plan and racism and poverty. The important role of poverty audits (assessing the impact of policies after application, rather than at design stage) is also discussed and some examples are cited.

While the theory of poverty-proofing has been welcomed, there have been some concerns in relation to its application in practice. It was felt that it has yet to be adequately developed and employed. The following strategies were identified as being central to the improvement and advancement of poverty-proofing:

- increase resources allocated to poverty proofing;
- conduct seminars with key personnel in each department/agency on how to poverty-proof policies and programmes;
- improve staff training and education on the application of the poverty-proofing guidelines;
- establish formal poverty-proofing review mechanisms.

A number of issues have arisen in the implementation of poverty-proofing to date which should be taken into consideration in its further development. These include:

- to consider the levels at which poverty-proofing should take place within and across government departments;
- to consider the introduction of a screening mechanism where certain criteria would be applied as to whether a policy or programme should be proofed or not;
- to ensure that the relevant data is available to undertake comprehensive poverty-proofing;
- to consult with people who are living in poverty and those who represent them to inform the poverty-proofing process;
- to provide adequate human and financial resources;
- to give further attention as to how poverty-proofing should be undertaken;
- to ensure that the process is transparent by making applications of poverty-proofing publicly available;
- to consider the development of a simple integrated proofing system which integrates poverty- and equality-proofing, and possibly rural- and eco-proofing;
- to extend poverty-proofing to the wider public service and state agencies;
- to monitor and assess the implementation of poverty proofing on a regular basis;

- to consider the "pros and cons" of a move to a legislative base.

There are proposals in place for an independent study to review poverty-proofing. It will be important that the review identifies how the poverty-proofing procedures have worked, the extent to which they have made an impact on resource distribution in addressing poverty, and recommendations for their development and extension. The review should also identify how poverty-proofing might be monitored and assessed on a regular basis.

6. The Impact of NAPS

One of the key questions in the assessment of NAPS is the impact it has had on poverty reduction in Ireland. This flags the importance of measuring and understanding poverty trends and the impact of anti-poverty policies. The main focus in assessing the impact of NAPS has been on the outcomes achieved, i.e. changes in the level and nature of poverty. However, the processes by which this is achieved are also important. NAPS sets out the process by which poverty is to be tackled in Ireland. It is therefore important to assess this process to ensure that it is effective and efficient.

Some of the main changes in the level and nature of poverty between 1994 and 1997 are:

- the percentage of the population experiencing consistent poverty (income poverty plus basic deprivation) has fallen from 9–15% to 7–10% of the population;
- the percentage falling below the relative income poverty lines set at 50% and 60% of average household income increased from 21–34% to 22–35%. This reflects increasing income inequalities where average incomes have increased at a greater rate than social welfare incomes;
- the risk of poverty for households headed by an unemployed person remained high even though the overall numbers fell as unemployment fell sharply. The risk of poverty increased for households headed by someone who was ill or disabled and households headed by someone working in the home (mainly women). The proportion of poor households headed by an employee or a retired person increased, while the proportion of poor households headed by farmers fell;
- the risk of poverty increased for single-adult households, for couples with three or more children and for households comprising two or three+ adults without children. Thus by 1997, a couple with four or more children and single-adult households were the groups at highest risk of poverty;

- while the poverty risk for lone parent households about halved between 1994 and 1997, their poverty risk still remained relatively high at 30%, compared to an average risk of 22% for all households;
- the risk of poverty rose for older households (from 10–41% in 1994 to 29–59% in 1997);
- the poverty risk for children fell between 1994 and 1997. Nevertheless, the risk of poverty for children still remained relatively high at 24–38% in 1997;
- the risk of poverty for women has increased.

The main factors which seem to be driving these changes are falling levels of unemployment (reducing the risk of poverty for some groups) and increases in social welfare rates that are less in relative terms than increases in average household income. This increases the risk of poverty for some groups, particularly those dependent on social welfare.

Good research data is essential to provide us with a knowledge base on levels of poverty, its nature, causes and trends over time. To date, the assessment of poverty trends in Ireland has relied mainly on the Living in Ireland survey undertaken by the ESRI. This has shown that *consistent* poverty has fallen while *relative income* poverty has increased slightly. These trends need to be set in the current economic and social context, of rapid economic growth. People's living standards have increased generally across the population, but relative income poverty has increased, for the reasons outlined above. Over the longer term, this may result in an increase in consistent poverty as living standards stabilise and societal expectations catch up and adjust to higher average incomes. Thus, in the shorter term – the environment in which NAPS is operating – the fact that real and relative income poverty levels are diverging needs to be addressed. This could be done through broadening the scope of the global target to encompass distinct elements, such as real income levels, non-monetary deprivation indicators and relative incomes. Alternatively, a relative-income poverty target could be set as well as a consistent poverty target.

Thus, additional work is also required in analysing the nature of poverty, in order to be better able to understand the processes at work in creating and sustaining poverty. Further analysis within the Living in Ireland survey should include:

- undertaking longitudinal analysis to monitor changes over time;
- analysing particular groups at high risk of poverty in more depth;
- conducting comparative research setting poverty levels in Ireland in a European and international context.

Additional Data Sources

While the Living in Ireland survey is an extremely important source of information on poverty and in monitoring poverty trends, it needs to be complemented by additional data sources and analyses to provide a complete picture of poverty trends. These are outlined as follows:

- the need to collect data on people who do not live in private households, such as people who are homeless, many Traveller families, people living in institutions, and refugees and asylum seekers. People not living in private households include those who are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society. The collection and ongoing analysis of data on these groups is difficult, particularly in relation to monitoring their levels of poverty over time. Additional data collection systems should be developed in consultation with the groups affected. This will require a resource commitment to ensure the collection of reliable and useful quality data;
- the allocation of resources within households needs to be further examined in order better to understand the needs of individual members within the household;
- the turnaround time between data collection and production of results needs to be reduced, as far as is practicable. However, it is necessary to retain data quality and confidence in the results;
- local data collection is required to complement national household data;
- the establishment of a national data archive should ensure that data-sets are available to Irish social scientists. This should facilitate more researchers to undertake poverty research;

For the future monitoring of poverty trends, causes and potential solutions it will be important that the data enhancements suggested take place. A resource commitment will be required to enable this to happen. This is essential to ensure the effective application of anti-poverty and social inclusion policies.

Further suggestions for assessing the impact of NAPS are:

- the inclusion in NAPS of a section on "how" the Strategy will be implemented and monitored;
- the development of performance indicators to monitor the impact of the Strategy on poverty levels;
- regular reviews of NAPS and progress reports to document the successes and failures of the Strategy.

7. Departmental Actions

The formulation and implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy in 1997 coincided with a period of public service reform, through the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI). SMI places a particular emphasis on cross-departmental initiatives and has poverty reduction as a key strategic goal.

NAPS requires each department and agency to identify the individual and joint contributions it makes to addressing poverty and to achieving the overall objectives of the strategy. Each department/agency was asked to prepare a baseline document in relation to poverty and social exclusion, looking in a strategic way at their plans in relation to poverty and social inclusion, taking account of their commitments to NAPS, the social inclusion elements of the SMI and Partnership 2000. This document was to be presented to NAPS's IDPC.

Drawing on these baseline documents and work plans, NAPS's IDPC prepared an Annual Report for 1998/99 setting out the main achievements and progress for 1998 in the field of social inclusion. These issues were presented under the five NAPS thematic areas and provide a detailed list of work related to social inclusion which has been undertaken or is ongoing in government departments. While the list of activities is comprehensive, it is not always clear how departmental objectives and actions link to NAPS objectives and to meeting its targets.

In relation to government spending on social inclusion and anti-poverty measures it is estimated that additional spending of some £950 million in full-year terms will have taken place over the 1997–1999 period on social inclusion measures. Furthermore, it is estimated that gross expenditure on social services generally in 1999, at £11.2 billion, will be one quarter higher than in 1996.

Cross-departmental and integrated approaches to tackling poverty and social exclusion have developed since 1998. These include initiatives on: literacy among the unemployed; homelessness; a local office family services pilot project; and an integrated services process.

It is evident from the assessment that in the years since the introduction of NAPS much progress has taken place in terms of the establishment of institutional structures to underpin the strategy and the identification and development of programmes and initiatives which promote social inclusion. In this context, it is worth noting that the whole environment for social inclusion has changed in recent years. Departments which had hitherto not seen it within their respective remits to deal with social issues, are now considering the impact of their policies on people who are poor and socially excluded. There has been a significant cultural shift in departmental thinking during

the lifetime of NAPS. Social inclusion has come much more to the fore in public policy and debate.

However, more remains to be done to ensure that poverty reduction becomes a strategic objective in each government department. A number of departments have not yet adequately assessed the impact of their policies and programmes in relation to poverty. Moreover, many of them have yet to recognise the cross-cutting nature of poverty and to identify the arrangements that would facilitate co-ordination of actions across departments. One of the key issues emerging is the difficulty departments have had in operationalising NAPS objectives, i.e. making them tangible at departmental level, leading to the achievement of NAPS targets. The theory is fine, but the practice has been proven to be difficult. Thus, a key question to be addressed in the further development of NAPS is how the strategy will be implemented, how policies will be proofed and how the implementation of NAPS will be monitored.

In this context it may be worthwhile to consider a pilot in one or two departments implementing approaches which have been found to be successful in other public service administrations, with a view to trying to concretise NAPS objectives.

8. Profile of NAPS

The development of NAPS was well publicised. There was an emphasis on making people aware of NAPS – the general public, groups living in poverty and their representatives, the social partners, government officials and the research/academic community through an extensive consultation exercise and production of documentation. The launch of NAPS was a public event, accompanied by the publication of *Sharing in Progress* – The National Anti-Poverty Strategy statement, a short summary of the statement in a pamphlet and press coverage.

NAPS is committed to informing both the general public and the public service about the extent and nature of poverty in Ireland and about the strategy itself. Government Departments and the Combat Poverty Agency have been identified as the key promoters of this information.

However, analysis of the implementation of NAPS to date shows that awareness of NAPS by the general public is low. In a public attitudes survey only 8% of the public surveyed had heard of NAPS. Awareness is also low among those who might be expected to be more informed, such as social partners, the wider community and voluntary sector and public servants.

While the ultimate aim of NAPS should be to prevent and reduce poverty in Ireland the support of the public is

important for its success. As stated in NAPS Strategy Statement the public needs to continue to be informed about the extent, depth, trends in, and location of poverty in Ireland and of its negative consequences for all of society.

Material has been produced explaining and promoting the Strategy and actions associated with it. Most of the material produced and disseminated has been by the Combat Poverty Agency and some community and voluntary sector groups. Given that NAPS is a government initiative, the production and dissemination of material on NAPS by the government has been disappointingly low, particularly in terms of press coverage.

It is acknowledged that achieving the outcome of eliminating poverty is ultimately more important than the profile of the Strategy itself. Nevertheless, awareness of the work the government is doing in this area is important for garnering public opinion and support. As clearly demonstrated by the analysis of material produced and disseminated, the press cuttings and the questionnaire survey there is a need to raise awareness and improve information on the nature and extent of poverty in Ireland and initiatives being undertaken to tackle it. As NAPS is a major government initiative the government should be central in promoting this message, through using a "NAPS brand" message, if necessary.

Through the Information and Public Education Strategy for the National Anti-Poverty Strategy a framework is in place through which the profiling of NAPS and increased awareness of poverty can be developed. What is required is that actions be put in place implement this strategy.

There is also a need to promote NAPS within the public service. NAPS should be a key element of induction training and should be incorporated as a key training module in its own right, for example on the implementation of poverty proofing. Other mechanisms should be explored for raising awareness of NAPS, including better mechanisms of dissemination of information e.g. through use of electronic systems, seminars, newsletters, staff secondments and so on.

In summary, key issues to be addressed in raising the profile of NAPS in future include:

- to improve civil service knowledge;
- to extend information to local authorities and state agencies;
- to keep the social partners informed;
- to get information to communities doing anti-poverty work; and
- to inform the public, particularly through the media.

9. Conclusions

In conclusion, in national, European and international terms the Irish National Anti-Poverty Strategy is an important and innovative approach to putting poverty and social exclusion at the centre of public policy. Key features include:

- the development of an ambitious national anti-poverty strategy involving extensive consultation;
- the acceptance of an agreed definition of relative poverty which also encompasses social exclusion;
- a shared analysis of the main causes of poverty;
- a cross-departmental initiative which recognises the multi-dimensional nature of poverty;
- targets for poverty reduction;
- structures through which the strategy can be delivered and which place poverty at the centre of public policy;
- the implementation of a system of proofing policies for their impact on poverty.

In recent years Ireland has experienced extraordinary economic growth. This has brought about a very welcome reduction in unemployment, including long-term unemployment which is known to be a key cause of poverty. Consistent poverty has substantially fallen to under 10% of the population in 1997.

It is important to recognise and acknowledge the great strides which have been made in poverty reduction in Ireland in recent years. However, it is also important to recognise that these changes bring with them new issues and challenges, including the increase in income inequality and the emergence of new groups within the population with a high and/or increasing risk of poverty. NAPS needs to be able identify and rise to these new challenges.

The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness sets out a comprehensive work programme for the revision and revitalisation of NAPS. If this programme of work is implemented with energy and imagination, then in the current favourable circumstances, poverty in Ireland can be eliminated.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Following a detailed consultation process, *Sharing in Progress*, the NAPS Strategy Statement, was launched in April 1997. With its adoption of a ten-year target for poverty reduction in Ireland, and identification of five key areas needing particular attention in tackling poverty – income adequacy, unemployment, educational disadvantage, urban concentrations of poverty and rural poverty – NAPS was a watershed in Irish social and economic policy. Furthermore, a number of principles were adopted to underpin the overall strategy, including those of guaranteeing the rights of minorities, focusing on the gender dimensions of poverty, actively involving the community and voluntary sector and fostering self reliance through respecting individual dignity.

A more detailed discussion of the targets and principles underlying NAPS is undertaken in Chapter 4, but this chapter provides an outline of the methodology employed in this assessment, particularly the details of a postal questionnaire survey undertaken for this purpose. The survey's respondents are profiled, and, finally, the structure of the report is outlined.

1. An Initial Assessment of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy

As outlined in the Agency Overview in Part 1, this assessment sets out to chart progress on NAPS to date¹, to assess key achievements, shortcomings and barriers to progress and on this basis draw conclusions on the issues to be addressed in the future implementation of NAPS. Further research, analysis and evaluation will be undertaken following on from key issues raised in this assessment.

This assessment forms part of the Combat Poverty Agency's role in the evaluation of NAPS. Given that NAPS is a ten-year strategy it is to be expected that it will take some time to become embedded and for real results to be delivered. Nevertheless, in the current positive economic climate in Ireland there is a real opportunity to reduce poverty substantially. A recent *Monitoring Poverty Trends* report (Callan *et al*, 1999), which forms part of the overall NAPS evaluation, monitors how consistent poverty has fallen since 1994, the year on which the NAPS analysis of poverty was based. At the same time, however, levels of poverty based on relative income lines have increased, primarily because even though social welfare rates have increased in real terms above inflation they have lagged behind increases in average household disposable income. This

1. For further information to date see the Inter-departmental Policy Committee (1999) *Social Inclusion Strategy – 1998/99, Annual Report of the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

has resulted in a widening gap between those in employment and those who are dependent on social welfare. The most recent data available relates to 1997, the year NAPS was launched, so it is critical that poverty trends are monitored on a regular basis in order to understand changing poverty trends.

While this assessment forms part of the evaluation of NAPS, it will primarily form the basis on which to commission a more substantial evaluation of the strategy. Thus, as well as commenting on progress to date, this assessment attempts to identify the key issues which should be examined as part of a broader and more in-depth evaluation. NAPS is a ten-year strategy. 2002 is the mid-way point. Further evaluation of the Strategy should work towards producing a substantial mid-term report on achievements to 2002.

Commitments in the new partnership agreement *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* should seek to achieve their objectives by end 2002 – the mid-way period for NAPS and the end of the partnership agreement.

The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) also has a role in monitoring NAPS. The NESF was re-constituted in 1998 and is currently considering the nature of its role in relation to the Strategy. Given its representative structure and focus on policy analysis and monitoring, it would seem to have a key role in assessing major social policy initiatives, such as NAPS. Its fourth pillar will have an important contribution to make in this regard.

2. Methodology Employed

This assessment comprises an analysis of data and material available since the introduction of NAPS. It draws on research reports produced by the ESRI, *Monitoring Poverty Trends* in particular, and on the *Social Inclusion Strategy: Annual Report of the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee 1998/99*. It contains an analysis of Dáil Debates on NAPS and press coverage of the Strategy. Records of meetings and other similar documentation are also drawn upon.

The development of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy involved an extensive consultation exercise. In undertaking this assessment it was decided that it would be useful to garner the views of a range of people who had been involved in the development of NAPS through a postal questionnaire survey.

3. The Postal Questionnaire

The questionnaire covered the main areas of NAPS and the context in which it is operating. Questions were general, in order to get a sense of what the main achievements and failings of NAPS have been from a range of key players.

The questionnaire first sought information on the main achievements, weaknesses and gaps in the infrastructure of NAPS. By this is meant the institutional and consultation mechanisms and procedures of the Strategy. These formed an extremely important component of the original development of NAPS and in many ways have been the areas where the main focus on the implementation of the Strategy to date have been concentrated, often referred to as "embedding NAPS". The questionnaire also asked for information on the main achievements, weaknesses and gaps in the content of NAPS. This refers to the thematic areas, principles, targets, objectives, policies and actions of NAPS. Subsequent questions were asked about the profile of the Strategy, its long-term importance and direction and the key issues which should be taken into account in its evaluation. The questionnaire also sought information on changes in the nature and extent of poverty in the current economic climate and asked for suggestions on alternatives to NAPS. The questionnaire is reproduced in full in Appendix 1.

4. Response to the Survey

160 questionnaires were issued to the community and voluntary sector, to the social partners, to the statutory sector, to researchers and academics, to political advisers, to the media and to local government groups. The distribution of the questionnaires issued is shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Distribution of Questionnaires Issued

Sector	Number Issued
Community and Voluntary Sector*	58
Statutory Sector	42
Other Social Partners*	28
Researchers and Academics	18
Political Advisers	9
Media	3
Local Government	2
TOTAL	160

* It is acknowledged that the community and voluntary sector is also a social partner. However, because of its stated important role in NAPS, for the purposes of this exercise it is identified separately.

The community and voluntary sector played a key role in

the development of NAPS in various ways. Community and voluntary groups sent in submissions, attended seminars and participated in thematic working groups. Furthermore, the Combat Poverty Agency has a responsibility to include the views and experience of the community and voluntary sector in the evaluation of NAPS. Therefore, views on the progress of NAPS to date were sought from 58 community and voluntary sector agencies. Questionnaires were issued to community platform groups, Community Development Programme (CDP) Advisory Group members, some church bodies working in the anti-poverty field, some children's groups and some members of thematic working groups who may not have already been included in the previous groupings. In three instances where questionnaires were sent to more than one individual within an organisation, an organisational response was returned. Thus, although 58 questionnaires were issued to the community and voluntary sector, 55 returns were subsequently expected.

NAPS is a centrally driven initiative and much of its implementation to date has involved the establishment of institutional structures, primarily in the statutory sector. Thus, 42 questionnaires were issued to the statutory sector. These included to members of NAPS senior officials group, NAPS Inter-departmental Policy Committee (IDPC), NAPS Unit, NAPS liaison officers, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) and the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF). This meant that in many instances individual government departments received up to three questionnaires – sent to different people, at different levels, with slightly different roles in relation to NAPS. Many departments chose to return departmental responses rather than individual responses, although this was not the case for all departments. For this reason the number of returns expected from the 42 questionnaires issued to the statutory sector was reduced by 16 to 26.

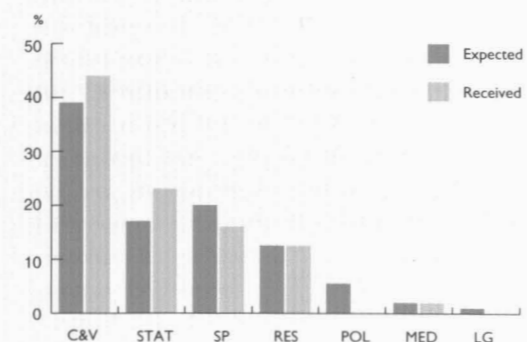
The social partners have a key role in the national partnership process. NAPS formed a key part of the last partnership agreement, *Partnership 2000*, comprising the greater part of Chapter 4 'Action for Greater Social Inclusion', of that agreement. Social inclusion is also a key objective of the new partnership agreement. The third section of the agreement sets out objectives on social inclusion and equality and a list of actions are set out for NAPS and poverty-proofing as well as commitments under the key NAPS themes. While the social partners participated in the development of NAPS to a limited extent, their involvement is seen as important in the implementation and further development of NAPS. 28 questionnaires were distributed to social partners – the employers' representatives, the farming representatives and the trade union representatives. Because of the importance

accorded to education in NAPS, a number of the education trade unions were also issued with a questionnaire. The community and voluntary pillar also received questionnaires, but as noted above, for the purposes of this assessment they have been classified as community and voluntary sector.

In the development of NAPS a seminar was held for researchers and academics. Many researchers and academics work in the field of poverty research and anti-poverty policy analysis. Also, the availability of data, research and policy analysis was critical in the development of NAPS and is essential to monitoring its implementation. All those who attended the researchers' and academics' seminar were issued with the questionnaire – 18 in total. A political commitment to the implementation of NAPS is key to its effectiveness. To garner a political viewpoint on NAPS, questionnaires were issued to nine political advisers. The media play a key role in informing the public about the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and in debating and raising awareness about levels of poverty and initiatives to address poverty and social exclusion. Consequently, three media people were issued with questionnaires. A key aspiration of NAPS has been to extend the strategy to local level and as such, two local government groups received questionnaires.

Overall, while 160 questionnaires were issued, 141 returns were expected, as explained above. 52 completed questionnaires were received. The percentage spread of completed questionnaires received compared to the percentage spread of questionnaires expected across the sectors is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Completed Questionnaires Received compared to Questionnaires Expected (%)



52 completed questionnaires from an expected return of 141 gives a response rate of 37%. While this response rate may seem low it is not all that unusual for a postal survey for which the typical response rate is between 20

and 40 per cent.² What is reassuring, however, is the relatively close correspondence between the percentage of questionnaires issued to a particular sector and the percentage of completed questionnaires received, as illustrated in Figure 1.1. The one notable exception is the political advisers, who as group felt that it was not appropriate for them to complete a written questionnaire. A political viewpoint is thus absent from the questionnaire survey responses.

The actual distribution of completed questionnaires received across the various sectors is shown in Table 1.2. The majority of the questionnaires received were from the community and voluntary sector. However, there was also fairly high representation from the statutory sector. The remainder of the questionnaire responses comprised the social partners, researchers and academics and one response from the media.

Table 1.2 Number of Completed Questionnaire Responses Across Sectors with Response Rate

Sector	Completed Questionnaires	Response Rate
Community & Voluntary Sector	23	42%
Statutory Sector	12	46%
Social Partners	9	32%
Researchers & Academics	7	39%
Media	1	33%
Political Advisers	0	0
Local Government Groups	0	0
TOTAL	52	37%

In addition to the 52 completed questionnaires received, a further 30 respondents contacted the Agency to explain why they had not completed the questionnaire. Table 1.3 shows a variety of reasons for non-response. This information provides an interesting reflection on the implementation of NAPS to date.

Table 1.3 Reasons for Non-Responses

Not enough information	13
Not appropriate	11
Irrelevant	4
Staff changes	2
TOTAL	30

13 non-respondents (Seven community and voluntary sector, one social partner, two researchers/academics and three statutory sector) felt that they did not have enough information to complete the questionnaire. This indicates a detachment from NAPS and a lack of

2. See Nachmias & Nachmias (1992) *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* 4th Edition; London; Edward Arnold, p.217.

information in relation to its implementation. In two instances (one in the community and voluntary sector and one among the social partners) there had been staff changes since the developmental stage of NAPS and the current post holders were not sufficiently familiar with NAPS to respond. In four cases (one social partner, one researcher/academic and two statutory sector) NAPS, and thus the questionnaire, was felt to be irrelevant to the non-respondent's work. All of the political advisers (nine) and two civil servants felt that it was not appropriate to respond to the written questionnaire. There was no response from 57 persons to whom the questionnaire was sent.

The questionnaire responses provide extremely valuable insights into the implementation of NAPS to date and how it is seen as a tool to tackle poverty and social exclusion in Ireland. The remainder of this report will draw heavily on the responses to the questionnaire in its assessment of the implementation of NAPS. In the main the questionnaire responses are integrated into the main text of the report. However, a summary of the key findings is provided in Appendix 2.

In relation to the responses it is worth noting the following:

- the views expressed were, in the main, consistent across sectors. In particular, the statutory and the community and voluntary sectors tended to identify similar issues, e.g. the need for more consultation and greater involvement of the community and voluntary sector in NAPS, and the need to enhance the profile of NAPS;
- overall, the responses of the statutory sector tended to be general while the responses of the community and voluntary sector tended to relate to specific issues. This reflects the concerns of their work.

5. Structure of the Assessment Report

Chapter 2 sets out the economic and social context in which the Irish National Anti-Poverty Strategy is operating. It examines the Irish economic and social context and then sets NAPS in a UN framework. A third section places NAPS in the context of European developments on poverty and social exclusion.

Chapter 3 provides an analysis of the institutional mechanisms which have been put in place to deliver NAPS. The analysis draws on the postal questionnaire survey responses and an analysis of Dáil debates.

Chapter 4 provides an assessment of progress on NAPS targets and principles, while **Chapter 5** considers the development and implementation of poverty-proofing.

Chapter 6 assesses the impact of NAPS to date, looking in particular at poverty trends in Ireland. **Chapter 7** sets the implementation of NAPS within the context of public service reform and how this has impacted on the role of government departments in relation to NAPS. **Chapter 8** examines the profile of NAPS among the general public and within the public service. It utilises an analysis of press coverage as well as drawing on the questionnaire survey responses and other survey material. **Chapter 9** briefly sets out some future issues and draws together the conclusions of the report.

Each chapter, by and large, follows a similar format. Firstly, the commitments from the original NAPS document *Sharing in Progress* are set out. Secondly, progress to date is documented, drawing on the IDPC's Annual Report and other available material. Thirdly, on the basis of the questionnaire survey results and other analyses, critiques and documentation, this progress is assessed. Finally, each chapter ends with a set of conclusions.

Chapter 2: Economic and Social Context

This chapter sets out the economic and social context in which the Irish National Anti-Poverty Strategy is operating. The first section examines the Irish economic and social context, drawing on published statistics and views from the postal survey. The second section sets NAPS in a UN context, the initial stimulus for the development of the Strategy. The third places NAPS in the context of European developments on poverty and social exclusion.

1. Irish Economic and Social Context

In assessing NAPS it is important to set its implementation in the current economic and social context. Since 1997, when NAPS was first introduced, Ireland has experienced unprecedented economic growth. In fact, the country has sustained such high levels of economic growth that it is no longer ranked as one of the poorer EU members. Key features of current Irish economic growth include the creation of new jobs, many of which are high-skill, high-wage and are being filled by young educated people; growth rates amongst the highest in the world; until recently, low inflation; and a real growth in incomes. Such a prolonged period of economic success is unprecedented in Ireland. Furthermore, forecasts suggest that there is no reason why this growth should come to an abrupt end, although it is expected to slow down.

The Irish economy has enjoyed six successive years in which real GNP growth has been at least 6%, and Government debt has fallen from 95% of GDP to under 50% (Baker et al, 1999). Employment has increased by 335,000 between 1994 and 1999 to a level of more than 1.5 million (NESC, November 1999: 3). In the period from April 1997 to late 1999 the unemployment rate dropped from 10.3% to 5.1% while the rate of long-term unemployment has decreased from 5.6% to 2.1% over the same period (CSO, *Quarterly National Household Survey*, March 2000). Inflation has remained low since 1997 (under 2.5%), until recently, when it increased to 4.3% (CSO, *Consumer Price Index Release*, February 2000).

What are the implications of this economic growth for poverty reduction in Ireland? Firstly, there has been a considerable fall in unemployment, and particularly long-term unemployment, which is known to be a key cause

of poverty. Secondly, consistent poverty has substantially fallen to under 10% of the population in 1997. Reductions in unemployment and poverty which might only have seemed aspirational in the early to mid 1990s have now been achieved. At the beginning of the 21st century we find ourselves in a much better economic situation than we were in even when NAPS was launched in 1997. So the context in which NAPS is operating has changed and it is important that this changing context is taken into account in the development and implementation of anti-poverty policies and programmes.

It is important to recognise and acknowledge the great strides which have been made in poverty reduction in Ireland in recent years, but to also recognise that these changes are also bringing with them new issues and challenges.

What are these issues and challenges?

1.1 The Nature of Poverty is Changing

It is noteworthy that over three-quarters of the respondents to the postal survey believe that the current economic growth in Ireland is changing the nature and experience of poverty. However, fewer than ten per cent of them believe that it is having a positive effect. Although increased employment and a corresponding decrease in poverty is noted, the respondents' experience is largely one of increased income disparities and a greater sense of social exclusion for those living on low incomes. As one respondent commented:

"Current growth is obviously having a positive impact in that it is taking some people out of poverty, but it is also compounding the exclusion and stigmatisation of those still living in poverty There is a sense that ... if a person is poor nowadays, it must be their own fault."

Income inequality is increasing as the gap widens between those in work and those not in work. Average weekly household income rose substantially, from £128.94 in 1994 to £156.96 in 1997. *Monitoring Poverty Trends* (1999) indicates that 7%–10% of the population are living in consistent poverty (based on

1997 data) and 22%–35% fall below the 50%–60% relative income poverty lines. While consistent poverty (based on income and access to basic necessities) is falling, relative income poverty (based on income only) is increasing. Social welfare rates have risen by 10–12% since 1994, which is less than the increase in household incomes, estimated at 22%. This has contributed to an increase in the numbers experiencing income poverty.

The increase in relative income poverty may have broader implications over the longer term. The challenge for NAPS, in the current, benign macro environment, is to tackle both the remaining consistently poor and to address this broader maldistribution of income. Respondents to the postal survey noted the widening gap between rich and poor and the increased feelings of exclusion, alienation and isolation for people living on low incomes.

The changing nature of poverty may have other implications which require attention. In the early to mid 1990s, reducing unemployment was the most important policy focus, and this is reflected in NAPS. But tackling the overall rate of unemployment is no longer such a critical issue. Other emerging issues are:

- while many unemployed people have found work, there remains a group of very long-term unemployed people who have not yet been able to avail of the increased employment opportunities;
- the risk of poverty for older people, particularly older women has increased;
- while still relatively small, there is an increasing risk of poverty for low-paid employees;
- large families and children in particular continue to have a high risk of poverty;
- people with disabilities continue to have a high risk of poverty;
- vulnerable groups such as Travellers, people who are homeless and refugees and asylum seekers have a very high risk of poverty.

It has also been found that cumulative disadvantage – the existence of a combination of disadvantages such as childhood poverty, lack of educational qualifications and experience of unemployment – creates a situation of poverty and exclusion more extreme than that produced by any one disadvantage on its own (Nolan and Whelan, 1999). A key issue is the extent to which recent economic and social development has left behind a group of households that experience such cumulative or multiple disadvantage and exclusion from the rest of society in a way that has not happened previously.

Respondents felt that in the current economic climate

poverty experienced by marginalised groups had become hidden and many poor people were “invisible”. The increased cost of housing, the lack of accessible and affordable childcare, and the lack of availability and access to primary health services were felt to be particular features of the current economic and social environment for people who are poor.

1.2 Resources Are Now Available to Eliminate Poverty

In the current economic environment there is now the opportunity largely to eliminate poverty in Ireland. Respondents thought that there should be a greater commitment to redistributing resources to ensure that they reach the people in greatest need. The issue of lack of resources to implement NAPS was raised in the questionnaires and was one of the most commonly identified weaknesses of the strategy.

Respondents suggested a number of things that could be done to address poverty during the economic growth in Ireland. These included:

- further investment in education to tackle educational disadvantage;
- a greater focus on addressing income inequalities;
- investment in social infrastructure.

However, there is a need to caution against too much targetting as people living in poverty benefit from a more general investment in public services.

2. UN Context

It was at the UN World Summit in Copenhagen in March 1995 that the Irish Government endorsed a programme of action aimed at not only eliminating absolute poverty in the developing world but also at reducing overall poverty and inequalities everywhere. Arising from this commitment, the Government approved the development of a National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Following on from this commitment the Irish Government has been required to submit progress reports to the UN. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has observed that Ireland has made good progress on meeting its commitments and noted with satisfaction the adoption of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy for 1997–2007 and related mechanisms such as the poverty proofing of policy proposals.

However, the UN Committee is concerned that NAPS does not adopt a human rights framework. The Committee is also concerned about the persistence of poverty among disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, in

particular people with disabilities, the Travelling community, older women, lone parents and children. Indeed, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has a particular concern about the high levels of child poverty in Ireland.

Amongst its suggestions and recommendations, the Committee proposed the inclusion of “justiciable”¹ economic, social and cultural rights into the proposed amendment to the Constitution. In particular it urged the expansion of the scope of NAPS, including the poverty-proofing of policy proposals and the integration of a human rights approach into NAPS. The Committee also urged more data on the problem of poverty and urged the Government “to take all remedial measures in order to combat the problem of poverty in Ireland.” (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1999, p 4)

While progress has been made on some of these issues there is an identifiable need to redistribute resources towards the elimination of poverty in Ireland. There is also a need to incorporate a stronger rights dimension into NAPS.

The UN produces an annual Human Development Report which includes a poverty measure, called the Human Poverty Index (HPI). In 1999, Ireland was ranked 16th among the 17 industrialised countries for which the index was calculated. Sweden was the best performer on this index and the United States the worst (UNDP, 1999). The index contains four measures:

- (i) the percentage of people not expected to live to 60 (10% in Ireland);
- (ii) the adult functional illiteracy rate (more than 20% in Ireland)²;
- (iii) the percentage of people below a relative income poverty line, set at half median disposable income (11% for Ireland)³; and
- (iv) the long-term unemployment rate (7.1% for Ireland).

1. Justiciable rights are rights subject to jurisdiction, that is the administration of justice.
2. A special issue of the Economic and Social Review (July 1999) on education contains a paper by Denny, Harmon, McMahon and Redmond, *Literacy and Education in Ireland*. This paper explores Ireland's poor ranking in the OECD's international literacy study. The authors find that the scores in the literacy test are significantly related to years of schooling, and that the low scores recorded in the Irish case are a product of the fact that those in older age groups have less formal education than is the case in other countries. The fact that the expansion in Irish education is more recent than in most other western European economies is relevant. The authors go on to show that a given educational credential in Ireland is associated with a higher literacy score than in Britain or Northern Ireland, for example and thus the Irish education system could be judged to be more productive in this sense.
3. The EU use poverty lines derived as proportions of median incomes, rather than mean or average incomes. The median is not affected by outliers, particularly at the top end of the income distribution in the same way. Thus because income distributions are skewed, the median invariably lies below the mean.
4. Eurostat, Statistics in Focus, 1/2000 Social Inclusion in EU Member States. The figures relate to the second wave of the European Community Household Panel and refer to the income situation in 1994 in 13 Member States (EU except Sweden and Finland). Applied to the 15 Member States, the 18% rate would represent more than 65 million people.

Nolan (1998) has noted that the picture presented for Ireland is less favourable than it would be if a wider range of countries and more recent data had been used. Nevertheless, he suggests that Ireland would still fall in the bottom half, which makes a strong case for a greater concerted effort fully to implement NAPS.

The UN General Assembly will meet in Geneva in June 2000 to assess progress on the commitments made in 1995 – referred to as Copenhagen +5. This presents an opportunity for Ireland to further strengthen NAPS, involving consideration of a greater focus on rights.

3. European Context

Ireland is part of Europe, a prosperous continent whose economy generates considerable wealth and creates jobs (Communication from the Commission, 2000: 5). Yet, according to current Eurostat data, some 18% of the EU population live on less than 60% of national median incomes, the EU's low-income threshold of relative poverty. This represents more than 65 million people⁴. According to the Commission:

“The ever-accelerating changes which reshape our economies and societies are likely to exacerbate vulnerability and to increase the risk of social exclusion, affecting in particular those who have not acquired the skills necessary to succeed in the innovation and knowledge activities as well as those who are for various reasons not participating in the labour market.”

(Communication from the Commission, 2000: 5).

With the introduction of Article 137 of the Amsterdam Treaty there is now a much stronger basis for the European Union to give an increased focus to poverty and social exclusion. Article 137 states that:

“The Council ... may adopt measures ... designed to encourage co-operation between Member States through initiatives aimed at improving knowledge, developing exchanges of information and best practices, promoting innovative approaches and evaluating experiences in order to combat social exclusion.”

The European Social Affairs Commissioner, Anna Diamantopoulou, has stated that:

“With 18% of the EU living below the poverty line, a Europe of social inclusion is imperative for reasons of social justice but also because exclusion brings heavy costs to society. Good social policy is good economic policy. European governments can learn from each other and co-ordinate their approaches – they should develop common objectives, agreed indicators and exchange best practice. The European Council should regularly review Europe’s progress and effectiveness in tackling exclusion.”

(European Union Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs: IP/00/215, 1 March 2000).

She and the Commission are asking Heads of Government to agree to the following targets:

- to reduce those living below the 60% poverty line from 18% today to 15% by 2005 and 10% by 2010
- to reduce child poverty throughout Europe by 50% by 2010.

The Commission notes that combating social exclusion has not only become an increasing priority for Member States but also a goal which they attempt to tackle increasingly through strategic measures and actions (*Communication from the Commission, 2000: 5*). In this instance they cite the example of Ireland’s NAPS, noting that this is based on a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty and social exclusion.

Ireland has interacted in a very positive way with European social policy developments and has made many important contributions. The Irish Presidency in 1996 was significant in this regard. More recently the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Dermot Ahern, T.D. made an important intervention at

the Informal Council of Labour and Social Affairs Ministers (Lisbon, February 2000). There he noted that Ireland:

“...supports the establishment of common objectives for social inclusion policies. But we also need to ensure that progress towards achieving these objectives can be measured by developing indicators of progress. In short, we need to make our social policy goals visible.”

These developments provide an important opportunity for Ireland to advocate that the EU should:

- promote policy exchange and learning for policy makers, the social partners and all those involved in anti-poverty action;
- put in place better data and reporting on trends in poverty and social exclusion;
- regularly monitor and report on approaches that have been developed in each member state;
- introduce a system of social impact assessments for EU policies;
- promote the development of minimum standards in key areas of anti-poverty policy;
- strengthen fundamental rights; and
- increase support for the role of non-governmental organisations.

The provisions in Article 137 are supported by Article 13 of the Treaty which allows for suitable EU measures to preclude discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

There is a growing emphasis by the European Union on addressing issues of social exclusion through enhancing human and social rights. This was a key feature of the EU Summit in Cologne in June 1999. At the instigation of the German Presidency it was agreed to start work on consolidating fundamental rights applicable at European level in a charter of rights. Similarly there have been demands made by the platform of European Social NGOs for the inclusion of a Bill of fundamental rights, including social rights, in the next revision of European treaties.

It is also worth noting here that the Combat Poverty Agency, NAPS Unit and the National Anti-Poverty Networks, along with transnational partners in Northern Ireland, Finland, the Netherlands and Portugal are currently undertaking an EU funded initiative on the development of guidelines for the involvement of

excluded persons and the organisations which represent them in the development, implementation and evaluation of social inclusion and anti-poverty strategies.

4. Conclusion

The changing economic and social context is altering the nature of poverty in Ireland. Recent years have seen massive reductions in unemployment and a substantial decline in consistent poverty. However, income inequalities are increasing and some groups continue to have a high risk of poverty. This changing context needs to be understood and the implications of it addressed through appropriate social policies. The resources are now available largely to eliminate poverty. It is important that this opportunity is taken.

The UN provided the stimulus for the initial development of NAPS. Copenhagen +5 in June 2000 will provide an opportunity to build on and develop the original NAPS. A key feature here should be the inclusion of a stronger rights focus in the Strategy.

Europe is playing an increasingly significant role of tackling poverty and social exclusion. Ireland can take this opportunity to contribute to, and learn from, European experience.

Chapter 3: Institutional Mechanisms

This chapter sets out the institutional structures as they were proposed in the NAPS Strategy Statement. Section 2 describes the structures that were actually established to implement NAPS. Section 3 provides an assessment of the institutional mechanisms, drawing on the postal questionnaire survey responses and an analysis of Dáil debates. The fourth section draws some conclusions on NAPS institutional mechanisms and makes some suggestions for the future.

1. The Institutional Mechanisms Proposed by NAPS

The institutional mechanisms proposed by NAPS were informed by two research reports¹ and a consultative seminar. As stated in NAPS Strategy Statement:

“The need for strong institutional structures to underpin the development of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy was identified early on in the formulation of the strategy. ... Following deliberations the following structures are now being put in place. These arrangements will be put in place for three years after which time their effectiveness will be reviewed. Adjustments will be made and new mechanisms introduced as proves necessary to strengthen the impact of the strategy.”

(National Anti-Poverty Strategy Statement, 1997:20).

Structures were envisaged at a number of levels: the political and the administrative level, the monitoring and evaluation levels, for including the views of the community and voluntary sector, and at local and regional level.

1.1 Cabinet Sub-Committee

At the **political level** it was envisaged that a cabinet sub-committee to deal with the issues of poverty and social exclusion would be established. This committee would be chaired by the Taoiseach and include all ministers whose

brief included policy areas relevant to tackling poverty, including the Minister for Finance. The Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs was to have day-to-day political oversight of the strategy and his role included updating the Oireachtas on developments within NAPS. Individual ministers would have responsibility for the development of areas under their remit.

1.2 NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee

At the administrative level the NAPS Inter-departmental Policy Committee was to remain in place, jointly chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. Members would comprise senior civil servants who were to be responsible for ensuring that NAPS provisions relevant to their departments were implemented. The original NAPS IDPC was instrumental in the development of NAPS. It was originally established in response to the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. Its remit, at that time, included the preparation of a statement which set out the nature and extent of poverty in Ireland, the selection of key themes and policy areas for action, and the recommendation of appropriate institutional mechanisms to underpin a National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

1.3 SMI Team

It was envisaged that an SMI² team would be established and would be located in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. This team would be complemented at central level by the then existing support structure³ in the Department of the Taoiseach. The SMI team was to be provided with core staffing, but would also include representatives from other relevant departments. The team would be augmented, as necessary, with appropriate external expertise. It would liaise with and complement the role of the Combat Poverty Agency.

1.4 National Economic and Social Forum

In relation to monitoring and evaluation, the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF), who already had responsibility for monitoring the social inclusion element of Partnership 2000, was to be asked to specifically report on the progress of implementing the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

1. Stutt C. in association with Murtagh, B. (1996) *National Anti-Poverty Strategy: Report on Institutional Mechanisms*, Dublin: Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs; Harvey, B. (1996) *A Commitment to Change? Implementing the National Anti-Poverty Strategy*, Galway: Community Workers Co-operative; Inter-Departmental Policy Committee (1995) *Consultation Paper on Institutional Mechanisms to Support the National Anti-Poverty Strategy*, Dublin: Department of An Taoiseach.
2. SMI relates to the Strategic Management Initiative, which is a major programme for change in the Irish Civil Service.
3. There was a support structure in place in the Department of the Taoiseach at this time, to assist in the development of the strategy.

1.5 Combat Poverty Agency

The Combat Poverty Agency was to oversee an evaluation of NAPS process, which would include consideration of the views and experience of the community and voluntary sector. The Agency was to present the results of the evaluation to the Inter-departmental Committee.

The Agency was also to provide information and education material and to support, in an advisory capacity, individual government departments and local and regional structures in the development of anti-poverty strategies.

1.6 Involvement of the Community and Voluntary Sector

The NAPS Strategy Statement noted the importance of "consultation with and the involvement of the voluntary and community sector, users of services and those with first-hand knowledge of poverty" (1997: 21) in the development of NAPS. The Strategy emphasised that for the success of NAPS it was essential for this "partnership between all the relevant actors in the process" to continue and develop. It was suggested that when appropriate or necessary, the community/voluntary sector and social partners would, as in the preparation of the strategy, be invited to participate in working groups to look at particular issues during the course of the strategy.

It was also envisaged that the community/voluntary sector and the social partners would have an ongoing role in the context of the arrangements for monitoring *Partnership 2000*. To facilitate this a commitment was made to continue Government funding for the National Anti-Poverty Networks. Seminars with the voluntary and community sector and other key actors would be organised in the future at key intervals to allow for an informal consultation process.

1.7 Local and Regional Level

At local and regional level it was envisaged that social inclusiveness and equality of opportunity would be fostered through a renewed system of local government. In particular, Community and Enterprise Groups would be responsible for developing plans, including local area action plans which would focus on social exclusion, which may involve the development of local anti-poverty strategies.

2. The Institutional Mechanisms Established

The first two years of NAPS saw the putting in place of a number of institutional mechanisms to implement NAPS, as envisaged in NAPS Strategy Statement, illustrated in Figure 3.1. The structures established include the following:

- a Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion chaired by the Taoiseach;

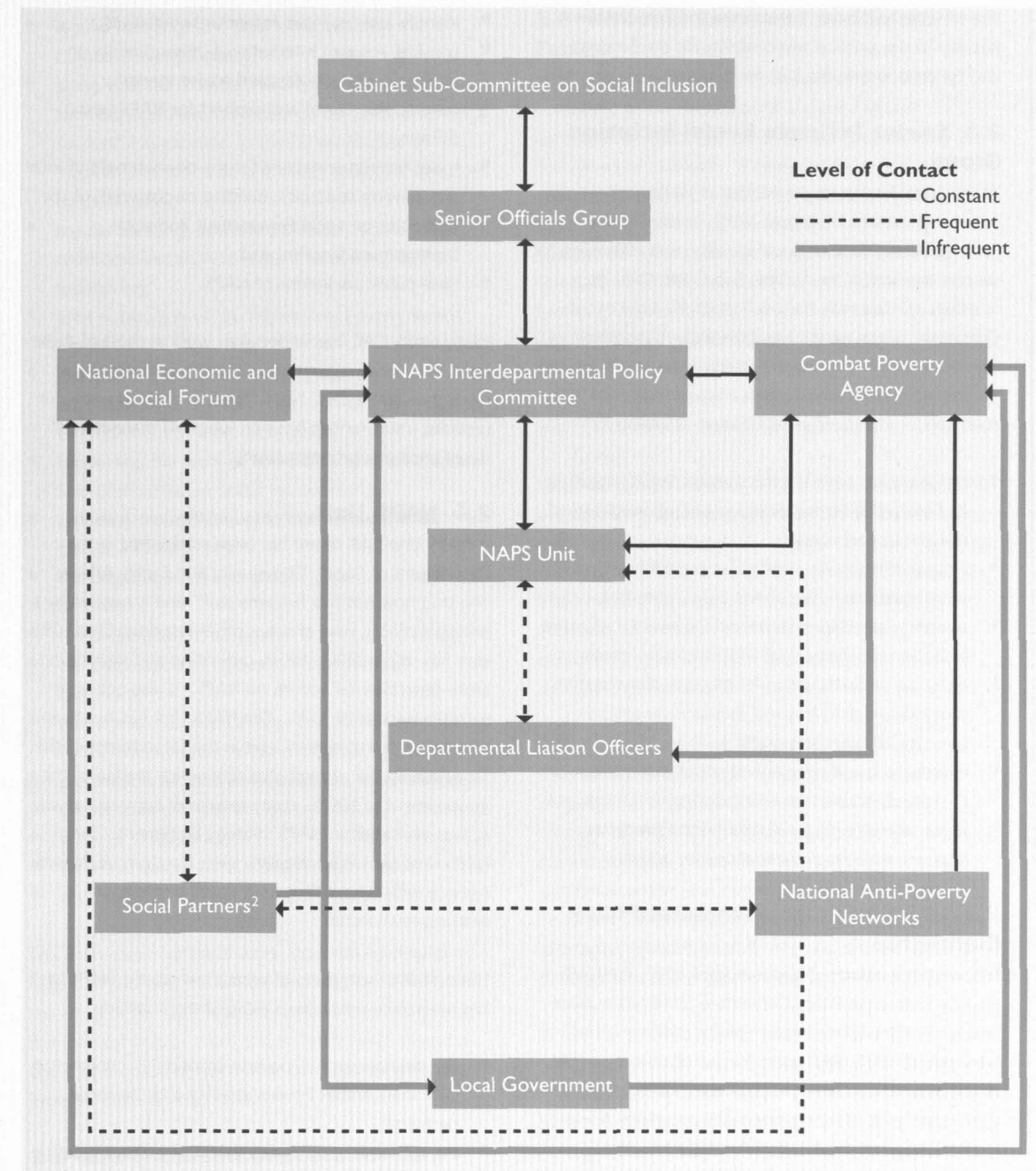
- a Senior Officials Committee to advise the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion;
- an Inter-Departmental Policy Committee (IDPC);
- a NAPS Unit;
- NAPS Liaison Officers;
- the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) has responsibility for monitoring the social inclusion element of *Partnership 2000*;
- the Combat Poverty Agency has a role in monitoring and evaluating NAPS;
- the National Anti-Poverty Networks have continued to be funded, and the community and voluntary sector has been involved in monitoring *Partnership 2000*;
- Preliminary work is in progress on the development of local anti-poverty strategies.

It is notable that two months after the launch of the NAPS Strategy there was a change of government. The Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrat Government has taken NAPS on board and consolidated various structures for its implementation. The remainder of this section will provide more detail on the structures which have been established to implement NAPS.

2.1 Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion

At the political level a Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion was established in July 1997. The Committee includes all Ministers and Ministers of State with a remit in these areas, including the Minister for Finance, and is chaired by the Taoiseach. Its purpose is to give political direction to issues and decisions on social exclusion. The Cabinet Sub-Committee generally meets on a monthly basis, and met on nine occasions in 1999. The composition of the Cabinet Sub-Committee is as follows:

- Taoiseach (Chair);
- Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment;
- Minister for Finance;
- Minister for Health and Children;
- Minister for the Environment and Local Government;
- Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs;
- Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform;
- Minister for Education and Science;
- Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation;
- Attorney General;
- Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (with special responsibility for children);
- Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture and Food (with special responsibility for Rural Development);
- Minister of State at the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation (with special responsibility for Local Development).



Notes:

1. These are indicative relationships which do and/or should exist.

2. Social partners include the National Anti-Poverty Networks, but because of their central role in NAPS, the National Anti-Poverty Networks are identified separately in this diagram.

The Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs has day-to-day political responsibility for the Strategy, and for reporting to the Dáil on its progress.

2.2 Senior Officials Social Inclusion Group

At the administrative level a number of structures have been established to implement NAPS. In late 1998, a Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion was established to support the work of the Cabinet Sub-Committee. Its meetings coincide with the meetings of the Cabinet Sub-Committee, which means that it generally meets about once a month. Its membership mainly includes civil servants at Assistant Secretary level whose areas of responsibility cover various aspects of social inclusion. Its role is to:

- provide a link between the Cabinet Sub-Committee and the policy formulation and operational levels of relevant Departments;
- arrange the agenda and finalise papers for consideration by the Cabinet Sub-Committee;
- provide leadership at senior official level for effective strategic management of social inclusion issues;
- act as an umbrella group for all cross-departmental structures relating to social inclusion, to ensure cohesion of approach; and
- maintain a broad overview of social inclusion issues in order to ensure that emerging topics are brought to the attention of the Cabinet Sub-Committee together with recommendations for action.

2.3 NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee

Following the launch of NAPS in April 1997, the NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee remained in place to oversee the implementation of the Strategy. The members of NAPS IDPC comprise senior officials, mainly at principal officer level, designated as having responsibility for ensuring that NAPS provisions relevant to their Departments are implemented. FÁS, Area Development Ltd., and the Combat Poverty Agency are also represented on the Committee. NAPS IDPC met 11 times between the launch of the Strategy in April 1997 and December 1999. Membership of the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee is included in Appendix 3. Its specific role is to:

- monitor the implementation of policies and programmes under NAPS. This will be done through preparation of an annual report and quarterly progress reviews on the achievement of targets;
- assess workplans of Departments for the coming year;
- identify evaluation mechanisms for NAPS;
- review and advise on broad issues related to poverty and social inclusion;

- identify and promote anti-poverty initiatives;
- consider relevant international developments on social inclusion policies and advise thereon;
- develop the role of and support for NAPS liaison officers;
- make recommendations for the development of local anti-poverty strategies, building on the work of the Task Force on Local Government and Local Development Systems; and
- raise public awareness of NAPS.

While NAPS IDPC has undertaken work in most of these areas, the above constitutes a more comprehensive remit than NAPS IDPC has fulfilled to date. However, it provides a substantive basis on which to manage and direct implementation of NAPS.

2.4 NAPS Unit

A NAPS Unit (SMI team) has been established in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. The Unit now has five full-time staff⁴ and is headed by a principal officer, who also has other responsibilities. The Unit has responsibility for co-ordinating and developing cross-departmental actions on NAPS. It also acts as a secretariat to NAPS IDPC. The NAPS Unit has not been complemented at central level in the Department of the Taoiseach by the support structure which existed in the development of NAPS, in any regular or substantive way, as was envisaged in NAPS Strategy Statement. The NAPS Unit has liaised regularly with the Combat Poverty Agency, with whom they have developed a good working relationship.

Some of the main areas of work in which the NAPS Unit has been involved since its establishment include:

- the development of poverty-proofing (in conjunction with the Combat Poverty Agency and the social partners);
- the subsequent proposed review of poverty-proofing
- liaising with Departments on a regular basis, particularly NAPS Liaison Officers;
- the organisation of initial training on NAPS for liaison officers (along with the Combat Poverty Agency);
- the development of pro-formas for departmental baseline documents and annual workplans;
- the collation of these documents and workplans;
- the preparation of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs baseline document;
- the preparation of NAPS's Annual Report and Ireland's National Report for the UN, on behalf of NAPS IDPC;
- liaising with the community and voluntary sector, including meetings with the National Anti-Poverty Networks;

- regular meetings and joint initiatives with the Combat Poverty Agency;
- along with the Combat Poverty Agency and the National Anti-Poverty Networks, the preparation of a successful application to the EU on Models of Involvement, based on a research project undertaken by the Agency;
- regular meetings with the ESRI with regard to the collection and analysis of data to assist in NAPS monitoring;
- joint publication of the Monitoring Poverty Trends report;
- along with the Combat Poverty Agency, the development of a public education strategy and the establishment of a profiling group;
- supporting the work of NAPS IDPC and the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion;
- providing representatives to inter-departmental groups and initiatives;
- the preparation of background papers and briefings on NAPS;
- the preparation of Ministerial Briefings and notes;
- the preparation of replies to Parliamentary Questions;
- preparation for, and participation in, National Partnership negotiations and monitoring;
- preparation for, and participation in, international events related to the EU, UN and Council of Europe;
- drafting of speeches;
- presentations to various officials and groups;
- responses to Freedom of Information requests.

This is an extensive list of work, undertaken despite a high staff turnover. Given the importance of NAPS and the limits of the staff resources available to NAPS Unit, it is important that its work is specifically NAPS-oriented and that it does not get drawn into support work at a broader, departmental level.

2.5 NAPS Liaison Officers

It was envisaged in NAPS's Strategy Statement that NAPS Unit staffing would include on a full-time or part-time basis representatives from other relevant departments, augmented as necessary with external expertise. This has not happened. However, liaison officers have been appointed in departments whose remit includes anti-poverty work. For details, see Appendix 4.

NAPS liaison officers fill a communication and co-ordination role in their respective departments in relation to NAPS. There are no formal links between them and the Unit but, the Unit is in regular contact with the majority of liaison officers in relation to NAPS issues.

2.6 National Economic and Social Forum

NESF was established by the Government in 1993 to contribute to the formation of a wider national consensus on economic and social policy, particularly to combat social exclusion. It produced 16 reports and eight opinions up until the end of 1997. In January 1996 it produced an opinion on the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (National Economic and Social Forum, 1996). The Forum was reconstituted in 1998 and the new Forum had its inaugural meeting in November 1998. Under its new mandate, it has a particular role to play in evaluating the effectiveness of policies which are being implemented within the framework of social partnership agreements and of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Since the launch of NAPS in April 1997 the old NESF has been winding down and the new Forum has been putting its new structures in place and discussing its role. The new NESF produced its first opinion in September 1999 on local development issues. It has not yet produced anything on NAPS, although it is currently considering what specific work programme it may undertake in this respect.

2.7 The Combat Poverty Agency

The Combat Poverty Agency has had an important ongoing role in relation to NAPS. The Agency is a member of NAPS IDPC. A key objective in the Agency's current Strategic Plan is to ensure that NAPS makes significant progress in reducing and preventing poverty. Since NAPS was launched the Agency has allocated a substantial amount of staff time and resources to the development and implementation of NAPS work.

In relation to its evaluation role, with the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, it commissioned and published a report from the ESRI using the Living in Ireland survey to monitor poverty trends (See *Monitoring Poverty Trends*, 1999). A further report to update this data and analyse further issues has now been commissioned. The Agency has also undertaken and published assessments of the 1998 and 1999 annual budgets in terms of their contribution to the implementation of NAPS. Other relevant research reports produced since 1997 include: *Women and Poverty, Where are Poor Households?, Local Partnerships for Social Inclusion, Loading the Dice: Analysing Cumulative Disadvantage, Public Perceptions of Poverty, Social Housing in Ireland, Housing Income Support in the Private Rented Sector and Educational Disadvantage and Early School Leaving*. All Agency policy submissions since the launch of NAPS have been framed on the basis of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. Key among these are the Agency's annual

4. The NAPS Unit had four staff up to the end of 1999. They have now been allocated an additional post.

pre-budget submissions and its submissions on the national agreements.

The Agency has developed an evaluation framework which has been endorsed by NAPS IDPC and this initial assessment has now been produced, drawing on the views of key players involved in the development and implementation of NAPS.

The Agency has a remit to include consideration of the views and experience of the community and voluntary sector. The Agency provides core funding and has an ongoing relationship with the seven National Anti-Poverty Networks: the Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed (INOUE); the Community Workers' Co-operative (CWC); the Irish Rural Link (IRL); the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN); the Forum of People with Disabilities (Forum); the Irish Travellers Movement (ITM) and the One-Parent Exchange Network (OPEN). The Agency has regular meetings with the National Anti-Poverty Networks. At these meetings NAPS is often a key item on the agenda.

The Agency liaises with the broader community and voluntary sector in a number of ways. These include:

- its grant scheme;
- its involvement in the development of the White Paper on relations between the community and voluntary sector and the state;
- advising the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs on its Community Development Programme;
- influencing government policy and practice on dialogue with, and inclusion of, the community and voluntary sector in policy making, with particular regard to NAPS;
- developing programmes on influencing policy;
- its drugs policy programme;
- supporting representation of the community and voluntary sector on key national fora;
- its local government work;
- through the Peace and Reconciliation Programme;
- through the Demonstration Programme on Educational Disadvantage;
- through its work on tackling child poverty.

To help inform the development of constructive relationships with the community and voluntary sector in the implementation of NAPS, research was commissioned by the Agency to explore models of good practice drawing from international and European experience.⁵ Several useful lessons for anti-poverty

strategies can be drawn from the international experience.⁶ These are:

- a clear distinction needs to be made at the opening of any consultation between: (i) broad open dialogue with NGOs in general, (ii) building conditions for consultations with NGOs on specific issues, and (iii) undertaking more restricted negotiation;
- differences in treatment of large charitable bodies, foundations and associations, on the one hand, and smaller voluntary and community groups on the other, should be made transparent to all parties in the consultation process;
- confidence-building measures for the voluntary and community sector are useful. This is often related to weak resourcing of the voluntary sector's investment in explaining policy changes to its members or affiliates.

This research report resulted in a successful application to the EU to undertake a project to develop guidelines for the involvement of excluded persons and the organisations which represent them in the development, implementation and evaluation of social inclusion and anti-poverty strategies, as mentioned in Chapter 2 of this report. This is a transnational project involving partners from Finland, Northern Ireland, the Netherlands and Portugal. At a national level the project is led by the Combat Poverty Agency, in partnership with NAPS Unit and the National Anti-Poverty Networks.

The Agency was also to provide information and education material. Material on NAPS for public education and awareness purposes has been published regularly by the Agency, indeed it has been one of the main sources of public information on NAPS and NAPS critiques. For further details on this element of the Agency's work, see Chapter 8. The Agency has also contributed to the initial training of liaison officers, organised by NAPS Unit.

2.8 The Community and Voluntary Sector

The voluntary and community sector had a key role to play in the development of NAPS. It was envisaged that this role, for the community and voluntary sector, and other key actors such as the social partners and users of services, would continue and develop. Since the launch of NAPS the involvement of the community and voluntary sector in the implementation of the Strategy has been limited. The National Anti-Poverty Networks have had meetings with the NAPS Unit, but these have mainly taken the form of information exchange rather

than consultation or joint initiatives. Some groups have had the opportunity to meet with NAPS IDPC on particular initiatives, but these opportunities have been limited to a few occasions. Members of the community and voluntary sector, and the social partners have been involved in the development of poverty proofing through *Partnership 2000*. In addition, community and voluntary sector representatives have contributed to two NAPS-led cross-departmental initiatives on Literacy for the Long-Term Unemployed and Homelessness. Further details on these initiatives are contained in Chapter 7.

Over the last two years the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs has been preparing a White Paper on the community and voluntary sector and its relationship with the State. A Green Paper, *Supporting Voluntary Activity* was published in 1997, followed by a consultation process. A Steering Group, including representatives from the community and voluntary sector, was set up to advise on the preparation of a White Paper on the basis of the consultations. The White Paper is currently in preparation.⁷ It is envisaged that the White Paper will outline principles and good practice models in relation to consultation between the community and voluntary sector and the state. It is also hoped that the White Paper will contribute to improved consultation mechanisms in the context of NAPS.

In the context of the White Paper, and of NAPS, it is important to recognise the range and diversity of community and voluntary sector players who have an important contribution to make. A number of umbrella bodies and networks have a central role to play in the overall development of the voluntary and community sector. They can provide support, training, information and other developmental services for their affiliated organisations as well as a policy formation and liaison role. These umbrella bodies include: the National Anti-Poverty Networks (see section 2.7) and the Community Platform.

The Community Platform represents a wide range of national community and voluntary organisations with an anti-poverty focus which have come together as a result of their need for representation and a negotiating voice in discussions on the national agreements. The Community Platform is one of eight groups involved in the Community Pillar, which itself has been involved in negotiating the last two national agreements. Another recent development is the emergence of the "Wheel". This is a movement for groups and individuals who wish to explore ways and means in which the community and voluntary sector might come together in a more cohesive and meaningful way. It is not a voice for the sector but aims to act as a catalyst behind many voices within the sector.

In undertaking consultation on NAPS issues it will be important to recognise the range of players involved and their status, and to use different mechanisms for different consultations. In other words, the focus should be on how to organise consultations and involvement more effectively within the range of existing structures. This is particularly pertinent in relation to engaging the community and voluntary sector in the process of setting NAPS targets and the review and evaluation of NAPS.

2.9 Local and Regional Government

Reform of local government has been ongoing for a number of years. One aspect of this reform is that local authorities are to have an enhanced role in strategic economic and social planning and thereby promoting greater co-ordination in the delivery of public services in their areas. Key in this development will be the County/City Development Boards (CDBs) who will bring together local government, local development, the state agencies active at local level, and the social partners, including the community and voluntary sector.

The Boards will have two main functions:

- (i) to increase co-operation between members, including enhanced information flow;
- (ii) to work on an agreed county/city strategy on economic, social and cultural development which is to be in place by 2002.

The CDBs will be supported by new Directors of Community and Enterprise who have recently been appointed in the 34 county/city councils (NESF, 1999).

In 1998, a system of policy-focused Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) replaced the traditional local authority committee structure. They are made up of elected councillors and other representatives from the social partners and sectoral interests. A Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems, which was set up in June 1998 reported in August 1998. This Task Force report has been adopted as government policy. The Task Force is now overseeing the implementation of the integration of local government and local development and has issued a guidance document entitled *Preparing the Ground: Guidelines for the Progress from Strategy Groups to County/City Development Boards* (Department of Environment and Local Government, 1999).

Guidelines for preparing city/county development strategies have been agreed by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. The Guidelines highlight the importance of including an anti-poverty dimension in the strategies.

7. The new partnership agreement *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* states that "A White Paper on Relations between the Community and Voluntary Sector and the State will be published in April 2000".

5. Ralaheen Ltd and Community Technical Aid (1998); *Models of Consultation and Ongoing Participation between the Statutory Sector and the Community and Voluntary Sector to Inform the Implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS)*. Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency.

6. See Conroy P (1999) "International Models for Tackling Poverty" in *Poverty Today April/May 1999*, No. 43, Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency.

The Combat Poverty Agency, in collaboration with the Department of the Environment and Local Government and the NAPS Unit, is currently undertaking a number of initiatives to develop models of anti-poverty work within a reformed system of local government. The Community Workers' Co-operative has also undertaken work to strengthen the poverty focus within local authorities, with funding from the EU.

3. Assessment of the Effectiveness of Institutional Mechanisms

3.1 Postal Questionnaire Survey Responses

In assessing the effectiveness of the institutional mechanisms which have been put in place since the launch of NAPS, it is useful to draw initially on the findings of the postal questionnaire survey.

The three most commonly identified achievements in the implementation of NAPS infrastructure were:

- poverty-proofing;
- target setting;
- establishment of institutional structures, such as the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion, NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee and NAPS Unit.

Also noted as achievements in NAPS infrastructure were:

- an inter-agency/inter-departmental approach to poverty;
- improved coherence of policy-making;
- national focus on addressing poverty;
- increased awareness of poverty;
- improved cohesion, co-ordination and consultation around poverty issues.

One respondent identified the main achievement in the implementation of NAPS simply as:

“the engagement of departments in a co-ordinated strategy.”

Another respondent elaborated:

“ ... the partnership element is very important in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. ... consultation with and the involvement of the community and voluntary sector, users of services, and those with first hand experience of

poverty has been a central feature of the development of the Strategy. ... [I] believe that it is essential that if NAPS is to be successful, this partnership between all the relevant key actors in the process continues and develops. It is of great benefit to the Strategy in general that, when appropriate, the community/voluntary sector and social partners will, in the preparation of the Strategy, be invited to participate in working groups to look at particular issues arising during the course of the strategy.”

Others noted achievements in relation to institutional structures as:

“Official recognition of poverty at a national political level and at a departmental level.”

“A means by which anti-poverty measures can, at least theoretically, be co-ordinated across a variety of departments.”

However, a number of key weaknesses and gaps in NAPS infrastructure related to institutional mechanisms. These included:

- insufficient involvement of key individuals, organisations and sectors;
- inadequate structures;
- inadequate resourcing of NAPS Unit and anti-poverty work in general;
- weak political backing;
- staff turnover, in NAPS Unit in particular;
- inadequate public awareness raising and education;
- lack of ongoing evaluation.

A number of perspectives were put forward on the lack of involvement of key individuals, organisations and sectors. These included:

“Lack of direct contact with people who are poor, inadequate approach to working with people who are poor. People who are poor need to be part of the solution.”

“ ... should perhaps be a greater level of direct contact between individual government departments and social

partners regarding the implementation of NAPS policies and actions. This is particularly relevant to departments having a lesser role in NAPS activities than other core departments.”

Another weakness noted and commented upon was the inadequacy of some of the structures. This related particularly to the centralisation of the NAPS process and is reflected in the following quotes:

“... overly dependent on Government Departments to drive the Strategy forward. At times, this results in an insular and narrow focus that isn't representative of the real needs of real people.”

“More power in relation to NAPS should be developed down to the local areas through the community and voluntary sectors. As far as NAPS is concerned I feel too much power is concentrated at central government and central government created structures.”

These, and the other issues identified here, will be further discussed in the remainder of this section.

3.2 Analysis of Dáil Debates on NAPS

As noted in Chapter 1, political responses are absent from the questionnaire survey. However, the political dimension is important in the implementation of NAPS, from both a leadership point of view and the fact that NAPS withstood a change of government. To provide some political assessment, an analysis was undertaken of the Dáil debates to ascertain the content of Dáil discussions on NAPS and whether these were raised/promoted by the Government or the Opposition. These debates, which were assessed for the period September 1997 to October 1999, are summarised in Table 3.1.

The Dáil debates provide a proxy for an analysis of the role of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion, as discussions in this Committee are bound by the normal rules on Cabinet confidentiality. Analysis of the Dáil debates also provides an assessment of the degree of political attention which has been given to NAPS.

Table 3.1 Summary of Dáil Debates on NAPS

Date Reported	Issue	Raised by
30 September 1997 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 877-8]	New Government's commitment to NAPS	Opposition
15 October 1997 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 923-930]	Progress of Cabinet Sub-Committee on Drugs, Social Exclusion and Local Development	Opposition
15 October 1997 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1038-9]	Progress on NAPS	Government
26 November 1997 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1000]	Progress of NAPS	Opposition
16 December 1997 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 189-208]	Progress of Cabinet Sub Committee on Social Exclusion – focus on drugs and number of meetings	Opposition
4 February 1998 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1234]	Child poverty	Opposition
4 February 1998 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1240-1]	Promotion of NAPS	Opposition
5 February 1998 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1285-1337; 1362-1373]	Educational disadvantage	Opposition
17 February 1998 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 381-4]	Increasing wealth inequality	Opposition
24 February 1998 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1253-1291; 1325-55]	Social Welfare Bill 1998, poverty-proofing and NAPS	Government + Opposition
25 February 1998 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1298-1304]	Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Exclusion	Opposition
25 March 1998 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1063-1109]	Social Welfare Bill and Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Exclusion	Government
23 April 1998 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 98]	Consultation with the community and voluntary sector (Green Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity), poverty research	Government
28 April 1998 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 127-132]	Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Exclusion, NAPS baseline documents and poverty-proofing	Government + Opposition
28 April 1998 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 287-9]	Progress of NAPS	Government + Opposition
29 April 1998 [Seanad Éireann, Debates, 362-415]	Bill for Urban Renewal and NAPS	Opposition
7 October 1997 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1380-2]	Progress on NAPS, NAPS cross-departmental issues – homelessness and literacy among the unemployed, NAPS targets and poverty-proofing the Budget	Government + Opposition
21 October 1998 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1608]	Drugs	Government
4 November 1998 [Seanad Éireann, Debates, 1408-11]	Young people's Facilities and Services Fund	Government
17 November 1998 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1272-1301]	Educational disadvantage, increased income inequality	Opposition
17 November 1998 [Seanad Éireann, Debates, 157-192]	Rural poverty	Opposition

25 November 1998 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 556-589]	Poverty-Proofing	Opposition
1 December 1998 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 556-589]	Income inequality	Opposition
2 December 1998 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1277-9]	Budget '99 and NAPS targets	Government + Opposition
2 February 1999 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 8769]	NAPS targets and poverty-proofing	Opposition
2 February 1999 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1005-6]	Child poverty	Government + Opposition
10 February 1999 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 431]	Progress of Cabinet Sub Committee on Social Inclusion	Opposition
23 February 1999 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1085]	Progress on NAPS targets	Government
24 March 1999 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 927-950; 981-1001]	New NAPS targets and NAPS Annual Report, Poverty-proofing	Government + Opposition
21 April 1999 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 939-41]	Inter-departmental Committees listed, including NAPS IDPC	Opposition
5 May 1999 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 293-4]	Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion and Drugs	Opposition
19 May 1999 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 61-2]	Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion	Government
26 May 1999 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 901]	Poverty-proofing	Government + Opposition
26 May 1999 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 803-3]	NAPS Annual Report	Opposition
2 June 1999 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1499-1501]	Progress on NAPS, NAPS targets and poverty proofing	Opposition
2 July 1999 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1069-1116]	Achievement of social inclusion	Government
29 September 1999 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 140]	Progress of Committee on Social Inclusion and NAPS in particular	Opposition
6 October 1999 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 1276]	Poverty-proofing, NAPS targets and child poverty	Opposition
12 October 1999 [Dáil Éireann, Debates, 4]	Progress on social inclusion	Government

The main Dáil discussions on NAPS have been in relation to the progress of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion. One of the main concerns of the Opposition has been the number of meetings this Committee has had. Initially it met fairly infrequently, "meeting only once in six months was a window-dressing exercise and was a new level of neglect of this area of social exclusion and menace from drugs" (Emmet Stagg, TD, Labour Party, 16 December 1997). In the last year, however, it has met more frequently, on an almost monthly basis. For example, on 5 May 1999 the Taoiseach told the Dáil that "the Sub-Committee has met on 28 January, 22 February and 22 April" and that the next meeting was scheduled for 20 May. The Committee met nine times in 1998 and nine times in 1999.

An interesting aspect of the Cabinet Sub-Committee is the range of names by which it has been called. It has variously been referred to as, "The Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Exclusion", the "Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Exclusion and Drugs (including local development)" but more recently and consistently, "The Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion", which is its official title.

In relation to the content of the Cabinet Sub-Committee's discussions it was noted on several occasions that these were confidential. For instance, the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs told Trevor Sargeant, TD, that "the deputy must understand that matters pertaining to the Cabinet Sub-Committee itself are confidential" (16 December 1997). Nevertheless, it is clear from the Dáil debates that much of the discussion has centred on drugs work, the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund and NAPS progress. Initially the main concern was in relation to progress in implementing NAPS, but more recently the focus has been on poverty proofing, meeting NAPS targets and raising the profile of NAPS.

In late 1997 the Taoiseach re-affirmed his commitment to NAPS under questioning from John Bruton, TD, Fine Gael. In 1998 the Taoiseach commented that, "The national anti-poverty strategy is a concerted effort to co-ordinate the tackling of the problems and there is relevant action in all Departments, particularly in relation to education, poverty and disadvantage" (17 February 1998). However, Proinsias de Rossa, TD, (Labour) in relation to responses he received on questions about the progress of NAPS stated, "If the Government is not serious about NAPS ... then it should stop saying it is committed to it and drop it. It should not pretend to be doing something it is not" (24 February 1998). On 2 July 1999 the Minister for

Finance stated that "the achievement of social inclusion is one of the Government's highest priorities, alongside a strong economic performance".

The Government emphasised its commitment to poverty-proofing. The Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs told the Dáil that the Government had approved poverty-proofing and that the provision had now been written into the new Government procedures handbook. On being questioned about his Department's role in this regard the Minister for Finance stated that his department was fully involved in the strategy (NAPS), supported poverty proofing and NAPS would be taken into consideration in the forthcoming Budget (30 September 1998). However, the 1999 Budget was attacked by the opposition for not doing enough to tackle social exclusion. Derek McDowell, TD, (Labour) asked, "how could one describe this budget as one for social inclusion when the majority of those on social welfare were relatively worse off as a result? Did deputies think that the Minister had even looked at NAPS?" (2 December 1998).

Progress on NAPS targets was also a topic for debate. In spring 1999 Jim O'Keefe, TD, (Fine Gael) said that he was hugely disappointed by the delay of the Government in making progress in NAPS introduced by the previous Government. In mid year Dermot Ahern, TD, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, told the Dáil that the main poverty targets set in 1997 had already been met and that the Government had now set even more ambitious social inclusion targets – "we will cut consistent poverty in half over the next five years" (2 July 1999).

Other issues discussed, which were on occasion given a NAPS tag, were child poverty, educational disadvantage and rural poverty. Rural poverty was a recurring theme in Dáil debates in 1998 and 1999. On child poverty Róisín Shortall, TD (Labour) asked the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs to outline his approach to child poverty. The Minister reported that children had been identified as one of a number of groups at particular risk and as such would be given attention. He mentioned Child Benefit, Family Income Supplement (FIS) and employment, for example, as areas of action which impact positively on child poverty. On a previous occasion he had stated that "child poverty is perhaps the greatest single justification for a national anti-poverty strategy, NAPS." (4 February 1998).

In late 1998 the Dáil debated educational disadvantage following a motion from Richard Bruton,

TD, (Fine Gael) who said that despite the emphasis of NAPS on educational disadvantage, the Minister for Education had not arranged to gather any systematic information about many of the issues on which the Department set specific targets. Previously, Dr Pat Upton, TD, (R.I.P. Labour) had enquired of the Minister of Education if his Department would establish a social exclusion unit. Such a unit has now been established in the Department of Education and Science and procedures are being put in place to gather information on educational progress on a regular basis.

Reference was also made to the role of the community and voluntary sector, but this was mainly in relation to progress on the White Paper on the relationship between the community and voluntary sector and the State.

In summary, NAPS has been discussed fairly regularly in the Dáil. While the debate has often been driven by the opposition enquiring about progress on NAPS, the Government has also referred to NAPS on a regular basis. This has been the case more recently with the introduction of poverty-proofing and the revision of the targets. Often, reference to NAPS is subsumed into debates on the Cabinet Sub-Committee or social inclusion issues more generally. The opposition have been critical in relation to evidence on the implementation of NAPS, particularly with regard to the annual Budgets. This analysis would indicate that the Government needs to be more proactive in this regard.

3.3 Effectiveness of NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee

Over the last two years NAPS IDPC has continued to play a key role in the development and implementation of NAPS. Its role has been altered by the establishment of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion and the Senior Officials Group. The senior groups have provided a route for IDPC proposals to be considered by the Government and they have facilitated cross-departmental working in the spirit of SMI. However, there is now less clarity about decision making in relation to NAPS. The IDPC has a more managerial role in relation to the implementation of NAPS.

The postal questionnaire survey evidence recognises that NAPS is under-resourced. For the future implementation of NAPS it will be important that NAPS IDPC members are adequately resourced to

ensure that they can fully participate in the work of NAPS and that anti-poverty work receives a high priority within their departments. It is worth noting here that in the postal questionnaire survey a number of respondents expressed the view that NAPS often takes a back seat to other issues. To address this issue some respondents advocated the appointment of people who are explicitly charged with working on NAPS and can ensure that it remains to the forefront of the Government's agenda.

As noted in section 2.3, NAPS IDPC has taken on comprehensive terms of reference. While it has undertaken most of these tasks, its involvement in some areas has been limited. To be more effective and to carve out its own particular niche in implementing NAPS, the following suggestions are made with a view to enhancing its effectiveness:

- raising the status of the Committee, e.g. by the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs attending some meetings of the Committee and ensuring attendance by senior officials from all relevant departments;
- the development of a clear annual work plan, time-tabled with areas of responsibility clearly outlined;
- meeting more than four times a year;
- initiating strategic work areas for NAPS;
- engaging in consultative work, eg. visiting local projects, regularly meeting community and voluntary sector representatives and other social partners;
- contributing to the development of strategies at local level;
- continuing to engage in cross-departmental working on key identified poverty initiatives. Clearer reporting relationships between cross-departmental groups and NAPS IDPC could usefully be established;
- developing and resourcing a public education and media relations function and publishing documents on a regular basis;
- ensuring that NAPS IDPC members and liaison officers are adequately resourced and supported to fulfil their roles;
- considering extending the membership of the Committee to include the social partners.

3.4 Effectiveness of NAPS Unit

In relation to the establishment of the NAPS Unit there was initially some debate about whether it should be located in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs or the Department of the Taoiseach. While the various rationales for its optimal location are documented elsewhere⁸, many of the respondents to the

8. See for instance, Stutt C. in association with Murtagh, B (1996) *National Anti-Poverty Strategy: Report on Institutional Mechanisms*; Dublin: Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs; Harvey, B (1996) *A Commitment to Change? Implementing the National Anti-Poverty Strategy*; Galway: Community Workers Co-operative; Inter-Departmental Policy Committee (1995) *Consultation Paper on Institutional*

postal questionnaire felt that, regardless of its location, the key features of such a unit should be that it is adequately resourced and supported and has the authority to fulfil its strategic and cross-departmental functions.

Key achievements of the NAPS Unit to date include the development and introduction of poverty proofing, which was undertaken in association with the Combat Poverty Agency and social partners. The Unit has also been instrumental in facilitating the development of departmental baseline documents, the annual work plans, the training of liaison officers, production of the first Annual Report and Ireland's National Report on the Implementation of the Outcome of the UN World Summit for Social Development. The Unit also services NAPS IDPC.

However, the work of the Unit has been thwarted by limited staff resources, a limited budget and frequent staff changes. These limitations were commented upon by many of the respondents to the questionnaire survey. For comparative purposes, an assessment is made between NAPS Unit and the Family Affairs Unit, which was established in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, upon publication of the Report of the Commission on the Family in 1998.

The Family Affairs Unit is headed by a Principal Officer and has nine dedicated staff members (two at Assistant Principal level, one at Administrative Officer level, two Higher Executive Officers, three Executive Officers, and one Clerical Officer). In comparison, the NAPS Unit is headed by a Principal Officer and now has five dedicated staff members (one at Assistant Principal Officer level, two at Administrative Officer level, one at Executive Officer level and one at Clerical Officer level). The Family Affairs Unit also has a dedicated research budget and has initiated a programme of research into family issues. While acknowledging the importance of the work there is an imbalance in the resourcing of the two Units. NAPS is a major government initiative reporting to a Cabinet Sub-Committee. The NAPS Unit was set up as an SMI team with a proposed strong cross-departmental component, liaising with all the main Government

departments on poverty issues. Given its current staffing levels, the breadth of its remit and the importance of its work, it is clearly under-resourced.

In the original NAPS Strategy Statement reference was made to the ability of the NAPS Unit (SMI team) to draw on representatives from other Government departments and augment it as necessary with external expertise. This has not happened, but would clearly strengthen the resources and expertise available to the Unit.

A high staff turnover has also been a problem for the Unit. Since its establishment, there have been two Principal Officers, three Assistant Principal Officers, three Administrative Officers, one Executive Officer and two Clerical Officers, all in a two-year period. It is acknowledged that it is a feature of the Civil Service that staff do not stay in the one area for a lengthy period of time. The reasons for staff movement in the NAPS Unit include promotion and transfer, and to some extent this is unavoidable. However, the implications of such a high staff turnover rate are a loss of expertise and knowledge, gaps between appointments and the time taken for new members of staff to become familiar with the work. High staff turnover can also impact negatively on the perception of the work of the Unit and on staff morale.

In summary, the NAPS Unit has a key role to play in the implementation of NAPS. However, to date it has been under-resourced to fulfil this role adequately. Opportunities to reinforce its staffing resources should be sought, for example, by seconding staff from other Departments and seconding external expertise, as necessary. An enhanced budget allocation for research and consultancy purposes⁹ would add to the resources available to NAPS Unit. This would enable it to provide materials and support to departments on the implementation of NAPS.

3.5 Effectiveness of Liaison Officers

The role of the liaison officer is to co-ordinate anti-poverty issues within departments and they act as a first point of contact in relation to NAPS issues within departments. The NAPS Unit, in conjunction with the

Combat Poverty Agency, provided an initial training programme for liaison officers in mid 1998. This training programme was aimed at increasing liaison officers' understanding of NAPS and, within the context of the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI), enhancing their ability to co-ordinate implementation of NAPS both in and between Departments. The training programme ran over three days with inputs from people working in the field of anti-poverty work and SMI.

NAPS liaison officers made an input into the postal questionnaire survey. This was enlightening in itself. Some of them were unclear about their role and many felt that they were not well enough informed about NAPS to complete the questionnaire. There has been a high turnover rate of NAPS liaison officers within departments, see Appendix 4. Many of the current NAPS liaison officers missed the initial training, and feedback to the NAPS Unit suggests that many of them feel isolated within their departments and unclear of their role. Some departments seem to give the liaison officers very little support and they take on this role over and above their other duties.

Evidence from other research suggests that liaison officers need to have dedicated time and resources to fulfil liaison duties, a clear remit in relation to what is expected of them and be at a senior enough level to be able to influence the work of their departments, in this case in relation to anti-poverty policy (Stutt, C. et al, 1996 and Harvey, B., 1996). The NAPS IDPC, whose remit includes support for NAPS liaison officers, needs to take on this issue.

3.6 The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) and NAPS

The NESF has been given a role in monitoring NAPS. The responses from the postal questionnaire survey indicated that there was a need to conduct periodic reviews of NAPS. In addition, there was a strong indication from the survey that there was a need to put in place structures to ensure that the community and voluntary sector had an input in the implementation and ongoing monitoring of NAPS. The NESF was formally re-constituted in 1998 and is currently considering its role in relation to NAPS. Given its representative structure and focus on policy analysis and monitoring it would seem to have a key role in assessing major social policy initiatives such as NAPS.

3.7 Effectiveness of the Combat Poverty Agency

The Combat Poverty Agency has been given a role to

oversee an evaluation of the NAPS process, which would consider the views and experiences of the community and voluntary sector. The Agency was also to provide information and education material and support government departments and local government in developing anti-poverty strategies. Details on what the Agency has done in this regard are documented in section 2.7.

Some responses to the questionnaire survey indicated that there was a lack of ongoing evaluation, and that there has been a failure to engage with the community and voluntary sector in the implementation and evaluation of NAPS. It was also suggested by some of the survey respondents that there was a need for "a fully independent authority/body" to review the targets, ensure that they are systematically evaluated and to comment on progress made within NAPS.

However, it is acknowledged that the Agency has provided much background research material on the extent and nature of poverty in Ireland, with a particular focus on NAPS. It has endeavoured to influence government policy in favour of those living in poverty through policy submissions. It has poverty-audited the annual budgets since the introduction of NAPS, and has provided much of the information which is publicly available on NAPS. It is currently developing a programme of work with local authorities with a view to implementing anti-poverty strategies at a local level.

The Agency has worked closely with the NAPS Unit to implement a programme of work to promote and implement NAPS.

3.8 Effectiveness of Structures for Involvement of the Community and Voluntary Sector

The involvement of the community and voluntary sector and people living in poverty was a key element in the development of NAPS. However, since the launch of the Strategy there has been relatively little involvement of the community and voluntary sector or people living in poverty in the delivery of the strategy.

A key finding from the questionnaire survey, articulated by respondents across all sectors, was the lack of involvement of the community and voluntary sector and people living in poverty in the implementation of NAPS. It was seen as a very centralised "top-down" strategy. The lack of involvement of the social partners was also noted.

A key challenge in the future implementation of NAPS

Mechanisms to Support the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. Dublin: Department of An Taoiseach; Inter-Departmental Policy Committee (1995) Summary of Submissions on the NAPS to the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee Dublin: Department of An Taoiseach; EAPN Ireland (1999) Irish National Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion – An NGO Perspective on the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS). (Unpublished).

9. It is acknowledged that the Combat Poverty Agency, which is funded by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs has a budget allocation for poverty research. Funding is also provided by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs to the ESRI for a substantial poverty research programme. The NAPS Unit possesses a consultancy budget to assist in carrying out particular pieces of work as they arise. Nevertheless, additional resources would provide the Unit with the opportunity to complement this work in a proactive way, as the need arises.

is to ensure greater involvement in the process. There are a number of ways this might be achieved, some of which have been suggested in the questionnaire survey:

- through NESF. NESF has a representative structure including representatives from the community and voluntary sector. The NESF Assembly,¹⁰ in particular, could play an important role in the ongoing implementation of NAPS. NESF, as a whole, has a particular role to play in evaluating the effectiveness of policies which are being implemented within the framework of social partnership agreements and of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. To date it has played an important role by commenting regularly on social policy issues. It could usefully arrange meetings with NAPS IDPC;
- greater use of theme working groups involving the community and voluntary sector and state officials;
- representation on an Evaluation Advisory Group, to be established by the Combat Poverty Agency;
- the White Paper on the relationship between the community and voluntary sector and the state should provide opportunities for the establishment of structures or processes by which the community and voluntary sector may become more involved in the implementation of NAPS;
- regular contact with NAPS Unit;
- more involvement of the social partners in particular initiatives, as was the case in the development of poverty-proofing;
- through placing greater emphasis on user participation needs;
- through devolution of anti-poverty strategies to local level and ensuring that local people are involved in the design and delivery of anti-poverty programmes at local level.¹¹ This could take place through the County Development Boards;
- through the state liaising directly with the National Anti-Poverty Networks, the Community Pillar, the Community Platform and the broader community and voluntary sector on anti-poverty issues;
- in addition to liaising with the community and voluntary sector, the state sector should also talk to and listen to people who are experiencing poverty directly.

3.9 Effectiveness of the Development of Anti-Poverty Strategies at Local and Regional Level

While plans are in progress for the development of anti-poverty strategies at local level, as discussed in

section 2.9, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of these. Nevertheless, it is useful to note that respondents to the questionnaire survey identified the need to decentralise the Strategy to local level, and that local government structures needed to ensure that people living in poverty were integrated into the process of developing local anti-poverty strategies. It is useful to note, however, that the importance of anti-poverty strategies has been recognised in the guidelines for preparing county development plans.

4. Conclusions on Institutional Mechanisms

This chapter has assessed the effectiveness of the institutional structures in the implementation of NAPS, with reference to the initial proposals as set out in NAPS Strategy Statement. The importance of appropriate structures for its delivery has been recognised as a key component of NAPS. Over the initial two years much progress has been made in this area, as NAPS becomes embedded into the political and administrative systems. The effectiveness of the structures in delivering on the objectives of the Strategy, particularly through cross-departmental working is assessed in Chapter 7 of this report.

Nevertheless:

- the institutional structures envisaged in NAPS Strategy Statement have been put in place;
- a Cabinet Sub-Committee has taken on a key role in promoting social inclusion policies;
- references to NAPS have increased in the Dáil;
- NAPS IDPC has continued to progress NAPS, but now needs to take on an enhanced role;
- the NAPS Unit has progressed a substantial body of work, but needs to be strengthened;
- the Combat Poverty Agency has progressed the Strategy through their work;
- poverty proofing has been introduced (see Chapter 5).

This assessment has shown that there is a need for a concerted effort by all involved to ensure that the mechanisms put in place to implement NAPS can deliver on NAPS commitments in a consistent way. There is a need for continued, explicit recognition of anti-poverty policy as a key policy area within the political and administrative systems. The actions which are undertaken by these systems should provide evidence that this is the case.

In addition, there are a number of other actions which would help to strengthen the institutional mechanisms

to implement NAPS. These include:

- an enhanced role for NAPS IDPC;
- additional resources and supports for NAPS Unit and liaison officers;
- the establishment of appropriate consultative and participatory structures for the involvement of the community and voluntary sector, people living in poverty and the social partners in the planning, implementation and evaluation of NAPS;
- acceleration of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy to local government and state agencies.

4.1 The IDPC

4.1.1 Introduction

4.1.2 The IDPC

4.1.3 The IDPC

4.1.4 The IDPC

4.1.5 The IDPC

4.1.6 The IDPC

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4.1.33 The IDPC

4.1.34 The IDPC

4.1.35 The IDPC

4.1.36 The IDPC

10. The constituency which elects the three NESF disadvantaged representatives.

11. The pilot integrated services initiative may provide a model for this.

Chapter 4: NAPS Targets and Principles

Chapter 4 provides an assessment of progress to date on NAPS targets and principles. In section 1 the original NAPS targets are set out for reference. Section 2 describes progress towards achieving the targets and discusses some of the issues arising. Section 3 uses the questionnaire survey and other written commentaries to assess the extent of NAPS achieving its targets. Section 4 presents conclusions and proposes areas for further action.

1. The Original NAPS Targets and Principles

One of the most important and novel features of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy is that it sets specific targets for poverty reduction. Indeed Ireland is the first European Union member state to adopt such a global poverty target. NAPS contains six targets – a global target and a target for each of the five themes.

The original NAPS targets are as follows:

1.1 Global Target

Over the period 1997–2007, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy will aim at considerably reducing the numbers of those who are “consistently poor” from 9%–15% to less than 5%–10%, as measured by the ESRI.

1.2 Unemployment

To reduce the rate of unemployment, as measured on an internationally standardised basis (ILO) by the Labour Force Survey, from 11.9% in April, 1996 to 6% by 2007; and to reduce the rate of long-term unemployment from 7%–3.5%, with a particular focus on reducing the number of very long-term unemployed who are especially at risk of being consistently poor.

1.3 Educational Disadvantage

To eliminate the problem of early school leaving before the junior certificate, to and reduce early school leaving such that the percentage of those completing the senior cycle will increase to at least 90% by the year 2000 and 98% by the year 2007. Furthermore, having regard to the assessment of their intrinsic abilities, that there are no students with serious literacy and numeracy problems in early primary education within the next five years.

1.4 Income Adequacy

Policy actions in relation to income adequacy will be targeted at contributing to the overall reduction in the percentage of the population whom the ERSI has identified as being consistently poor from 9–15 % to less than 5–10% over the period 1997 to 2007. All

social welfare payments will be increased to the minimum of the lower range recommended by the Commission on Social Welfare.

1.5 Disadvantaged Urban Areas

To reduce the numbers suffering the greatest deprivation in disadvantaged urban areas by increasing their standard of living and providing opportunities for participation, thus reducing the measured indicators of disadvantage in the area, especially the rate of unemployment and particularly long-term unemployment by 2007.

1.6 Rural Poverty

To ensure that strategies are developed for the provision of services in rural areas, especially those concerned with educational disadvantage, unemployment and income adequacy, so that the overall targets of NAPS are achieved in rural areas.

1.7 NAPS Principles

In developing NAPS a number of principles were adopted which underpin the overall strategy. These principles are:

- ensuring equal access and encouraging participation for all;
- guaranteeing the rights of minorities, especially through anti-discrimination measures;
- the reduction of inequalities and in particular, addressing the gender dimensions of poverty;
- the development of the partnership approach building on national and local partnership approaches;
- actively involving the community and voluntary sector;
- encouraging self reliance through respecting individual dignity and promoting empowerment;
- engaging in appropriate consultative processes, especially with users of services.

The NAPS Strategy Statement stated that these principles would be applied, in a Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) context, by departments and agencies in implementing the measures set out in NAPS.

2. Progress on the Targets and Principles

The 1998/99 Annual Report of the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee on NAPS and Ireland's National Report on the Implementation of the Outcome of the UN World

Summit for Social Development sets out progress on the achievement of the targets to date and issues arising. This progress is summarised in this section, with further details available in the reports referred to.

2.1 Progress on Meeting the Global Target

From 1994 to 1997 consistent poverty fell from 9–15% to 7–10%. With the global target set for a reduction in consistent poverty to 5–10% by 2007, this means that this target has been virtually achieved. It should be borne in mind, however, that the most recent information indicates that 10% of the population are still living in consistent poverty. It should also be noted that the most recent information relates to 1997, the year in which the Strategy was launched.

In June 1999 the Government decided, in the light of the updated ESRI data, to set a new global target. The new target is that:

Consistent poverty is to be reduced to below 5% by 2004.

Thus the global target has become more ambitious, reflecting reductions in the level of consistent poverty since the initial launch of NAPS. The percentage of the population experiencing consistent poverty in 1997 was 10% – this is to be reduced by half, to 5%, within 7 years (1997 to 2004).

The ESRI has suggested that to remain relevant, a poverty target needs to be re-based regularly, about every five years. Based on evidence to date this seems sensible. More fundamentally, the ESRI suggests broadening the scope of the poverty target to encompass the distinct elements underpinning it, namely real income levels, non-monetary deprivation indicators and relative incomes. However, they do recognise that finding the appropriate balance between these elements may be difficult. Nevertheless, given the need to ensure that policy initiatives are directed to tackle the causes of poverty this would seem to be an important factor in the future monitoring of the global target. It will be important that anti-poverty measures reach those most in need, but also that they do not result in a widening gap between the rich and the poor or accentuate existing inequalities. Thus, these additional measures could usefully be incorporated to better understand the processes underpinning changes in the global poverty target.

2.2 Progress on the Unemployment Target

Progress in Ireland on reducing unemployment has been exceptional in recent years. NAPS targets on

unemployment have already been met and exceeded – the current unemployment rate (Quarterly National Household Survey, Fourth Quarter 1999) is 5.1% (NAPS target was to reach 6% by 2007) and long-term unemployment is 2.1%, exceeding the 2007 NAPS target of 3.5%.

The unemployment target was re-set by the Government in mid 1999:

Unemployment is to be reduced to below 5% by 2002 and long-term unemployment is to be reduced to 2.5% by 2002.

The Government subsequently announced new unemployment targets as part of the Employment Action Plan: to reduce unemployment below 5% by end-year 2000; and long-term unemployment below 2% by end-year 2000.

A 5% unemployment rate is currently asserted to be “full employment” by many economic commentators. However, this understanding has changed over time. For example, in 1967 the then National Economic Council defined 2% unemployment as full employment, and by 1975 they gave a figure of 4%. A full-employment society can be understood to be one in which every adult who wishes to can find employment with acceptable conditions within a reasonable time.

While it may be the case that there will always be some level of frictional unemployment consistent with full employment, the existence of long-term unemployment can only be viewed as a structural problem. The NAPS target set by Government in June 1999 to reduce long-term unemployment to 2.5% by 2002 had already been met by September 1999. The Employment Action Plan has a more ambitious target for long-term unemployment reduction – to reduce long-term unemployment to below 2% by end-year 2000. The new national agreement *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* contains the objective of effectively eliminating long-term unemployment and seeks that mass unemployment will not recur (2000: 116).

People who are long-term unemployed have a high risk of poverty. For the 36,000 people who are officially long-term unemployed (*Quarterly National Household Survey, Fourth Quarter 1999*), in that they are actively seeking work, it may be particularly demoralising to be unemployed in a buoyant economy. In addition, these figures do not include people who may be “discouraged workers” and others who may be “marginally attached” to the labour force. To get as complete a picture as possible it is important to examine a number of sources

of statistics on unemployment, such as the Quarterly Household Survey and the Live Register. Given that there are also unemployment blackspots, unemployment should be tracked at local level, where possible, as well as at national level.

The nature of policies to address the unemployment problem may have to change in a low unemployment economy, with a focus on quality rather than quantity of job opportunities. Programmes tailored to individuals’ particular needs may be required. In this case, the development of appropriate performance indicators would be helpful in monitoring progress in a qualitative way, e.g. quality of training, nature of the job, rate of pay, terms and conditions, community context, as well as quantitatively, towards reaching the targets.

2.3 Progress on the Educational Disadvantage Target

Problems have arisen in attempting to achieve the education target as presented. Essentially, the main component of the target relates to completion of the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate. While the number leaving without any qualification continues to fall (3% in 1995/6, cited in NAPS’s Annual Report, 1999:52) the number completing the Leaving Certificate has levelled out in recent years (81% in 1995/6). As documented in NAPS’s Annual Report, one of the problems is that the figure is confined specifically to the completion of senior cycle. It does not take into account students who leave the second-level system and pursue education and training programmes leading to certification through apprenticeships, Youthreach courses and through Senior Traveller Training Centres. Retention rates have been shown to improve when account is taken of participants in these programmes.

Another factor making it difficult to achieve higher retention rates is that some school-goers choose to leave school early to take up jobs in the current labour market.

In this context it would be useful to reconsider the education target. In terms of poverty reduction, ideally every young person should leave the education system with an adequate standard of education and some qualification or certified skill/achievement. It is clear that this will not always be met through academic qualification alone, although a certain level of academic achievement will be required. As stated in NAPS’s Annual Report, while it may unrealistic to expect that the education system will be suitable for as many as 98% of students it may be appropriate to restructure it to give due regard to other, less formal, education and training opportunities and to interventions outside the mainstream setting.

Thus, a number of considerations have to be taken into

account in reviewing the educational disadvantage target and the following questions have to be answered:

- What is an adequate level of academic achievement for everyone?
- What additional achievements and skills can be rewarded?
- Are the routes and mechanisms in place by which these can be achieved?
- Are the data available by which to measure progress towards a target framed in this way?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure that those young people who leave school early can be encouraged and supported to avail of education and training through the workplace?

The second element of the education target is to ensure that there are no children in early primary education with serious literacy and numeracy problems. This element of the target has received less attention than the retention rates component. However, it is just as important. A recent government survey has found that one in ten children still leave primary school with literacy problems (*Irish Times*, 22/01/00). On the back of this the Minister for Education and Science announced details of a £2.5m national reading campaign aimed at improving literacy standards. It will be important that the impact of this is systematically assessed, and along with numeracy testing, contributes to monitoring progress towards meeting NAPS target.

A new target has not been set for tackling educational disadvantage. However, the Government has indicated that a new target should be set on education and adult literacy (NAPS Annual Report, 1999).

Adult literacy is a particular problem in Ireland. A recent OECD study (1997) showed that nearly one quarter of all Irish adults had only basic literacy levels (See footnote in Chapter 2, section 2). As the link between educational attainment and income levels is well established this is an area of obvious concern (NAPS Annual Report, 1999). While efforts are being made to address this, a target for improvement in adult literacy could usefully be incorporated into NAPS target on tackling educational disadvantage.

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* contains a comprehensive list of objectives on life-long learning. It will be important that the actions outlined there are acted upon and adequately resourced.

2.4 Progress on the Income Adequacy Target

The income adequacy target essentially re-states the global target and also sets out to achieve the minimum social

welfare rates recommended by the Commission on Social Welfare (1986). These were achieved in the 1999 Budget, based on uprating the Commission's rates by inflation. A key issue in relation to social welfare rates is that while they are increasing in real terms above inflation they are falling behind increases in average income. This is leading to widening income inequalities and people dependent on social welfare are benefiting much less from the growing economy than those in employment. A number of commentators, including the ESRI and the Combat Poverty Agency, have highlighted this issue in recent years and have called for social welfare rates to be increased in line with earnings and for the establishment of a mechanism through which the uprating of social welfare rates can be considered annually.

NAPS's Annual Report (1999) indicates that the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs will be considering the issue of the future of social welfare rates. Under the new national programme, there is a commitment to establish a Working Group, with an independent Chairperson, to examine the issues in developing a benchmark for adequacy of adult and child social welfare payments, including the implications of adopting a specific approach to the ongoing up-rating or indexation of payments.

An issue of increasing concern is that of low pay. The report *Monitoring Poverty Trends* (1999) showed that the risk of poverty increased for employees from 3% in 1994 to 7% in 1997 and that the proportion of low-paid employees among the poor grew from 6% of the total to 13% over this time period. While the risk and incidence of poverty for employees remains relatively low, it has substantially increased between 1994 and 1997. Added to this, the fact that these figures are for "heads of household" it does not show low-paid employees who may be within households. It is known for example, that women, young people, and part-time workers, who are less likely to be heads of households, have the lowest rates of pay (Nolan, 1999: 139). While the introduction of the National Minimum Wage should have a positive impact on low rates of pay, its implementation and impact will need to be closely monitored.

2.5 Progress on the Urban Disadvantage Target

The target on urban disadvantage is unspecific and therefore it is difficult to measure progress. The numbers suffering the greatest deprivation in disadvantaged urban areas have never been specifically enumerated. Research (Nolan, Whelan and Williams, 1998) has found that poverty and exclusion are spatially pervasive and not concentrated in a small number of

areas. This makes it more difficult to measure. However, it is noteworthy that in 1994 (the latest date for which this information is available) seven out of ten households renting local authority housing in Dublin were on low incomes and experiencing basic deprivation. To date, there are no plans to update these figures, but this is something which could be undertaken.

No monitoring mechanism has been put in place to measure increased standards of living or participation rates in disadvantaged urban areas, although some information may be available through the monitoring and evaluation reports of the Local Urban and Rural Development Programme. The urban disadvantage target could be presented in more specific terms and indicators put in place to monitor it, at local level, through the local partnership structures and/or local and regional government structures. The Combat Poverty Agency is working with a small number of local authorities in developing a model for drawing up "local poverty profiles" at local authority level. This work could help to inform the construction of a more specific urban disadvantage target.

While specific measures are not available, a number of initiatives have taken place to reduce disadvantage in urban areas since the launch of NAPS. A particular initiative to tackle disadvantage in urban areas is the Integrated Services Process (ISP)¹, which aims to develop new procedures to ensure a more focused and better co-ordinated response by statutory authorities to the needs of urban communities with the greatest level of disadvantage in four pilot areas. This project is overseen by the Inter-departmental Policy Committee on Local Development rather than NAPS IDPC. It is notable that this inter-departmental committee is chaired by a Minister of State compared to NAPS IDPC which is chaired by senior civil servants. The ISP, however, does adapt NAPS approach of looking for solutions under a number of identified themes albeit at the local level. Through this process early school leaving has emerged as an important issue and illustrates the strong link between educational disadvantage and other forms of poverty and exclusion.

Other initiatives targeted at reducing disadvantage in urban areas are the Community Development Programme, the National Drugs Strategy, the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development and the URBAN Initiative.

A more specific target, with associated performance measures attributable to NAPS, would be useful in assessing the reduction in urban disadvantage.

2.6 Progress on the Rural Poverty Target

The target on rural poverty is also unspecific and thus it is difficult to measure progress on meeting this target. In general, NAPS specifies that the targets to be met in the other areas also apply to the rural, with a specific focus on the provision of services. Even though the risk of poverty for farmers has fallen substantially, from 20% to 12% between 1994 and 1997 at the 50% relative income poverty line, (*Monitoring Poverty Trends*, 1999), spatial analysis (by Nolan, Whelan and Williams, 1998) shows that just over one fifth of all poor households live in open countryside. No monitoring has been put in place to measure the extent to which NAPS targets have been met in rural Ireland.

A number of initiatives are currently underway which highlight the need to address poverty in rural areas. One is the White Paper on Rural Development and the other is the National Development Plan. The White Paper highlights the need to address poverty and social exclusion in rural areas, but does not propose specific measures by which this might be achieved. It refers to NAPS for ideas in this area. A specific recommendation contained in the White Paper is that of rural proofing. However, consideration needs to be given as to how rural proofing can be combined with poverty proofing, to assess the potential impact of policies in poor rural areas.

The National Development Plan divides the country into regions and proposes a substantial development programme for the border, midlands and west regions, which are primarily rural in nature. However, while the National Development Plan has a strong social inclusion component, the extent to which its proposed measures will meet NAPS's rural poverty target are not spelt out.

Programmes like the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development – LEADER – farm schemes like the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and headage payments, Farm Assist and the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation have the potential to reduce poverty in rural areas. However, NAPS needs to specify a more specific target to reduce poverty in these areas and put in place actions and monitoring systems to ensure that it is achieved.

2.7 Emerging Issues for Target Consideration

The Government has asked NAPS IDPC to draw up new targets to reflect the changed environment, for example in relation to education and adult literacy, and to consider action targets in relation to particular groups such as children in poverty. The 1998/99 NAPS Annual Report notes that the input of the social partners in the

area of target setting would be particularly valuable.

The new national partnership agreement, *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*, is committed to reviewing and, where appropriate, revising the existing NAPS targets and to considering possible new targets under the themes of child poverty, women's poverty, health, older people and housing/accommodation. This process is to take place by mid 2001, in consultation with the social partners.

As noted in Chapter 2, section 1.1 the nature of poverty is changing. It is important that NAPS, and the targets in particular, reflect changes in the nature of poverty. Thus, the review and revision of the targets proposed in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*, is welcomed.

As well as being inclusive, by involving the social partners, target-setting should be informed by sound information on the extent and nature of poverty and poverty trends. Not only is data important in target setting, but also in monitoring progress towards the achievement of targets. Data from the Living in Ireland Survey and analysis by the ESRI have proved invaluable in the initial setting of the global target. This central poverty dataset and analysis should be enhanced and complemented by other information collection and analysis exercises to ensure that targets can be set on an informed and accurate basis. For example, as suggested by the ESRI (see *Monitoring Poverty Trends*, 1999:66), it will be important to capture incremental changes over time as to what constitutes necessities, so that the deprivation indicators' component of the consistent poverty measure can accurately reflect these changes.

2.8 Progress on Implementing the Principles

The principles are an important component of NAPS. They were seen as particularly important by the community and voluntary sector in the development of NAPS, and were suggested in various submissions received and in the consultation process.

The UN has suggested that NAPS should incorporate a stronger rights dimension and enhancement of the principles is one way in which this could occur.

There have been a number of developments which consolidate NAPS principles. These include the implementation of the Employment Equality Act and publishing of the Equal Status Bill. In addition, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform has been developing the concept of equality-proofing, which has been informed by a research project on the issue (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 1999).

1. For further information on the ISP see Section 7.2.4 of this Report.

One way in which this work is being followed up is through a joint research project between the Equality Authority and the Combat Poverty Agency on examining inequalities which lead to poverty.

Implementation of key anti-poverty elements of the report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, the report of the Task Force of the Traveller Community and the report of the Second Commission on the Status of Women also contribute to meeting NAPS principles. While many of the recommendations in these reports are now being implemented, much remains to be done. The research report by the Combat Poverty Agency on Women and Poverty, highlighted some of the key issues to be addressed in reducing poverty among women.

NAPS formed an integral part of the last national agreement **Partnership 2000 for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness**. The new agreement contains a full framework section on social inclusion and equality. In this section there are a range of objectives and actions in relation to promoting NAPS and social inclusion measures. It is noteworthy that the framework for addressing poverty and social inclusion will have regard to the NESC strategy report in relation to citizenship rights. Specifically it states that:

“Citizenship rights encompass not only the core civil and political rights and obligations but also social, economic and cultural rights and obligations which are embedded in our political culture and which underpin equality of opportunity and policies on access to education, employment, health, housing and social services. Citizenship obligations refer to such obligations as the payment of taxes and fulfilment of obligations implied by access to services and benefits. ... There is a strong case for giving increased priority to social inclusion within public spending.”

(Quoted from NESC report in *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, 2000: 78*)

While there has been some progress on recognising NAPS principles and trying to progress aspects of these in an effort to reduce poverty and inequalities, much remains to be done. There has been little progress made in ensuring equal access and participation for all. Even though some anti-discrimination legislation has been introduced, discrimination against minorities in Ireland

has grown as the numbers of refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants into Ireland have increased. As documented in Chapter 3, failure to engage in appropriate consultative processes and actively involve the community and voluntary sector have been identified as particular weaknesses in the implementation of NAPS.

There is thus a need to reinforce all the principles of NAPS across the civil service and to put in place mechanisms to ensure that they underpin all anti-poverty policies and measures.

3. Assessment of the Targets

3.1 Questionnaire Responses on Targets and Principles

Respondents to the postal questionnaire survey stated that target setting was one of the main achievements of NAPS. In response to the question “What, in your view, are the main three achievements in relation to the content of NAPS?” the most frequently stated response was various combinations of “setting, achievement and revision of targets”. This view is reflected in the following statements made by respondents:

“The most important aspect of NAPS was the identifying/setting of targets to be met. To achieve this required a comprehensive analysis of the full range of issues affecting the level of poverty in Ireland. Thus, the issue for the first time is being addressed in an holistic manner.”

and

“Focussing on a small number of priority themes makes NAPS a far more tangible concept.”

However, some weaknesses were also identified in the targets. These responses included statements like “the targets are outdated and unambitious”, “the targets had effectively been reached by the time they were being set” and there is “no institutional target”.

A separate and related point was that certain themes had not been given enough attention in NAPS or had not been included at all. Issues suggested for inclusion in NAPS were:

- housing and homelessness (most frequently mentioned);
- health;
- public transport;

- drugs;
- pre-school education.

Particular groups who should be included were:

- children;
- women;
- lone parents;
- people with disabilities;
- older people;
- Travellers;
- low paid;
- refugees and asylum seekers;
- immigrants/emigrants;
- prisoners and their families.

While it was not necessarily suggested that all of these areas should have a poverty reduction target, a number of new targets were specifically suggested. These included:

- set targets for building affordable social housing over the next 5-10 years;
- adopt specific targets and policy actions in relation to children, older people and people with disabilities;
- health issues should be included along with the original five themes and targets.

On revising the targets it was suggested that more ambitious targets should be adopted, more resources should be allocated for the specific purpose of achieving the targets and progress towards reaching the targets should be closely monitored.

There was no direct mention of the principles in the questionnaire responses. However, indirect reference was made to the application of the principles. For example, respondents suggested there had been a lack of involvement of the community and voluntary sector in the implementation of NAPS and a failure to engage in appropriate consultative processes; there should be a greater emphasis on the link between poverty and inequality; and that a rights-based approach should be more strongly introduced into NAPS.

4. Commentaries on NAPS Targets

A number of individual commentators have written about NAPS targets. Comments on the targets after the Strategy was published included acknowledgements that for the first time clear measurable anti-poverty targets had been set and that mechanisms had been put in place to monitor, evaluate and report on progress. At the same time some commentators recognised that the targets were somewhat modest and in some areas unspecific.

4.1 Commentaries on the Global Target

The global target was seen as central to NAPS (Nolan, 1997). Nolan has argued that ESRI research has shown that households' living standards are influenced by resources over a long period as well as by current income. This is what the global target, which is a measure of consistent poverty, attempts to measure. In 1997 Nolan suggested that,

“if the global target is to be attained it is likely that other measures, such as the number in relative income poverty will also have to come down substantially.”

However, in a period of exceptional economic growth, this has been found not to be the case. Researchers at the ESRI, including Nolan argue that,

“the unusual situation in which that may not hold is when average incomes are growing exceptionally rapidly, when those on low incomes share in that growth and see their real living standards rise significantly, but when they lag somewhat behind the mean. Of course this is precisely what has been happening in Ireland ... deprivation levels can then be falling while relative income poverty is rising.”

i.e. expectations lag behind rapid income growth – (*Monitoring Poverty Trends, 1999:66*).

To overcome this the ESRI suggest that the poverty target should be re-based regularly, about every five years and should contain a number of distinct elements: real income levels, non-monetary deprivation indicators and relative incomes. While they argue that a target containing distinct elements would more comprehensively describe poverty trends they caution that finding the appropriate balance between the various elements may be difficult.

The global target has now been re-set. It is more ambitious, but is still firmly based on consistent poverty. It was set by the Government. Monitoring progress towards the achievement of this target raises several issues:

- the target needs to be developed to include the three dimensions discussed above, i.e. real income levels, non-monetary deprivation indicators and relative incomes;

- the deprivation indicators need to be updated on a regular basis;
- the target needs to be re-based regularly, e.g. every five years;
- the global target needs to be complemented by additional complementary analysis to understand the changing nature of poverty as well as monitoring levels of poverty;
- the poverty risk of those people who do not live in private households e.g. people who are homeless, some members of the Travelling community and people who live in institutions also needs to be monitored on a regular basis.

4.2 Commentaries on the Educational Disadvantage Target

The educational disadvantage target focuses on the reduction of early school leaving with a view to its practical elimination. Nolan (1997) has noted that while a good deal of progress has been made in cutting the numbers leaving school early, the remaining core leaving before the Junior Certificate is likely to prove more difficult to tackle. McCormack and Archer (1997) argue that simply retaining young people from disadvantaged backgrounds will not, in itself, remove inequality in educational outcome, and suggest that the target should be set in terms of altering the relationship between educational outcome and social background. Both Nolan and McCormack and Archer agree that monitoring progress towards meeting the elements of the target is important and should be part of national or cross-national surveys of school performance. McCormack and Archer also note that it is regrettable that there is no specific target for "life-long learning, second-chance education and community-based education and training".

Evidence from the Integrated Services Process (ISP) suggests that an educational target advocating a 95% retention rate for the Leaving Certificate will not necessarily provide the solution for tackling educational disadvantage. The ISP recognises that addressing educational disadvantage is a very complex problem and requires listening to young people at risk at an early stage. It requires a major cultural shift away from the notion that only academic qualifications are of merit. Further evidence on the views of disadvantaged young people themselves can be found in the forthcoming report evaluating the Combat Poverty Agency's Demonstration Programme on Educational Disadvantage. Evidence from these sources strongly supports an integrated approach to tackling educational disadvantage and the need to develop and promote alternative training such as apprenticeships. Thus, these issues need to be

reflected in the target to tackle educational disadvantage.

The NAPS Annual Report (1999) recognises the need for this target to be re-set. It is clearly an important issue to be addressed in the next stage of NAPS.

4.3 Commentaries on the Unemployment Target

At the time the unemployment target was set there was considerable discussion on what measure of unemployment should be used – the Labour Force Survey, using the ILO definition or the PES definition, or the Live Register. There has been considerable debate on these issues generally in Ireland, particularly since there was an increasing variation between the different measures. This has now been addressed to some extent by using data collected from the Quarterly National Household Survey (CSO) and more explicitly stating that the Live Register includes people who may be working part-time. Importantly though, the Live Register includes "discouraged workers" and people who may be only marginally attached to the labour force. These people are essentially unemployed even though they may not appear in the official unemployment statistics where the criterion for classification is unemployed and actively seeking work.

At the time the target was set commentators felt that the unemployment target was very modest given forecasts for economic growth. This has proved to be the case. The target set in 1997 for a ten year period has already been exceeded in just over two years for both unemployment and long-term unemployment. The new target set in 1999 to reduce long-term unemployment to 2.5% by 2002 has already been met in the autumn of 1999 and the target to reduce unemployment to below 5% looks likely to be reached sooner than 2002 (at 5.1% at the end of 1999). It is worth recording that the national targets to reduce unemployment have been driven by European policy, through the National Action Plan on Employment (ironically also referred to as NAPS), rather than by the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. The substantial reduction in unemployment is very welcome, whatever its driving force.

Given the link between long-term unemployment and poverty, this is where the National Anti-Poverty Strategy should now focus its attention. The questions posed by Mary Murphy (1997) at the launch of NAPS are still relevant, even though the numbers may have changed:

"Who will be the remaining 3% long-term unemployed in 2007? Will they be those who are already five years unemployed

today? For how long will the 3% be long-term unemployed – one year or twenty years? Will they be consistently poor?"

NAPS should seek to focus its efforts on eliminating long-term unemployment.

4.4 Commentaries on Income Adequacy, Urban Disadvantage and Rural Poverty Targets

As noted by Nolan at the time of the launch of NAPS these three targets are much less concrete and contribute little to the strategy. The income adequacy target is essentially a restatement of the global target with a short-term commitment on social welfare rates. "The crucial issue of what happens to rates over the next decade is left open" (Nolan, 1997). This has become an increasingly important debate as income inequalities have been widening in a time of accelerated economic growth. In order to ensure that income inequalities and relative income poverty does not increase, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy needs to address the issue of widening income inequalities through ensuring that those on low incomes do not have a relative worsening in their standard of living. This would suggest the need for a stand alone relative income poverty target in addition to the global target.

As stated earlier, the urban disadvantage and rural poverty targets are "so unspecific and anodyne as to scarcely merit the name" (Nolan, 1997). The difficulty in setting more specific targets for urban disadvantage and rural poverty at the time related to the dearth of specific information in these areas and the analysis of it in a form suitable for specific target setting. For example, for better monitoring of rural poverty up to date information on the numbers who are consistently poor is needed for rural (farm and non-farm) households. This remains a challenge for these NAPS targets. However, this challenge should be taken as these are important areas for poverty reduction.

4.5 Points Made in Relation to Target Setting

A number of general points are relevant here in relation to the setting of NAPS targets in the current economic context.

- In addition to re-setting and refining the original NAPS targets there have been various calls for additional targets to be set. The main areas suggested have been housing/accommodation and homelessness, and health, and in relation to various groups such as children, older people and people with disabilities. The *Programme for Prosperity and*

Fairness states that possible new targets will be considered under the themes of child poverty, women's poverty, health, older people and housing/accommodation. In setting new targets for NAPS it will be important to find a balance between setting targets for key poverty areas which are relevant in the current economic and social environment, and at the same time, avoiding a myriad of targets for a wide range of poverty areas, so that the overall strategy becomes unfocussed.

- The process by which the targets are set is critical. There was some criticism in relation to the setting of the original targets. While there had been a lot of discussion and consultation about the content of NAPS, there had been very little debate about what would be appropriate targets. However, the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs has noted in the 1998/99 NAPS Annual Report that "the input of the social partners in the area of target setting would be particularly valuable". This commitment is re-emphasised in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*, where it is stated that "the existing targets will be reviewed and revised where appropriate, and possible new targets will be considered in consultation with the social partners" (2000: 79).
- Government departments need to be centrally engaged in the target-setting process. Government policies will, in the main, ultimately deliver measures by which to achieve the targets. Thus, a key question is how the targets can be translated into operational goals in departments. In particular, thought needs to be given as to which policies require to be put in place to work towards the achievement of targets and what barriers need to be overcome. Cross-departmental working would seem to be important in this regard. The Integrated Services Process may provide some useful guidelines here. This issue of the role of government departments in the NAPS process is discussed further in Chapter 7.
- There is a need to consider the timeframe within which the targets are set. NAPS is set in a ten-year timeframe and the original targets were set to reflect this. Even though it may be realistic to frame the reduction and eventual elimination of a structural problem like poverty within a ten-year timeframe it is difficult to predict economic and social progress over such a period, as has been shown to be the case. The new targets are set in three- and seven-year timeframes. This is more realistic in the current economic context and provides an opportunity to re-base targets on a more regular basis. A short-term

and long-term view are be particularly useful.

- There is a need to monitor progress in meeting targets on a regular basis. For this purpose it would be useful to consider putting in place a system of indicators by which such progress could be assessed. To some extent this has happened in the case of the global poverty target, through analysis of the annual Living in Ireland survey. However, all of the targets should have appropriate performance indicators in place.

This monitoring will require good quality data collection and analysis on an ongoing basis. Existing data sources should be further exploited and complementary sources established and analysed, where necessary. Models which could be explored include the reports produced by the New Policy Institute in Britain on monitoring poverty and social exclusion, and work done by the UN and the EU. However, a strength of the Irish NAPS is the focus on the global target, with subsidiary targets, rather than having a myriad of unconnected poverty indicators. Atkinson (1997), in calling for the introduction of an official poverty target in the UK, advocates an annual poverty report presenting a range of information as well as an informed commentary.

- There is a need to ensure that the achievement of targets will lead to poverty reduction. This argues for subsidiary targets to be linked to the global target in some way.
- There needs to be a more systematic review of the application of the principles; the extent to which they are still relevant, eg. should there be additions or deletions; and how they can better inform the implementation of anti-poverty programmes and practice.

5. Conclusions

This chapter has assessed the original and the new NAPS targets and has discussed issues arising. It is clear that the targets are seen as one of the most important elements of NAPS, even though at setting, they were seen by some to be unambitious, which has since proved, with the benefit of hindsight, to be the case. Some commentators have noted, however, that the setting of an official poverty reduction target was an ambitious move in itself. Nevertheless, some of the targets were unspecific and it has therefore been difficult to measure progress in meeting them.

A number of points have been made in relation to **review and revision** of NAPS targets. These can be summarised as:

- the need to re-set some of the original NAPS targets;
- the need to set additional targets, e.g. in the areas of housing/accommodation and homelessness, health, and to address poverty among children, older people and people with disabilities
- the need to engage in a consultative process for arriving at targets;
- the need to consider how targets can be operationalised within government departments;
- the need to consider the time-frame for which particular targets should be set, in both the short-term and the long-term;
- the need to put in place performance indicators to measure progress towards meeting the targets. This will require additional data collection and analysis.

There is also a need for a more systematic review of the application of the principles.

In relation to the **current NAPS targets** there is a need to:

- re-base the global target regularly, say every five years and to explicitly assess a number of components underlying it - real income, non-monetary indicators, relative income;
- re-consider and re-set the education target, based on a broader view of education, measuring literacy and numeracy levels at primary school and including an adult literacy component;
- re-set the new unemployment target - to eliminate long-term unemployment;
- re-set the income adequacy target on the basis of relative income levels;
- re-set the urban disadvantage and rural poverty targets based on disaggregated national data, and additional local information data, to be collected, if necessary, perhaps through local development or local government sources.

Chapter 5: Poverty-Proofing

Chapter 5 describes the development of poverty-proofing. The first section identifies how NAPS proposed to include the process of poverty-proofing and Section 2 discusses issues which arose in its development. Sections 3 and 4 look at the implementation of the process, and some examples of applications of poverty-proofing are provided in section 5. Section 6 presents an initial assessment of poverty-proofing based on the questionnaire survey responses and Section 7 identifies key issues for the future.

1. How NAPS Proposed to Include Poverty-proofing

The NAPS strategy statement states that:

“The question of the impact of poverty will also be a key consideration when decisions are being made about spending priorities in the context of the national budgetary process and the allocation of EU structural funds.”

(National Anti-Poverty Strategy Statement, 1997: 20).

At their first meeting after the launch of NAPS, the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee (IDPC) responsible for its implementation agreed that a system of proofing policies for their impact on poverty be developed.

2. Issues Arising in the Development of Poverty-proofing

A number of issues arose in the development of poverty-proofing. These are briefly summarised as follows:

2.1 Proofing or Auditing?

From the outset the concern was expressed as to whether policies should be proofed or whether their impact should be audited. While definitions vary, a policy *audit* can be described as a technical examination, at a moment in time, of a range of policies in their operationalisation, management, delivery and consumption.¹ It is a term derived from accountancy. Policy-proofing can be defined as a formal mechanism by which policies are assessed at design and review stage for their likely impact on a particular area of concern. In so far as the impact of a given policy on a particular objective or target group is an integral part of the whole policy making process, proofing is something

which should take place as a matter of course.

Thus a key decision at the outset was whether the process should be ongoing, assessing policy at design and implementation stage – i.e. proofing – or whether it should be a “snapshot”, assessing in retrospect the impact a policy has had on society – i.e. auditing. While both are clearly important it was agreed by the social partners that the focus of this initiative should be on proofing policies. An impact assessment or audit could be carried out independently as part of the evaluation. This is also important.

2.2 Poverty- or Equality-proofing?

The NAPS contains a commitment to assess the impact of policy on poverty. Partnership 2000 contains a commitment to equality-proofing:

“... in the context of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), this [key developments in the equality area] will be complemented by the strengthening of administrative procedures for equality proofing, having regard to the recommendations of the NESF.”

(Partnership 2000 for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness, 1996: 29).

NESF had recommended that poverty-proofing be expanded to include equality-proofing. The application of formal proofing mechanisms in relation to the full range of equality issues (gender, disability, age, ethnic origin, geographic location, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, member of the Travelling community, religion, etc.) even if desirable, was felt to extend beyond the remit of NAPS and would have significant resource implications. Thus it was recommended, in so far as NAPS is concerned, that the focus should be on poverty-proofing with inequalities being addressed, only in so far as they were likely to lead to poverty².

2.3 Who Should Poverty-proof?

Consideration was given as to who should actually do the poverty-proofing i.e. should there be a central unit whose duties included the monitoring of government policy or should the process be carried out within Departments? It was agreed that the individual who is developing the policy proposal should be the person responsible for poverty-proofing. It was acknowledged that guidance notes and appropriate analytical back-up

1. See Conroy, P. (1996) *Equality Proofing Issues*. Dublin: Economic and Social Forum, unpublished report.

2. Work has been undertaken by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform on the development of equality proofing.

would be required. It was suggested that officials should consult with relevant bodies as appropriate.

2.4 How Should Poverty-proofing be Introduced?

Original discussions considered whether poverty-proofing should initially be introduced as a pilot process or whether it should be introduced as a full initiative across government departments, state agencies and local authorities straight away. Following discussion it was decided that the poverty-proofing process should be introduced for a one-year trial period in civil service departments only. After one year it would be fully reviewed and revised, if necessary. In the longer term it was acknowledged that poverty-proofing would be extended to state agencies and local authorities and consideration could then be given to placing the mechanism on a legislative basis.

2.5 Need for Cross-Departmental Linkages

The need for cross-departmental linkages was recognised as vital, as the success of poverty-proofing depends, to a large extent, on Departments consulting and interacting with each other in the design and development of policies.

2.6 Identification and Collection of Relevant Data

It was thought that identifying and collecting relevant data relating to poverty was a pre-requisite for effective proofing. Various sources of data were noted such as the Living in Ireland survey data compiled by the ESRI, the research findings of the CPA, administrative statistics and information and statistics from other agencies such as the Census Office and ADM Ltd. The need for information to be supplemented to address gaps and for regular updating was recognised.

2.7 Need for Consultation

The need to consult with relevant external bodies such as the social partners, service delivery organisations, organisations representing people living in poverty and people experiencing poverty was noted. What was less clear was how this should be done.

2.8 Clear Information Processes and Training for Officials

Providing information on the poverty-proofing process and training for officials in implementing the guidelines was seen to be important. While there was a clear acknowledgement of the importance of these elements, they remain an under-developed part of the process. Nevertheless, the training of officials remains a high priority in a poverty-proofing context and it is likely that

further training developments will take place following the poverty-proofing review.

2.9 Worked Examples

The inclusion of worked examples of policy-proofing was seen as important to assist officials through the process. An initial example on revisions to the Family Income Supplement (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs) was included in a Framework document (*Policy-Proofing in the Context of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy*, 1998). Other departments were asked to provide worked examples for inclusion in the poverty-proofing guidelines (NAPS Unit *Guidelines for the Implementation of Poverty-proofing Procedures*, 1999). Four examples were received - two from the Department of Education and Science, one from the Department of Environment and Local Government and one from the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation. Nine of the 13 departments on the NAPS IDPC failed to provide an example. Those examples that were provided focused on policies that inherently have an anti-poverty focus.

3. The Development of Poverty-proofing

3.1 The Involvement of Social Partners

A poverty-proofing framework document was drafted by the Combat Poverty Agency (CPA) and the NAPS Unit. This document was discussed by the NAPS IDPC and then presented to the social partners for consideration. The document was revised and agreed on the basis of discussions with the social partners (*Policy Proofing in the Context of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy*, 1998).

3.2 The Experience Abroad

In the process of developing the poverty-proofing guidelines similar initiatives in other countries were examined. Although some scrutinising of the impact of government social policies takes place in most countries, the proofing of policies is not commonplace. South Australia has a social audit process in place and this was examined in some detail. Initiatives in France, Italy and the UK were also studied. However, the most useful experience was drawn from Northern Ireland where Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment (PAFT) Guidelines have been operating since 1994.

4. The Implementation of Poverty-proofing

Poverty-proofing is defined as:

“the process by which government departments, local authorities and state agencies assess policies and programmes at design and review stages in relation to the likely impact that they will have or have had on poverty and inequalities which are likely to lead to poverty, with a view to poverty reduction”
(*Policy Proofing in the Context of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy*, 1998).

Poverty-proofing is currently being implemented on a pilot basis in civil service departments only. A framework and guidelines have been drawn up through consultation with the social partners in the context of *Partnership 2000*. Following a Government decision in July 1998, poverty-proofing has been included as a requirement in the Cabinet Handbook which states that Memoranda for Government should, inter alia, “indicate clearly, as appropriate, the impact of the proposal for...persons in poverty or at risk of falling into poverty, in the case of significant policy proposals.”

What this means in practice is that major economic or social policy proposals be assessed for their effects on poverty. The assessment includes the following:

- Does it help to prevent people falling into poverty?
- Does it contribute to the achievement of the NAPS targets?
- If the proposal has no effect on the level of poverty, what options might be identified to produce a positive effect?

Such poverty-proofing should be undertaken in the following circumstances:

- in the preparation of SMI Statements of Strategy and Annual Business Plans;
- in designing policies and preparing Memoranda to Government on significant policy proposals;
- in the preparation of the Estimates and Annual Budget proposal – this also includes expenditure reviews and programme evaluations;
- in the preparation of the National Development Plan and other relevant EU Plans and Programmes;
- in the preparation of legislation.

Poverty-proofing is undertaken by officials in government departments. The process was due to be reviewed at the end of the pilot year - autumn 1999, at which point its expansion to other areas of the public service is to be considered. At the time of this assessment (end 1999/early 2000) proposals for an

independent study to review poverty-proofing were being pursued. The findings of the poverty-proofing review should have important implications for the future operation of poverty-proofing. Further details on poverty-proofing are contained in the NAPS Annual Report, 1999.

5. Some Applications of Poverty-proofing

There are still relatively few examples of poverty-proofing “in action”. A number of examples are briefly referred to here.

5.1 Poverty-proofing the Annual Budget

Some government departments poverty-proofed their budget proposals in advance of the Government's Annual Budget 1999, the first budget after the introduction of poverty-proofing. While this initiative is welcome, the social partners did express concern about how assessments were made between different expenditure options and at the level at which they were made. However, what is of greater concern is the apparent absence of poverty-proofing for the following Annual Budget 2000.

5.2 Policy Reports

One example of poverty-proofing a major policy report is The Working Group Examining the Treatment of Married, Cohabiting and One-Parent Families Under the Tax and Social Welfare Codes (1999) where all the proposals in the report were poverty-proofed and included as an appendix to the report. The assessment included analysis by income group and household type. While this is a useful model, if any of the proposals were to be considered further for implementation, a more detailed examination should be undertaken to more fully understand the impact on people living in poverty.

5.3 National Development Plan

The Cabinet Handbook states that poverty-proofing should be undertaken in the preparation of the National Development Plan (NDP) and other EU Plans and Programmes. The National Development Plan 2000–2006 contains a substantial social inclusion component and the promotion of social inclusion is one of four national objectives underpinning the NDP strategy. Social inclusion measures are explicitly part of a number of operational programmes and sub-programmes and there is a chapter in the Plan on promoting social inclusion.

In relation to poverty-proofing, each chapter of the Plan contains an assessment of its potential impact on

equality, the environment and on rural areas. This impact assessment is based on data and information gathered, and on consultations undertaken in the development of the Plan. The emphasis on social inclusion in the NDP, and the application of a poverty-proofing framework, is a welcome one. However, the implementation of social inclusion measures and the emphasis given to them will be critical. In this context, the Horizontal Co-ordinating Committee on equal opportunities and social inclusion will be important.

Appendix 4 of the NDP contains a pilot eco-audit, however, it would have raised the profile of the poverty-proofing element of the NDP if it had included an overall poverty proof as an Appendix, following the poverty-proofing guidelines.

5.4 Racism and Poverty

The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (*Developing an Anti-Racism Dimension to the National Anti-Poverty Strategy Poverty-proofing Guidelines: Case Studies to Inform Implementation, 1999*) has developed an anti-racism dimension to the NAPS poverty-proofing guidelines through the use of case studies. The Department of the Environment and Local Government's policy on housing management and the new curriculum for social, personal and health education developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment have both been analysed using the poverty-proofing process, from an anti-racism perspective. These are helpful examples of the application of the poverty-proofing guidelines and issues arising, with respect to minority ethnic groups.

5.5 Poverty Auditing

A number of poverty audits have also been undertaken. For example, the Agency undertook an analysis of the 1998 annual budget (the first post-NAPS budget) to assess the extent to which measures introduced were consistent with targets set out in NAPS. The analysis concluded that the net effect of the budget was the widening of the gap between rich and poor, noting that the most disappointing aspect of the Budget was its lack of strategic direction in progressing measures with a clear anti-poverty focus.

The 1999 budget was the first budget after the introduction of poverty-proofing. In its analysis of this budget the Combat Poverty Agency concluded that in comparing Budgets '98 and '99 it was clear that the latter would make a greater impact on poverty. However, a number of weaknesses were identified, the most notable of which was the lack of a clear anti-poverty strategy for children and the lack of attention to the most marginalised in society in a period of sustained economic growth.

In January 1999 the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare published its final report on a proposed National Childcare Strategy. The report recognised that the needs of those experiencing poverty should be prioritised and that resources should be targeted towards them. The Group set out a range of recommendations including supports for the development of a diverse range of childcare services and an integrated package to help parents at various income levels with the costs of childcare. The Combat Poverty Agency undertook a poverty audit of the Group's recommendations and concluded that many of them would not benefit those experiencing poverty and that some of them may even have a negative impact. The Agency argued that the needs and rights of children should be central to the strategy, with the needs of children experiencing disadvantage being prioritised.

6. An Initial Assessment of Poverty-proofing

The postal survey highlighted the importance of poverty-proofing. In fact, one of the most commonly identified achievements of NAPS was the introduction of poverty-proofing procedures, particularly in relation to the development of major policy proposals. One respondent noted that:

"The implementation of the poverty-proofing process and its inclusion in the Government Guidelines for drafting memos etc. has increased the visibility of NAPS and is a powerful means of filtering the aims of NAPS down through organisations."

In addition to placing poverty at the heart of the policy-making process, poverty-proofing was seen as a powerful means of improving cross-departmental links in relation to anti-poverty work. As one respondent put it:

"The main achievement is the formal establishment of an inter-agency/formal departmental approach with different government departments now being asked to 'poverty-proof' policy development."

However, much concern was expressed that the process had been inadequately developed and employed. In terms of the implementation of the NAPS infrastructure, a principal weakness was seen to be the limited application of the poverty-proofing guidelines. As one respondent said:

"The poverty-proofing process has failed to make its presence felt in any tangible way. Indications to date are that the process is only being applied to policies that are in themselves designed to have an impact on poverty. However, the point of the process was to [poverty] proof policies that might not have an obvious impact on poverty. Documentation...from Departments stating that 'the impact on those in poverty would be positive' is not a clear indication [of poverty-proofing] as required by the Cabinet Handbook."³

Nevertheless, there was a view that:

"Anti-poverty consideration is now an accepted part of policy development/analysis, even if the formal poverty-proofing process is not always explicitly followed."

In general, respondents felt that the poverty-proofing process should be extended beyond central Government and that it should be applied to a broad range of policies. One respondent noted that:

"The NAPS poverty-proofing process has not been extended to local or regional authorities. Given the rapid move towards developing the role of local authorities as outlined in the Task Force Report on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems, the lack of a poverty-proofing process at these levels is a serious omission."

Poor and inadequate resourcing of the NAPS was identified as a major obstacle in this regard. As one respondent commented:

"In my experience many government departments have not been adequately resourced to implement the guidelines. If [the guidelines] were taken seriously, then structures would need to be developed in each department to conceptualise the effect of their policies in terms of their effect on poverty."

3. It is noted that the poverty-proofing documentation states that it is necessary to poverty-proof all significant policy proposals.

The lack of resources given to NAPS was considered to be one of the main weaknesses of the strategy in general and of poverty-proofing in particular. Respondents were critical of the failure to make adequate training and education provisions for the effective implementation of poverty-proofing. This led a number of respondents to conclude that there was a lack of real commitment on the part of government to assessing the impact of policies on poverty.

In terms of the main areas on which the evaluation of NAPS should focus, one of the key issues identified was the poverty-proofing process. Respondents from across the sectors raised this issue and pointed to the need to develop evaluative systems to ensure that relevant departments/agencies complied with the poverty-proofing guidelines. This reflected the view that the benefits of poverty-proofing were not being realised. In order to address this issue, a small number of respondents suggested making the guidelines a legal or statutory obligation. For the most part, however, the following strategies were identified by the respondents as being central to the improvement and advancement of poverty-proofing:

- increase resources allocated to poverty-proofing;
- conduct seminars with key personnel in each department/agency on how to poverty proof policies and programmes;
- improve staff training and education on the application of the poverty-proofing guidelines;
- establish formal poverty-proofing review mechanisms.

7. Key Issues for the Future

The following issues should be taken into consideration in further developing and implementing the process of poverty-proofing:

7.1 Levels of Poverty-proofing

Currently, the officials responsible for devising policy in a department also undertake poverty-proofing. However, it is appropriate to consider whether poverty-proofing should also operate at other levels within and across departments, e.g. at when making departmental decisions on which policies to support, and – for the Department of Finance – making decisions on Government spending between departments. Also relevant in this context is the need to identify the difference between applying poverty-proofing to "day-to-day" policy decisions as opposed to applying the process to major one-off issues, such as the Estimates, the Budget, and the National Development Plan.

7.2 Screening

Consideration could be given to introducing a screening mechanism where certain criteria would be applied as to whether a policy or programme should be proofed or not. A concern is that in the absence of screening a large number of policies might be assessed unnecessarily, with the risk that policies that have significant adverse impacts would not be adequately considered.

7.3 Data Requirements

The availability of data is essential to undertake comprehensive poverty-proofing. Data which are available need to be analysed and made available to departments and others involved in the process. Groups most at risk of poverty need to be identified and the impact of policies on them assessed. Gaps in poverty information need to be identified and addressed.

7.4 Consultation

It is important that the views of those who are living in poverty and those who represent them inform the poverty-proofing process in line with NAPS principles. Developing mechanisms for doing this is a key consideration. The White Paper on relationships between the community and voluntary sector and the state may have a contribution to make in this regard. Consultation in relation to poverty-proofing should be considered within the wider parameters of consultation and participation in relation to the implementation of NAPS. There is a need for improvement in this area, as experience to date has shown this aspect of NAPS and poverty-proofing to have been inadequate.

7.5 Resources

Effective poverty-proofing requires human and financial resources. The failure to allocate adequate resources has limited its effectiveness to date.

7.6 How to Undertake Poverty-proofing

Further attention needs to be paid as to how poverty-proofing should be undertaken. This should be integrated into training and development work. The Poverty-proofing review should explicitly address this aspect of poverty-proofing. Further worked examples should be provided on an ongoing basis. The publication of examples of poverty-proofing would also assist.

7.7 Transparency

The rationale for poverty-proofing is to reduce poverty and to ensure that policies and programmes do not increase poverty. However, unintended outcomes are always possible. Thus it is very important that the application of the process is transparent. Making applications of poverty-proofing publicly available will

demonstrate the seriousness of the initiative and assist in building good practice.

7.8 Poverty/Equality Nexus

It has been proposed by those currently developing equality-proofing guidelines that a single integrated proofing procedure be developed, incorporating existing gender-proofing and poverty-proofing procedures. Implementation of this proposal will pose a significant challenge. A joint research project by the Combat Poverty Agency and the Equality Authority intends to examine the poverty/equality nexus in the application of proofing. There are also proposals to introduce rural-proofing and this element will also need to be integrated into the overall proofing process, as will "eco-proofing".

7.9 Extension to Other Agencies

Although poverty-proofing was initially introduced only into the civil service it has always been envisaged that it would be subsequently extended to the wider public service and local government. Consideration should be given as to how this might be done, in the context of the Poverty-proofing review.

7.10 Monitoring/Review of Poverty-proofing

To ensure that poverty-proofing is implemented effectively there should be ongoing monitoring of its implementation and regular reviews of its impact and effectiveness. The proposed poverty-proofing review could be seen as the first stage in this. The review should identify how poverty-proofing might be monitored and assessed on a regular basis.

7.11 Legislative Base

Various commentators have suggested that poverty-proofing should be put on a legislative base. This is something that should be considered, with the "pros and cons" of a move to legislation being set out clearly. Consultation on the implementation of the PAFT process in Northern Ireland strongly recommended setting it up on a legal basis and this has now been done. However, drawbacks to this approach have also been noted (see Appendix to Policy Proofing in the Context of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, July 1998").

8. Conclusion

Poverty-proofing is one of the most significant developments of NAPS and one which has the potential to make a considerable contribution to poverty reduction. However, the process needs to be further embedded into the administrative system and current shortcomings addressed to enable it to become a

powerful mainstream tool to assist in poverty reduction and the promotion of social inclusion.

It will be important that the poverty-proofing review currently proposed identifies how the poverty-proofing procedures have worked, the extent to which they have made an impact on resource distribution in addressing poverty, and recommendations for their development and extension. The review should also identify how poverty-proofing might be monitored and assessed on a regular basis.

Chapter 6: The Impact of NAPS

Chapter 6 examines information on changing levels of poverty in Ireland and looks at the impact of NAPS to date in this regard. Section 1 sets out how NAPS proposed to assess its impact on poverty. Section 2 examines progress in assessing NAPS, looking in particular at data sources, providing a brief overview of the nature and extent of poverty in Ireland, highlighting poverty trends, noting some data enhancements that are required and giving the postal survey respondents' views of the impact of NAPS. Section 3 draws some conclusions.

1. How NAPS Proposed to Assess its Impact on Poverty

A commitment to assessing the impact of NAPS is implicit in the Strategy. The NAPS Strategy Statement states that the challenge of NAPS is to:

- (i) Analyse and understand the scale of the poverty problem;
 - (ii) Identify the key areas in which action is needed if poverty is to be reduced;
 - (iii) Establish key objectives, targets and a series of concrete actions for tackling poverty; and
 - (iv) Ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place to monitor and review the objectives and targets.
- (*National Anti-Poverty Strategy Statement, 1997:4*).

The importance of having up-to-date, reliable data to inform the development of the strategy is identified as an essential component of NAPS. In particular the strategy highlights the need for government departments and agencies to strengthen the process of collection, analysis and discussion of core data on poverty and to identify gaps in the process.

In terms of monitoring and evaluating the performance of the strategy, the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) and the Combat Poverty Agency (CPA) are charged with specific responsibilities. In the context of national social partnership agreements, the NESF is required to report on the progress of implementing NAPS. The CPA, on the other hand, is required to undertake an evaluation of NAPS which takes into account the views and experience of the voluntary and community sector.

2. Progress on Assessing the Impact of NAPS to Date

A key issue in assessing the impact of NAPS is the importance of measuring and understanding poverty trends and the impact of anti-poverty policies. Thus, the main focus in assessing the impact of NAPS has been on the outcomes achieved, i.e. changes in the level and nature of poverty and the impact on people who are poor.

Most of the impact assessment work in this area to date has been on assessing poverty levels and that is the main focus of this chapter. However, the process by which such outcomes are achieved is also important, and therefore, it, too, should be assessed to ensure that it is effective and efficient. The Strategy should be perceived to be tackling poverty in order to gain support for this approach.

2.1 Data Sources and Key Role of Research

The development of NAPS was informed by a number of data sources, in particular the 1994 Living in Ireland survey. Good research data is essential to provide a knowledge base on the levels of poverty, its nature and causes and trends over time and the Living in Ireland survey has been the basis on which current knowledge of poverty trends in Ireland in the 1990s has been built. Along with other documentary research, the survey was used to prepare an Overview Statement for the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee entitled *Poverty, Social Exclusion and Inequality in Ireland*. The Overview Statement made use of the Living in Ireland survey to provide an overview of the extent, nature, causes, experiences and consequences of poverty in Ireland. The Living in Ireland survey forms part of the European Community Household Panel Survey (ECHP) and thus comparisons can be made across Europe. It is also a longitudinal survey which means that the same households are interviewed each year, and there is the potential to track changes over time. The Living in Ireland survey has now been running every year since 1994 so that it will be possible to track changes in household circumstances since this time. In Ireland, over 4,000 households were initially surveyed and within these households almost 10,000 people were interviewed.

The survey covers most of the population, on a sample basis, and has been invaluable in enabling trends in poverty for the population and progress vis-à-vis the NAPS global target to be monitored. This data-set has also provided a base for undertaking research into the

causes and consequences of poverty and in framing policy to address these.

Data sources, other than the Living in Ireland survey, which have been used to inform NAPS include: the Household Budget survey (undertaken by the CSO about every seven years), the National Quarterly Household survey (undertaken by the CSO), the Census, administrative statistics and issue-based and locally based surveys and case studies. Preparations for the next Census include piloting a question on income and collecting information on ethnic background. If these questions are retained for the next Census, this information could potentially add to our knowledge on poverty and social exclusion and enable more detailed spatial analysis of poverty.

2.2 The Nature and Extent of Poverty in Ireland

The publication of the report *Monitoring Poverty Trends* (1999) provides the most up-to-date, comprehensive account available of the extent and nature of poverty in Ireland between 1994 and 1997. Further work has been commissioned from the ESRI, by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the Combat Poverty Agency to update this picture, initially for 1998.

The main changes in the level of poverty between 1994 and 1997 have been:

The percentage of the population experiencing both consistent poverty (falling below the 50 to 60% poverty line and experiencing basic deprivation¹) has fallen from 9%–15% of the population to 7%–10%. This fall, which is mainly due to fewer households experiencing basic deprivation,² is to be welcomed.

The percentage of the population falling below the relative income poverty lines set at 50% and 60% of average household income increased slightly from 21–34% of the population to 22–35%. This reflects increasing income inequalities where average incomes have increased at a greater rate than social welfare incomes³. This has also resulted in a greater depth of poverty i.e. people falling further below the income lines.

1. For details on how these poverty measures are derived see the *Monitoring Poverty Trends* report.

2. Basic deprivation is based on eight indicators of deprivation. It means an enforced lack of at least one of the following socially perceived necessities (enforced lack means not being able to afford them): a meal with meat, chicken, fish or its equivalent every second day; a warm waterproof overcoat; two pairs of strong shoes; a roast joint or its equivalent once a week; new, not second hand clothes; going without a substantial meal for a day in the last two weeks; going without heating; or going into debt for ordinary living expenses.

3. Social welfare rates have increased in real terms above inflation. Since 1994 inflation has increased by 6%, social welfare rates have increased by 10–12% while household incomes on average rose by 22%.

4. It should be noted that all those over 14 are counted as adults in this analysis. This means that households with a married couple and older teenage offspring would be '3 or more adults', with or without children.

5. The limitations of small sample size should be noted here. Lone parents make up only about 2% of the Living in Ireland survey sample (4,000 households in 1994 and 3,000 households in 1997).

In relation to labour force status, the risk of poverty for households headed by an unemployed person remained high, even though the overall numbers fell, as unemployment fell sharply. The risk of poverty increased for households headed by someone who was ill or disabled and households headed by someone working in the home (mainly women). The proportion of poor households headed by an employee or a retired person increased, while the proportion of poor households headed by farmers fell.

In terms of household composition, the risk of poverty increased for single-adult households, for couples with three or more children and for households comprising two or three+ adults without children.⁴ It fell, however, for 'others with children' (comprising either one adult, or more commonly three or more adults, living with children) and was fairly stable for two adults with one or two children. Thus by 1997, couples with four or more children and single-adult households were the groups at highest risk of poverty.

The poverty risk for single-parent households about halved between 1994 and 1997, from 57% to 32% at the 50% income poverty line and from 70% to 34% at the 60% line⁵. While this fall in poverty risk is welcomed the risk is still relatively high at just over 30%, compared to an average risk for all households of 22% at the 50% income poverty line.

The age profile in poverty risk changed between 1994 and 1997. The risk of poverty rose for older households where the household head was aged 65 and over. At the 50% line the poverty risk for households headed by an older person increased from 10% to 29% between 1994 and 1997 and at the 60% income poverty line from 41% to 59% over the same period. This high and increasing risk of poverty for older people reflects the impact of the rapid increase in average household incomes since 1994 on the relative position of those living on state pensions. Although social welfare pensions have increased by 10–12% since 1994, market incomes have increased by much more.

The poverty risk for children fell between 1994 and

1997. In 1994 households with children accounted for 55% of all those below the 50% relative income poverty line whereas by 1997 this had fallen to 35%. Child poverty fell between 1994 and 1997 at the 50% and 60% relative income poverty lines: from 29% to 24% at the 50% line and from 40% to 38% at the 60% line. Nevertheless, the risk of poverty for children still remained relatively high at 24–38%.

While a detailed gender analysis has not been undertaken on the 1997 survey data the results would indicate that the risk of poverty for women has increased. The 1994 survey found that there was a good deal of overlap between single-adult households, households headed by someone who is retired, or working in the home and households headed by women. Given that the risk of poverty had increased for these households in 1997, it would be expected that the risk of poverty has increased for women.

The main factors which seem to be driving these changes are falling unemployment (reducing the risk of poverty for some groups) and the fact that increases in social welfare rates have been less in relative terms than increases in average household income (increasing the risk of poverty for some groups, particularly those dependent on social welfare). While this broadly relates to a division between those in employment and those not, it is worth noting the increased poverty risk for employees and the need to guard against low paid employment as a growing cause of poverty.

A priority for the future is further analysis of this information to examine in more detail changing poverty trends and their underlying causes. The Combat Poverty Agency has commissioned studies on child poverty and the distribution of income based on analysis of the Living in Ireland survey. These reports will be published in 2000.

2.3 Poverty Trends

It is important to set these poverty trends in the economic and social context in which NAPS has been operating so far. NAPS has been introduced in a period of unprecedented growth and falling unemployment. This has affected how the Strategy has actually operated and how it has been perceived. The implications of rapid economic growth have brought about changes in consistent and relative poverty, which need to be addressed in both the short and long term.

Consistent poverty has fallen, reflecting an improvement in people's living standards generally, including those on

6. It is relevant to note here that a longitudinal survey on children's well-being is currently proposed.

7. Some novel work on poverty measurement has been undertaken in New Zealand, which may be worth examining. In Great Britain a Millennium survey on poverty and social exclusion has been conducted. The data is currently being analysed and the results will be published at the end of June 2000.

low incomes. This is welcome in the short term. However, relative income poverty has slightly increased, mainly because social welfare rates, while increasing above inflation, have increased at a lower rate than average incomes. As noted in *Monitoring Poverty Trends* (1999: 67), as living standards stabilise over the longer term, societal expectations may catch up and adjust fully to higher average incomes.

In this context, higher real incomes and lower deprivation levels, while welcome, would not necessarily mean that everyone was able to participate fully in society. Thus, over the shorter term in which the global poverty target is operating, the fact that real and relative income levels are diverging so markedly cannot be ignored. As proposed in Chapter 4 of this assessment, the above information suggests the need to broaden the scope of the global poverty target to encompass distinct elements, such as real income levels, non-monetary deprivation indicators and relative incomes.

Alternatively, a relative income poverty target could be set as well as a consistent poverty target.

Additional work is also required in analysing the nature of poverty, in order to be better able to understand the processes at work in creating and sustaining poverty, so that these can be adequately addressed.

2.4 Data Enhancements Required

Further analysis of the Living in Ireland survey would enhance our understanding of poverty trends and processes. This could include:

- undertaking a longitudinal analysis to monitor changes over time, particularly to identify groups who move in and out of poverty and the "triggers" which cause them to do so⁶;
- analysing particular groups at high risk of poverty in greater depth to examine the causes of their high poverty risk and to develop appropriate solutions;
- conducting comparative research, comparing the nature and extent of poverty in Ireland to other countries, and comparing methodological approaches to poverty measurement, at European and international level⁷.

It is clear that while the Living in Ireland survey is an extremely important source of information on poverty and in monitoring poverty trends, it needs to be complemented by additional data sources and analyses to provide a complete picture of poverty trends.⁸ Some of the data enhancements required are discussed below.

Firstly, as a household survey, the Living in Ireland survey interviews only people living in private households. This means that marginalised groups not living in private households, such as people who are homeless, many Traveller families, people living in institutions and refugees and asylum seekers are excluded from the survey. While the numbers of people not living in households are relatively small as a percentage of the total population, their absence from the survey is unlikely to affect the overall level of poverty in any substantial way.

The key point is that people who do not live in private households include those who are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society. It is therefore pertinent that anti-poverty policies should seek to address their needs and the impact of public policy in so doing should be monitored. Social inclusion policies can only be said to be effective when the situation of the poorest in our society has been improved.

The **Programme for Prosperity and Fairness** recognises this as an issue to be addressed and includes among its social inclusion objectives the need:

“To provide relevant data and data collection systems for the monitoring and evaluation of poverty, including systems of measuring poverty among groups not currently included (e.g. people living in institutions, Travellers and the homeless.” (2000: 78).

The collection of data on people not living in private households is difficult, particularly in relation to monitoring their levels of poverty over time. However, there is existing data and research which could be enhanced and utilised. As suggested by the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* additional data collection systems should be developed and the co-operation of those involved should be sought. Adequate resources will be required to ensure the collection of reliable and useful quality data.

Secondly, household surveys, such as the Living in Ireland survey tell us little about the allocation of resources within households. This is particularly relevant in the analysis of the feminisation of poverty. Some work has attempted to explore this issue in Ireland, for example, Rottman (1993), *Income Distribution within Irish Households: Allocating Resources Within Irish Families*; Cantillon (1997) *Women and Poverty: Differences in Living Standards Within Households*;

Cantillon and Nolan (1998) *Are Married Women More Deprived than their Husbands?*; and Nolan and Watson (1999) *Women and Poverty in Ireland*. The Combat Poverty Agency has commissioned work from the ESRI to further examine the allocation of resources within households and the needs of individual family members within the household. A report on this work will be available at the end of 2000. The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* also contains a commitment to address the gender dimension of poverty.

A **third** issue in using large-scale quantitative data sets for monitoring poverty trends is the turnaround time between the collection of the data and the publication of results. At the moment, on the Living in Ireland survey, it takes about one and a half years from the completion of data collection to the production of survey results. This information includes an analysis of the risk and composition of poverty groups and the identification of current issues as well as overall poverty levels. While this time lag could be reduced to some extent through the allocation of additional resources, time is required for data preparation, construction and analysis.

Fourthly, local data collection is required to complement national household data. National data has limitations in relation to its disaggregation to local level and for particular sub-groups of the population, eg. lone parents.

Fifthly, to date the Living in Ireland survey data has been held in the ESRI and has mainly been available only to the Institute for analysis. However, a data archive is being established jointly by the Institute for the Study of Social Change, University College Dublin and the ESRI. The objective of the data archive is to acquire, process and make available datasets of all kinds of Irish social scientists. This opens up the possibility of enhancing the poverty research infrastructure and facilitating more researchers to undertake poverty research, thereby adding to our knowledge in this area.

For future monitoring of poverty trends, causes and potential solutions it will be important that the data enhancements suggested take place. A resource commitment will be required to enable this to happen. This is essential to ensure the effective application of anti-poverty and social inclusion policies.

3. Assessing the Impact of NAPS – Survey Respondents’ Views

Respondents in the postal questionnaire survey viewed the content of NAPS as positive in terms of the support

it provided to people living in poverty. In general, respondents supported the official acknowledgement of poverty, the adoption of specific poverty reduction targets, the introduction of poverty proofing and the use of a relative definition of poverty. On a theoretical level, these issues were seen to be highly significant developments in the area of poverty alleviation. On a practical level, however, the ability of NAPS to sufficiently impact on people experiencing poverty was questioned.

In general, respondents felt that the Strategy did not succeed in bringing the range of needs of the most marginalised groups to the centre of the policy-making process. For this reason the Strategy was viewed by a number of respondents as having failed to impact in a significant and meaningful way on people living in poverty. This was seen to be exacerbated by the absence of a formal review mechanism to evaluate the success, or otherwise, of the Strategy on people living in poverty. As one respondent said:

“The strategy...seems to miss out a section on “how” it will be implemented, how policies will be proofed, how it will be monitored...By this ambiguity...it is not relevant to people at local level.”

The responses from the postal questionnaire survey highlight the lack of a systematic process for monitoring the impact of NAPS as a particular weakness. It was felt that little is known about the impact NAPS has had on poverty and about how much the Strategy itself has contributed to, for example, reduced unemployment rates. Respondents considered that a systematic assessment of the impact NAPS has had on poverty would provide an insight into both the achievements and failings of NAPS, as well as an opportunity to develop specific performance indicators for the Strategy. It was suggested that regular reviews of NAPS be conducted and that progress reports documenting the successes and failures of the Strategy be produced.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has assessed the impact of NAPS through examining changes in the level and nature of poverty, by drawing on analysis of the available data, mainly from the Living in Ireland survey. The process by which poverty is tackled, for example, through implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy is also assessed in this chapter, by drawing on responses to the postal questionnaire survey.

Good research data is essential to provide a knowledge base on the levels of poverty, its nature and causes and trends over time. To date, the assessment of poverty

trends in Ireland has relied mainly on the Living in Ireland survey. This has shown that consistent poverty has fallen while relative income poverty has increased slightly. These trends need to be set in the current economic and social context, of rapid economic growth. People’s living standards have increased generally across the population, but relative income poverty has increased, mainly because social welfare rates, while increasing above inflation, have increased at a lower rate than average incomes. Over the longer term this may result in an increase in consistent poverty as living standards stabilise and societal expectations catch up and adjust to higher average incomes. Thus, in the shorter-term over which NAPS is operating, the fact that real and relative income poverty levels are diverging, needs to be addressed. This could be done through broadening the scope of the global target to encompass distinct elements, such as real income levels, non-monetary deprivation indicators and relative incomes. Alternatively, a relative income poverty target could be set as well as a consistent poverty target.

Additional work is also required in analysing the nature of poverty, in order to be better able to understand the processes at work in creating and sustaining poverty. Further analysis of the Living in Ireland survey should include:

- undertaking longitudinal analysis to monitor changes over time;
- analysing particular groups at high risk of poverty in more depth;
- conducting comparative research setting poverty levels in Ireland in an European and international context.

While the Living in Ireland survey is an extremely important source of information on poverty and in monitoring poverty trends, it needs to be complemented by additional data sources and analyses to provide a complete picture of poverty trends. These are outlined as follows:

- Data is needed on people who do not live in private households, such as people who are homeless, many Traveller families, people living in institutions, and refugees and asylum seekers. People not living in private households include those who are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society. The collection and ongoing analysis of data on people who are not living in private households is difficult, particularly in relation to monitoring their levels of poverty over time. Additional data collection systems should be developed in consultation with the groups affected. This will require a resource

8. The Combat Poverty Agency has commissioned a research project on the potential of secondary data sources as a resource for information on poverty. A draft report is currently being finalised.

commitment to ensure the collection of reliable and useful quality data.

- The need to examine further the allocation of resources within households in order to understand better the needs of individual members within the household.
- The need to reduce, as far as is possible given resource and technical restraints, the turnaround time between data collection and production of results. However, it is necessary to retain data quality and confidence in the results.
- Local data collection is required to complement national household data.
- The establishment of a national data archive should ensure that data-sets are available to Irish social scientists. This should facilitate more researchers to undertake poverty research.

For future monitoring of poverty trends, causes and potential solutions it will be important that the data enhancements suggested take place. A resource commitment will be required to enable this to happen. This is essential to ensure the effective application of anti-poverty and social inclusion policies.

In assessing the impact of NAPS, survey respondents felt that while NAPS was positive in terms of the support it provides to people in poverty, the Strategy failed to bring the range of needs of the most marginalised groups to the centre of the policy-making process. For this reason the Strategy was viewed by a number of respondents as having failed to impact in a significant and meaningful way on people living in poverty. This was seen to be exacerbated by the absence of a formal review mechanism to evaluate the success, or otherwise, of the Strategy on people living in poverty.

Suggestions made for improvement included:

- the inclusion in NAPS of a section on "how" the Strategy will be implemented and monitored;
- the development of performance indicators to monitor the impact of the Strategy on poverty levels;
- regular reviews of NAPS be conducted and progress reports produced that would document the successes and failures of the Strategy.

In summary, this section has assessed the outcomes of NAPS, in terms of trends in the level and changing

nature of poverty in Ireland. This has shown that consistent poverty has been falling, which is to be welcomed. However, it has also shown that income gaps are widening which is an issue which needs attention, if poverty rates are not to increase in the longer term.

Enhancements to data collection and analysis were suggested which would improve our knowledge in monitoring the changing levels and nature of poverty. Additional resources will be required to undertake this work.

Further work is required on assessing how NAPS is operating to work towards poverty reduction in Ireland. This is also an important issue and is further addressed in the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Departmental Actions

The formulation and implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy in 1997 coincided with a period of public service reform. This has impacted on the role of departments in relation to NAPS. The first section of this chapter places NAPS in the context of this reform and outlines departments' responsibilities in terms of the Strategy. Section 2 describes the progress of departments in fulfilling their obligations to NAPS while the third section provides an initial assessment of the developments that have taken place in this area to date, making some suggestions for ways in which NAPS might become more integrated into departmental systems. The final section draws some conclusions.

1. What NAPS Set Out to Do

NAPS challenges government departments and agencies to develop more open and inclusive ways of addressing poverty. The successful outcome of the strategy depends upon a strategic approach which involves all departments and agencies in addressing all aspects of poverty and social exclusion. Thus NAPS requires each department and agency to identify the individual and joint contributions they make to addressing poverty and to achieving the overall objectives of the strategy. This is set within the context of a Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion.

The SMI, which was launched in 1994, represents a comprehensive programme of change for the Irish public service. It provides government departments with a framework to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of their operations with a view to delivering quality services to customers, maximising contribution to national development and making effective use of resources.

A co-ordinating Group of Secretaries, which was appointed to oversee the implementation of the SMI and to suggest management changes and methods of co-ordinating departmental strategies, recommended that individual departments and agencies take ownership of the process of strategic management by drawing up strategy statements. These statements should represent a three-year work plan of departments' objectives, the way in which it is proposed to meet these objectives over time, and how the resources will be used.

The co-ordinating Group of Secretaries also recommended that strategic result areas, i.e. key priority areas of government activity, be developed for the Irish public service. The importance of identifying strategic result areas rests in the cross-departmental element of the SMI which includes a commitment to greater co-

operation between government departments in key priority areas, such as crime, unemployment and poverty. In this context, the government specifically referred to the use of SMI to reflect its commitment to NAPS and to ensure that tackling poverty is given a position of priority across all departments and programmes.

The Second Report of the co-ordinating Group of Secretaries, entitled *Delivering Better Government*, identified poverty as a strategic result area and acknowledged that poverty-related issues can be most effectively addressed by using a cross-departmental approach. Thus, when preparing their strategy statements, each department was required to identify the policy areas within their sections which impact on poverty as well as the specific cross-departmental relationships that are necessary to address them. In accordance with the requirements of the SMI, the approach taken to these issues should be consistent with the NAPS recommendations and highlighted in the departmental SMI strategy statements. This requirement is reiterated in the NAPS Strategy Statement which states that:

"Departments have been required to address the question of poverty in the development of their statements of strategy under the Strategic Management Initiative ... State agencies and local and regional bodies will also be required to address the question of poverty in their statements of strategy under the SMI. Departments will produce annual progress statements to the Inter-Departmental Committee setting out progress achieved over the previous year in relation to the strategy."
(Sharing in Progress, 1997: 20).

Under the SMI, departments are also required to translate the goals and objectives outlined in their strategy statements into business plans for use at individual and team level to inform their day-to-day work. In addition to identifying the business objectives of the various business units and matching unit objectives with high level goals and strategies, the business plans should address the cross-departmental issues identified in the strategy statements. A provision is also made for the production of annual reports on progress made in regard to implementing the strategy statements. Where appropriate, each of these documents should indicate the ways in which NAPS is embedded in the SMI process.

Departments were also asked to undertake a number of key tasks in relation to the NAPS. As is indicated above, the NAPS strategy statement commits departments to report on an annual basis to the NAPS IDPC. In order to facilitate this, a reporting mechanism was put in place specifically for the NAPS whereby departments report to the IDPC through the NAPS Unit on work undertaken and achieved in relation to the Strategy.

Each department was asked to prepare a baseline document in relation to poverty and social exclusion within its own area of responsibility and present it to the IDPC. When constructing these documents, departments were encouraged to look in a strategic way at their plans in relation to poverty and social inclusion, taking account of their commitments to the NAPS, the social inclusion elements of the SMI and the national partnership agreement at that time, **Partnership 2000**.

A number of parameters were laid down for the preparation of baseline documents. These were to set out:

- the key issues relating to poverty and disadvantage in each area of responsibility;
- the objectives and effectiveness of the policies and the programmes
- relevant to poverty and disadvantage;
- the constraints on achieving the objectives;
- the cross-cutting initiatives which might usefully address problems of
- poverty and disadvantage;
- the key action points arising from the review.

Using these guidelines, it was expected that baseline documents would detail departments' commitments in relation to poverty and social inclusion and act as the baseline against which anti-poverty targets would be set and reviewed periodically.

Departments were also required to prepare work plans to deliver on the commitments laid down in their baseline documents and to set specific priorities, targets and deadlines against which progress could be measured on an annual basis. Thus, just as SMI strategy statements were to be accompanied by business plans, baseline documents were to be accompanied by work plans. According to the NAPS Unit, the similarity of these tasks would minimise the amount of additional work required to prepare each document.

The deadline of end December 1997 was set for the development of NAPS work plans. This coincided with the conclusion of NAPS baseline documents and the review of SMI strategy statements within departments.

2. Progress to Date

2.1 Departmental Strategy Statements and Business Plans

In mid 1998, the first strategy statements to be prepared under the SMI were published. Strategy statements covering the years 1998-2001 now exist for each department and are publicly available.

The process of developing business plans involved detailed discussions and the development of objectives for each section and subsection of departments. A number of departments prepared sectional business plans which are only available in, and applicable to, particular departmental divisions. Thus, business plans are publicly available in only a small number of cases.

In accordance with the SMI, annual reports have also been prepared by all departments and when compared with the appropriate strategy statements, it is possible to assess progress made in relation to the key objectives and goals identified. Considerable progress in terms of the development of programmes and initiatives which promote social inclusion was noted for 1998.

2.2 NAPS Baseline Documents, Work Plans and Annual Reports

NAPS baseline documents were submitted in the early part of 1998. These documents provide a broad strategic statement on social inclusion policy relevant to each department. The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs published its baseline document, entitled *Social Inclusion Strategy of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs*, in August 1998. All other baseline documents remain unpublished but can be accessed from the NAPS Unit.

Departments also submitted work plans for 1998 detailing their immediate and future plans in relation to programme development as well as new initiatives progressed in the area of poverty and social exclusion.

Departments were asked for Annual Reports for 1998 and these formed the basis for the NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee Annual Report for 1998/99. This Annual Report set out the main achievements and progress for 1998 in the field of social inclusion. These issues are presented under the five NAPS thematic areas and provide a detailed list of work related to social inclusion which has been undertaken or is ongoing in government departments.

A comparison has been made between the objectives identified in the NAPS Strategy Statement and the achievements highlighted in the NAPS Annual Report,

documented in Appendix 5. This comparison shows that, by and large, the institutional structures have been put in place at a political and administrative level through which to deliver the Strategy, including the introduction of poverty-proofing. It illustrates that substantial progress has been made towards achieving some of the NAPS targets and identifies some initiatives which have taken place under NAPS. While the list of activities is comprehensive, it is not always clear how departmental objectives and actions link to the NAPS objectives and to meeting the NAPS targets. This issue will be further discussed in section 3.

2.3 Government Spending on Social Inclusion and Anti-Poverty Measures

Partnership 2000 committed the Government to additional spending of £525 million in full-year terms on social inclusion measures during the period of the programme (1997-1999). As a result of various social inclusion measures announced in the three annual budgets over this period, additional spending of some £950 million in full year terms will have taken place over this period. It is estimated that gross expenditure on social services generally in 1999, at £11.2 billion, will be one quarter higher than in 1996 (NAPS Annual Report, 1999).

2.4 Cross-departmental and Integrated Approaches

Cross-departmental and integrated approaches to tackling poverty and social exclusion have also developed since 1998. The following is a brief description of some of the initiatives currently in progress.

(a) Literacy for the Unemployed

A cross-departmental group focusing on literacy for the unemployed was set up by the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion. Its first meeting was held in December 1998 and was chaired by the Department of Education and Science. The Group includes representatives from the Departments of Education and Science, Social, Community and Family Affairs, Enterprise, Trade and Employment, FÁS, VECs, the National Adult Literacy Agency and the Local Employment Service.

The Group was established to develop an integrated response to addressing the literacy needs of the unemployed, "to jointly develop measures in consultation with the appropriate statutory agencies and expert groups, and report back to the Cabinet Committee including estimated costs and available funding".

The International Adult Literacy Survey conducted in 1995, and published in 1997, influenced the work of the Group. The survey showed early school leavers, older adults and

unemployed people as being most at risk of literacy difficulties, with participation in adult education and training being least likely for those with the poorest skills.

The Group has now reported to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion. One of the key issues identified by the Group was the need for targets. The Group was of the view that targets should centre on:

- number of clients to be reached;
- target level of investment;
- more effective referral and integration of basic skills into education and training programmes for those in need;
- greater orientation of education and training for the unemployed towards more basic levels of skill;
- prioritisation of those with the lowest literacy levels.

The Group made a number of recommendations in relation to provision and addressing financial barriers and incentives. In particular, the Group recommended that priority access to literacy provision be given to those with the lowest literacy levels. This will include the long-term unemployed and those at risk of unemployment or with acute difficulty in maintaining employment.

(b) Homelessness

A Cross-Departmental Team on Homelessness was established in June 1998 under the aegis of the Department of the Environment and Local Government, under the auspices of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion. The Departments of Finance, Health and Children, Social, Community and Family Affairs, Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Education and Science, Tourism, Sport and Recreation and FÁS are also represented on the team.

The terms of reference for the Team are:

"To develop an integrated response to the many issues which affect homeless people including emergency, transitional and long-term responses as well as issues relating to health, education, employment and home-making."

The Team met a number of times. It received written and oral submissions from official agencies and voluntary bodies providing services for homeless people. The Team is currently finalising its report. It is expected that it will be presented in the near future with firm recommendations on how the issue of homelessness can be addressed. The report will be submitted to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion.

(c) *Local Office Family Services Pilot Project*

This project is being developed by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs to focus on the integrated delivery of public services in conjunction with local communities. It complements the Integrated Services Project, initiated by the Cabinet Sub-Committee through the Local Development Inter-departmental Policy Committee and managed by ADM Ltd., see section (d) below. It is not a cross-departmental initiative but seeks to integrate services at a local level.

The Local Office Family Services Pilot Project is being piloted in Cork, Waterford and Finglas, Dublin. Each project will seek to provide a high quality information service regarding supports available to the family, both statutory and voluntary, with particular emphasis on supports available locally. (NAPS Annual Report, 1999). The implementation of the project commenced in 1999.

(d) *Integrated Services Process (ISP)*

The purpose of the Integrated Services Process (ISP) is to develop a new way of doing business that will lead to a more focussed and better co-ordinated response by the statutory authorities in urban blackspots, as a basis for a model of best practice. The ISP has been developed under the auspices of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Local Development and is targeting four areas of intense urban disadvantage: Dublin's North-East Inner City; Dublin 8 Four Flats Complexes; Jobstown, Tallaght; and Togher, Cork.

Following a decision by the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion, on foot of needs analyses carried out in the four target areas, the implementation phase was launched by the Taoiseach in December 1998 at a special meeting of the Secretaries General of relevant departments and CEOs of relevant statutory agencies. Each of the relevant departments and statutory agencies designated an official at national and local level, who is responsible for driving the ISP within that department or agency. The local nominees have agreed priority themes for action in each area, as part of an implementation team. They are being assisted in this process by a national co-ordinator based in ADM Ltd., who is looking after operational aspects of the project, and by four development and monitoring officers, one based on each of the target areas.

The Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion endorsed fully the main recommendations contained in the First Interim Progress Report on the ISP in July 1999. The Report contains information on the priority themes and issues in each of the four areas, which are now being implemented. These include issues such as early school leaving and localisation of services. The Report

also highlights the fundamental need for departments and agencies to heighten their engagement with the ISP at the national level, particularly in the areas of budget planning, resource deployment and new programme design.

To reinforce the Government's commitment to the ISP, the Taoiseach convened a meeting of departmental Secretaries General and agency CEOs in November 1999 to review progress being made in implementing the ISP in the relevant organisations. Feed-back from the meeting was positive and progress reports submitted by the departments and agencies indicate a high degree of commitment and enthusiasm in implementing the ISP. There are some concerns, however, that the ISP is not understood or actively supported at central level in some organisations.

External evaluators¹ are working on their first ISP Progress Report, which will be completed in early 2000. The evaluators, in consultation with ADM Ltd., have decided to focus on two specific issues: early school leaving and integration, from which models of best practice can be developed. A number of thematic workshops have been held on these issues, both locally and with the central nominees. It is intended to use the evaluators' findings in the second progress report which will be submitted to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion in May 2000. This report will provide evidence of tangible achievements which have been made.

The ISP National Steering Committee has decided not to roll-out the ISP to other pilot areas. From the outset, the ISP has been focused on improving the co-ordination and delivery of state services in a small number of selected pilot areas. The purpose of the process is to develop a 'model of best practice' that could be implemented in all other urban blackspots. Thus, the focus should be on identifying such models and not on extending the pilots. It has, therefore, been decided to concentrate on progressing the themes identified with a view to being in a position to replicate at least some of the models of best practice on a wider scale.

3. An Initial Assessment

This initial assessment is primarily based on an evaluation of the content of SMI strategy statements and NAPS baseline documents. It was conducted with a view to assessing the extent to which departments have identified a role in relation to poverty and social exclusion and the degree to which relevant programmes and activities are informed by NAPS. It also draws on the responses to the postal questionnaire survey and a review of New Zealand's public sector management system.

3.1 SMI Strategy Statements and Business Plans

The approach taken to devising and presenting strategy statements differed from department to department. In some instances, the objectives and goals in relation to the key SMI themes were outlined for each section while in other instances they were outlined for the department as a whole. Irrespective of the approach taken, however, strategy statements gave due attention to methods of enhancing accountability, improving the management of human resources and public finances, increasing accountability and managing cross-departmental issues. Where they were limited, however, was the extent to which the question of poverty was addressed under the SMI. This was as much the case for some departments who have a central role in relation to NAPS as it was for departments who have a more peripheral role.

Actions that are intrinsically associated with poverty alleviation were linked with NAPS in only a small number of strategy statements. This extended to the cross-departmental component of the SMI. Across the range of strategy statements produced by departments, references to cross-departmental co-ordination included a commitment to initiate a more open and collaborative approach to attaining objectives but lacked a specific description of the areas in which this might be achieved. In its strategy statement, for example, the Department of Finance placed considerable emphasis on the importance of cross-departmental initiatives and mentioned that its objectives in this regard included:

"to contribute to Strategic Result Areas, particularly those crossing Departmental boundaries, which require a coherent and collective response by the Department." (Department of Finance, 1998: 27).

The specific departments with which it intends to co-operate were not identified. Moreover, despite the identification of poverty as a strategic result area under the SMI, and despite the centrality of its role in relation to poverty alleviation, the Department of Finance did not identify cross-cutting issues in relation to poverty and social exclusion. This is characteristic of the majority of strategy statements produced by departments.

In terms of highlighting the key changes which have been made to policies because of the NAPS, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs is unique. In both its strategy statement and business plan, it provided clear and specific insights into its work in relation to NAPS. This contrasted greatly with, for example, the Department of Education and Science which simply acknowledged educational disadvantage as

one of the key areas of the NAPS before saying that the principles underpinning the strategy are reflected in the goals, objectives and activities in the department's strategy statement. Despite acknowledging the NAPS, the specific links that exist between its work and the strategy were not outlined in its report. With the exception of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, this was a weakness across all of the strategy statements.

In summary, this preliminary assessment revealed that despite the requirements of the SMI, very few departments explicitly addressed the question of poverty in their strategy statements and business plans. In fact the SMI objectives which have direct relevance to NAPS could only be inferred from the majority of these documents. As a consequence, the degree to which anti-poverty initiatives inform the day-to-day work of government could not adequately be established.

3.2 NAPS Baseline Documents and Work Plans

An assessment of the NAPS baseline documents and work plans revealed that the requirement to construct these documents in a particular way helped to focus departments' attention more specifically on the contribution they make to tackling poverty and social exclusion. An assessment of the content of these documents revealed, however, that there was considerable room for improvement.

Firstly, very few departments adhered to the specific parameters which were laid down for constructing baseline documents and work plans. As a result, some important information was absent from a number of the reports. While most of the departments identified the poverty-related objectives for which they are responsible, only a small proportion of them identified the key constraints on achieving these objectives and the cross-cutting issues which might usefully benefit them.

Secondly, much of the information contained in the baseline documents was descriptive and in some cases, unrelated to anti-poverty initiatives. For this reason, the links that exist between poverty and the objectives identified were not always apparent.

Thirdly, some of the baseline documents contained information that was derived exclusively from the corresponding SMI strategy statements. A small number of these documents were devoid of references to NAPS while the majority of them contained lengthy lists of the broad range of initiatives in which the departments' are involved.

1. The external evaluators are Price Waterhouse Coopers

For one or more of these reasons, a number of government departments did not explicitly identify the role they play in relation to NAPS. Although this was primarily the case for departments who have a peripheral role in relation to Strategy, it was also the case for a number of departments who have been identified as having a central role in relation to it.

Much of the information contained in many of the baseline documents merely hinted at policies and programmes to address poverty and social exclusion. In its baseline document, for example, the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands highlighted its work to improve arts and cultural institutions, waterways, work to off-shore islands and gaeltacht areas. It did not, however, highlight the specific ways in which this work inputs into NAPS. As a consequence, the contribution this department makes to addressing poverty and social exclusion can only be inferred from its baseline document. This was also the case with regard to some of the information contained in the baseline documents produced by the Departments of Public Enterprise, Agriculture and Food and Marine and Natural Resources.

The baseline document produced by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs represents a good model. The document follows the specific parameters laid down for baseline documents and it is constructed in a manner that facilitates an insight into exactly how the various programmes and activities of the department address issues of central importance to poverty and social exclusion. Another good example was produced by the Department of Environment and Local Government. In accordance with the guidelines for constructing baseline documents, this department clearly outlined its contribution to NAPS in the areas of housing policy, local development and urban renewal.

Because the NAPS work plans were derived from the strategy statements, they are subject to the same weaknesses identified above. In summary, therefore, there is clearly a great need for both the baseline documents and the work plans to be revisited with a view to developing stronger and more direct links with the NAPS. In the absence of these links, it is difficult to ascertain the degree to which anti-poverty actions have been re-prioritised within departments.

3.3 Responses from the Questionnaire Survey

Departmental baseline documents, work plans and cross-departmental working were not specifically identified by postal questionnaire respondents, although this is hardly surprising given that most of this work has been internal

to the civil service. It is notable, however, that these issues were not specifically raised by statutory-sector respondents.

Positive responses which alluded to departmental plans and cross-departmental working included:

- an Inter-agency/Inter-departmental approach to poverty;
- improved coherence of policy-making;
- making poverty an important component of policy-making.

Some shortcomings were noted, however, encapsulated in the following quotes:

“[NAPS is] not sufficiently embedded in the culture of individual departments.”

“In my experience, many government departments have not been adequately resourced to implement the [poverty proofing] guidelines. If they were taken seriously, then structures would need to be developed in each department (for example, inter-sectional working groups) to conceptualise the effects of their policies in terms of their effect on poverty and then to develop appropriate strategies for addressing the negative effects, and enhancing the positive.”

Elements of this idea are further developed in the next section.

3.4 Lessons from a Review of New Zealand's Public Sector Management System

One of the key issues emerging from the analysis so far is how difficult it has been to operationalise the NAPS objectives into tangible actions at departmental level, which will lead to achievement of the NAPS targets. The theory is fine, but the practice has been proven to be difficult. Similar issues have come up in other public sector management programmes. One which is not dissimilar to the Irish initiative, and which has been fairly extensively reviewed, is the New Zealand Public Sector Management System (State Services Commission, 1998).

Key findings emerging from the reviews of the New Zealand system are:

- the system is more geared to the short-term production of outputs rather than to planning for

the long-term, and to accounting for what is produced rather than to evaluating progress in achieving major policy objectives;

- the identification of problems in relation to how governments set strategic priorities and in how the public service helps them meet those goals;
- clearer specification and better achievement of outputs is effective only if there is certainty that the production of outputs leads to the achievement of outcomes, and only if outcomes can be broken down into measurable parts and distributed among the various departments as outputs.

To address some of these weaknesses the creation of Strategic Result Area networks has been proposed to better focus on outcomes, (for further information on strategic result area networks see Appendix 6).

This approach would seem to address some of the weaknesses identified in the analysis of the NAPS within the Irish civil service. It may be useful to pilot some of the concepts identified in the review of the New Zealand public management system, and in other systems, in the Irish civil service with a view to trying to operationalise the NAPS objectives in a tangible way.

4. Conclusion

It is evident that in the years since the introduction of NAPS much progress has taken place in terms of the establishment of institutional structures to underpin the strategy and the identification and development of programmes and initiatives which promote social inclusion. In this context, it is worth noting that the whole environment for social inclusion has changed in recent years. Departments, which had hitherto not seen it within their respective remits to deal with social issues, are now considering the impact of their policies on people who are poor and socially excluded. There has been a tremendous cultural shift in Departmental thinking during the lifetime of the NAPS. Social inclusion has come much more to the fore in public policy and debate.

However, as this chapter has shown, more remains to be done to ensure that poverty reduction becomes a strategic objective in each government department. As demonstrated by this assessment of SMI strategy statements and NAPS baseline documents, a number of departments have not yet adequately assessed the impact of their policies and programmes in relation to poverty. Moreover, many of them have yet to recognise the cross-cutting nature of poverty and to identify the

arrangements that would facilitate co-ordination of actions across departments.

Nevertheless, an important start has been made and there are some good models to draw on. In this context it may be worthwhile to consider a pilot in one or two departments where approaches which have been found to be successful in other similar public service administrations might be modeled here, with a view to trying to operationalise the NAPS objectives in a more tangible way.

to Irish speakers, especially the Gaeltacht Communities.”
(Sharing in Progress, 1997: 22).

Thus, NAPS was committed to informing both the general public and the public service about the extent and nature of poverty in Ireland and about NAPS. Government departments and the Combat Poverty Agency were identified as the key promoters of this information. The information was to be made available in Irish as well as English.

The next section examines the information produced on poverty in Ireland and on NAPS in particular.

2. Progress in Publicising NAPS to date

In a public attitudes survey carried out for the Combat Poverty Agency by Research and Evaluation Services in Spring 1998, almost one year after the launch of the Strategy, only 8% of those surveyed had heard of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. Yet an overwhelming majority (81%) felt that Government should be involved in such a Strategy, suggesting the need to publicise NAPS.

Appendix 7 summarises material produced specifically on NAPS, by whom it was published, its dissemination and whether it is/was available in Irish. The table focuses on NAPS-specific material.

It is relevant to note that the Combat Poverty Agency produces a range of material on the nature and extent of poverty in Ireland and on anti-poverty measures and policies. This includes: a quarterly magazine, *Poverty Today*, an Annual Report, factsheets on poverty, *Poverty Briefings*, policy submissions, research reports, resource materials, policy papers and information leaflets. Government departments, particularly the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs also produce regular reports which may include information on poverty and press releases and statements with a poverty focus. Bodies like the ESRI, NESF and NESCC often publish on poverty-related issues. The community and voluntary sector produce reports, leaflets, guides and newsletters with a focus on NAPS.

Most of the information on NAPS has been disseminated by the Combat Poverty Agency, through its quarterly magazine, *Poverty Today* which carries a regular feature on the strategy. The promotion of greater public awareness of NAPS is a key goal in the Agency's Strategic Plan 1999-2001.

The NAPS Unit/Department of Social, Community and

Family Affairs has produced some material on NAPS. The State has been fully or partly responsible for publication of NAPS Report and summary of same, the IDPC Annual Report, the ESRI analysis of the Living in Ireland survey data, the NAPS Unit promotional leaflet, as well as regular articles for the Combat Poverty Agency's *Poverty Today* magazine. These documents are accessible and assist in raising the profile of the Government's social inclusion initiatives. A Communications strategy for NAPS is also being considered by the State.

It is disappointing that other bodies, such as other government departments and social policy institutions e.g. university journals etc., have not sought to discuss and/or raise the profile of NAPS.

In October 1997 the Combat Poverty Agency prepared a discussion paper, An Information and Public Education Strategy for the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, for NAPS IDPC, at the Committee's request. This discussion paper proposed an overall aim, objectives and principles for an information and public-education strategy and set out the two complementary strands that such a strategy might have. The first focused on creating an *ongoing profile* for NAPS. It was envisaged that *increasing awareness* of NAPS would in its turn create an awareness of the government leading efforts to tackle poverty. The second strand focused on *increasing poverty awareness* through a more informed analysis and understanding of the causes, extent and experience of poverty, which it was felt is fundamental to support for the need for economic and social change in favour of the poor.

The paper was considered at an IDPC meeting in November 1997. Members were favourably disposed towards the proposed strategy and undertook to liaise with their press/information sections. The information and public education strategy was approved by the IDPC in April 1998.

One initiative followed up in relation to the strategy was the proposed establishment of a "NAPS Profiling Group", on which would sit departmental press officers, members of NAPS IDPC, the NAPS Unit, Combat Poverty Agency and the National Anti-Poverty Networks. The NAPS Unit and Combat Poverty Agency arranged to meet with departmental press officers on two occasions to discuss a NAPS communications strategy and the potential establishment of such a group. Nine of the 13 Departments expressed an interest in this initiative. The press officers were keen to promote tangible actions which had taken place under NAPS.

Thus, while in principle, there is support for the idea of promoting NAPS, the occasions in which this has been

done in practice have been somewhat limited, evidence of which is indicated in the analysis of press coverage in the next section of this report. In general, the government has been concerned at the relatively low awareness of NAPS activity, both within the civil service and publicly, and the need for a greater degree of co-ordination and co-operation between departments generally, and in relation to announcements more specifically.

Training, of liaison officers in particular, was considered to be another important component of informing the internal civil service about NAPS. This was identified as a priority by NAPS IDPC. An initial two-and-a-half day training programme was drawn up by the NAPS Unit and the Combat Poverty Agency for NAPS liaison officers, and delivered in 1998. It was reasonably well attended, but because of many staff changes, it may be opportune to repeat and extend this exercise, especially in relation to the implementation of poverty proofing.

3. An Initial Assessment

This initial assessment of the profile of NAPS is based on two key sources of information, the mention of NAPS in national and regional newspapers from 1997 to 1999, and information from the postal questionnaire survey.

3.1 Analysis of NAPS Coverage in National and Regional Newspapers

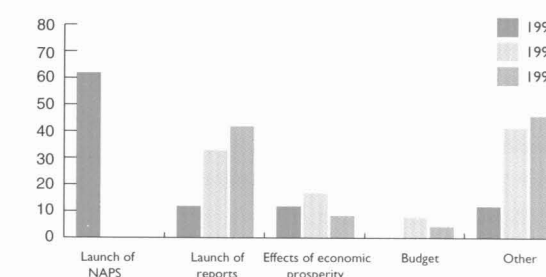
Forty-four articles from national and regional newspapers for the years 1997 to 1999 were sourced. The majority of these appeared in the national dailies, namely the *Irish Times* (16), the *Irish Independent* (eight) and *The Examiner* (six). There was an increase in the number of articles on NAPS from eight in 1997 to twenty-four in 1999. As indicated in Figure 8.1, this increase is largely attributed to proportionally more reporting by the *Irish Independent* in 1998 and in other national and local newspapers such as the *Irish Catholic*, the *Sligo Champion*, *Kerry's Eye* and the *Westmeath Independent* in 1999. However, there was a relative drop in reporting on NAPS between 1998 and 1999 in the two key opinion-forming newspapers with the widest national dissemination.

Figure 8.1: % spread of articles for each year 1997-1999 across a number of different newspapers



The focus of the articles revealed a number of re-occurring central themes as illustrated in Figure 8.2 below. It is not surprising to note that there was a marked change in the central themes of the articles from 1997 to 1999. The majority of articles (62%) published in 1997 highlighted the launch of NAPS. All of these articles were specifically concerned with NAPS and provided information on NAPS targets, infrastructural arrangements and the role of the Government.

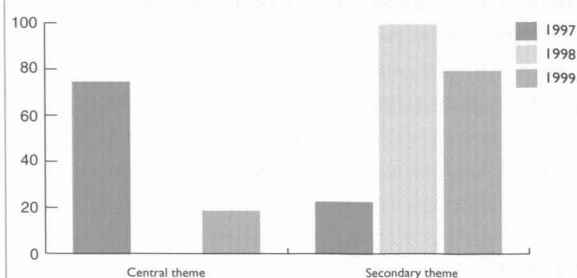
Figure 8.2: % spread of central themes across the three years



A steady increase in the number of articles reporting on the results of recently completed research in relation to poverty was recorded from 1997 to 1999. Much of this research emanated from the Combat Poverty Agency, most of which was research on general poverty issues rather than NAPS specific research, apart from the *Monitoring Poverty Trends* report launched in 1999. It was notable that in 1999, 25% of the articles appearing in the "launch of reports" category were specifically concerned with the first Annual Report of NAPS. The impact of economic prosperity on people living in poverty was also reported in a significant proportion of the articles. For 1998 and 1999, a high proportion of articles were classified in the 'Other' category for the reasons that they either covered a range of issues in relation to anti-poverty work or were too general to warrant specific classification.

The content of the articles ranged from the general to the specific. In an attempt to capture the emphasis placed on NAPS within the articles, they were each classified in terms of the centrality of NAPS theme. In 1997, the year NAPS was launched, 75% of the articles focused specifically on NAPS. However, this emphasis changed considerably in the following years when NAPS appeared as a secondary theme in all of the articles published in 1998 and in 75% of those published in 1999. This is illustrated in Figure 8.3.

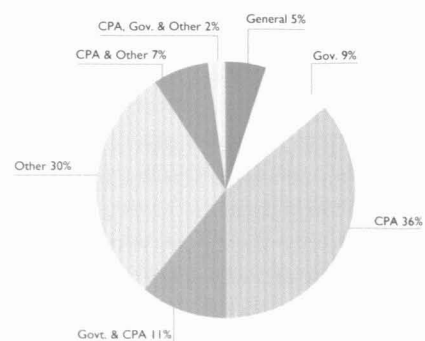
Figure 8.3: Emphasis placed on NAPS in articles across the three years (%)



In the majority of articles where NAPS was a secondary theme, mention of NAPS was confined to one or two brief sentences that highlighted the significance of anti-poverty strategies. Close examination of the content of the articles revealed that NAPS tended to be submerged by other information which in turn rendered it less visible to the readers. While the importance of mentioning NAPS in articles, albeit as a secondary theme is acknowledged, its contribution to raising public awareness of NAPS appears to be limited.

To explore this further the origins of all references to NAPS were identified. Figure 8.4 shows that references to NAPS came from three main sources: the Government, the Combat Poverty Agency (CPA) and 'Other' organisations including, amongst others, the ESRI, St Vincent de Paul, the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), and the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE). In a small percentage (5%) of cases references to NAPS could not be attributed to any organisation in particular and as such, they were classified as 'general'.

Figure 8.4: Source of references to NAPS (%)



In view of the importance of the national anti-poverty strategy as a major Government initiative it is interesting that only 9% of the articles containing references to NAPS were made solely by the Government; while 11% of references made by the Government were accompanied by references from the CPA. The percentage of references to NAPS by the Government totals 22% in contrast to 56% for the CPA. In this

context, however, it is important to note that it is not possible to dictate what appears in the newspapers. Also, in relation to promotion by the Government, this may have taken the form of promotion of the Government's social inclusion strategy, rather than NAPS specifically.

Nevertheless, as demonstrated by Figure 8.4, the highest percentage of references to NAPS has been made by the CPA which, along with organisations in the 'Other' category, has promoted NAPS in its press work. In many instances these organisations highlighted the benefits of having an anti-poverty strategy and pointed to the importance of setting and achieving sufficiently ambitious poverty reduction targets. These comments are generally situated in articles concerned with the effects of economic prosperity and the results of recently published reports on poverty in Ireland. In a number of articles, the CPA was critical of annual government budgetary measures which it felt were not in keeping with the strategy.

Analysis of press coverage on a chronological basis reveals that after the initial launch of NAPS there was a significant decrease in Government commentary from 50% in 1997 to 17% in 1999. It is interesting to note that the Government was quoted in none of the articles published in 1998 while the CPA and other organisations were quoted in 92% and 25%, respectively.

Closer examination of the articles indicates that the majority of references made to NAPS by the Government have arisen in response to two major events, namely the launch of the strategy in 1997 and the launch of the first Annual Report of NAPS in 1999. In all but a few other instances, the Government is scarcely evident. When the Government does receive press coverage in relation to NAPS it is in relation to NAPS specific work, whereas the Combat Poverty Agency and other organisations tend to take any opportunity to mention NAPS in their press releases.

The lack of evidence of the Government's public promotion of NAPS may be attributable in part to three factors. The first is that material may have been prepared in press releases but may not have been carried in the press or may have been severely edited. For example, efforts were made by Government to publicise the poverty-proofing initiative at its introduction in 1998, but it received relatively little coverage. This may be because as a technical exercise it is not particularly "news-friendly". In contrast, policy made as a result of poverty-proofing, providing evidence of the impact of proofing, would be more "news-friendly", but to-date has rarely been put into the public domain.

Secondly, the current government has been promoting a social-inclusion strategy of which NAPS is part. Much of its press coverage relates to initiatives within the broader ambit of social inclusion, for example, the integrated services process, and measures to tackle educational disadvantage and as such may not carry a "NAPS tag". Related to this, there is little evidence of tangible discrete initiatives that have arisen directly as a result of NAPS which could be "NAPS-branded" and promoted as such on a regular basis.

Thirdly, this analysis has focused on the examination of outcomes, such as newspaper reports. The analysis does not include an examination of the speeches, addresses made at public fora (e.g. family fora, pre- and post-budget fora), appearances at day to day events, media briefings etc., where members of the Government make reference to NAPS and social inclusion initiatives in general. In most cases this information does not make its way into the media.

However, notwithstanding these three factors it is disappointing that NAPS, as a major government strategy to considerably reduce poverty in Ireland, is not more evident in the public domain, particularly through the Government's own media channels. Analysis of the press coverage shows that the frequency with which NAPS has been mentioned in national, regional and local newspapers and the manner in which it has been brought to people's attention has mainly been through the CPA and other organisations concerned with reducing poverty.

3.2 Views of Respondents in the Postal Questionnaire

The questionnaire survey highlighted the lack of a public profile for NAPS, expressed by one respondent as follows:

"There has been very poor public communication of NAPS. As the Strategy document points out 'public opinion is extremely important for the success of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. The public needs to continue to be informed concerning the extent, depth, trends in, and location of poverty in Ireland and of its negative consequences for all of society.' Yet there are very few members of the public (or indeed of the media) who know that NAPS exists, much less what it means."

Ninety per cent of respondents thought that the profile of NAPS should be further enhanced. Indeed, major

weaknesses identified in NAPS were inadequate public awareness raising and education, and lack of promotion of NAPS. This was articulated by one respondent as:

"One of its key weaknesses is that it has not a high profile. The general public should be made aware of its existence and aims, and development agencies should have the opportunity to become involved actively in it. As it is, it exists in name only and means little to groups on the ground."

Nevertheless, a strength of NAPS was seen to be that it increased awareness of poverty. In general, respondents felt that the profile of NAPS should be enhanced with everybody and the following were specifically mentioned: the general public, the community and voluntary sector, local government, central government and state agencies, the social partners, trade unions, the media and people living in poverty.

In terms of the long-term importance and direction of NAPS a key component was seen to be increasing public awareness of poverty, improving the profile of NAPS and improving training, education and resources. The following strategies were specifically mentioned:

- to introduce a Public Relations dimension to NAPS;
- to create a focused media and marketing strategy;
- to promote education and training; and
- to improve the general dissemination of information.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that awareness of NAPS by the general public is low. In a public attitudes survey only 8% of those surveyed had heard of NAPS. Awareness is also low among those who might be expected to be more informed, such as the social partners, the wider community and voluntary sector and public servants.

While the ultimate aim of NAPS should be to prevent and reduce poverty in Ireland the support of public opinion is important for its success. As stated in NAPS Strategy Statement the public need to continue to be informed about the extent, depth, trends in, and location of poverty in Ireland and of its negative consequences for all of society.

Material has been produced explaining and promoting the Strategy and actions associated with it, but the quantity and dissemination of this material has been sporadic rather than systematic. Most of the material

produced and disseminated has been by the Combat Poverty Agency and some community and voluntary sector groups. Given that NAPS is a Government initiative, the production and dissemination of material on NAPS by the Government has been disappointingly low, particularly press coverage.

It is acknowledged that achieving the outcome of poverty alleviation is ultimately more important than the profile of the Strategy itself. Nevertheless, awareness of the work the government is doing in this area is important for garnering public opinion and support. As clearly demonstrated by the analysis of material produced and disseminated, press cuttings and the questionnaire survey there is a need to raise awareness and improve information on the nature and extent of poverty in Ireland and initiatives being undertaken to tackle it. As NAPS is a major government initiative the government should be central in promoting this message, through using a "NAPS brand" message, if necessary.

Through the CPA's *Information and Public Education Strategy for the National Anti-Poverty Strategy* a framework is in place through which the profiling of NAPS and increased awareness of poverty can be developed. What is required is that actions be put in place to implement the strategy.

There is also a need to promote NAPS within the public service. NAPS should be a key element of induction training and should be incorporated as a key training module in its own right, for example on the implementation of poverty proofing. Other mechanisms should be explored for raising awareness of NAPS, including better mechanisms of dissemination of information eg. through use of electronic systems, seminars, newsletters, staff secondments and so on.

In summary, key issues to be addressed in raising the profile of NAPS in future include:

- to improve civil service knowledge;
- to extend information to local authorities and state agencies;
- to keep the social partners informed;
- to get information to communities doing anti-poverty work; and
- to inform the public, particularly through the media.

Chapter 9: Future Issues and Conclusions

The first section of this chapter discusses responses from the questionnaire survey in relation to whether possible alternatives to NAPS should be considered, the long-term importance and direction of NAPS and issues to be addressed in the further evaluation of NAPS. The second section draws together some conclusions on this overall assessment.

1. Future Issues – Respondents' Views

1.1 Alternatives to NAPS?

The majority of respondents considered NAPS to be the best approach to reducing poverty in Ireland. Consequently, rather than suggesting alternatives to the strategy, the respondents proposed ways of improving it. The suggestions made related to the main gaps and weaknesses in NAPS. Illustrative responses were as follows:

"I believe NAPS is very important. However, resources are needed to implement the Strategy, the poverty proofing guidelines need to be pushed more firmly and the target time-frames need to be set over three-year periods."

And,

"For all its weaknesses, NAPS is an important landmark in Irish social policy. It is vital that it is seen not as a once-off ten-year strategy and that the anti-poverty principles, approach and focus are worked into the operation of all government departments and organisations."

One of the primary criticisms of NAPS was seen to be a lack of strong political will. For this reason, stronger political and institutional will was a frequently identified requirement for the future implementation of NAPS. In addition, respondents expressed the need for more ambitious poverty reduction targets, improved resources and increased public awareness raising and education. These were identified as major weaknesses in the Strategy and were raised time and again by respondents from across all of the sectors.

NAPS was also seen to need more inclusive strategies. A number of respondents expressed the need to politically

empower the poor with a view to ensuring that their voices are heard. It was expressed throughout the survey that NAPS was a top-down decision-making body that excluded the voluntary and community sector as well as people living in poverty. As one respondent commented:

"NAPS requires structured involvement of the community and voluntary sector, both in target setting and monitoring of implementation, in order to make it more effective and relevant to those living in poverty, and to generate greater support."

Respondents also referred to the need to develop a monitoring mechanism to oversee the implementation of the strategy as well as to identify, and address, its main strengths and weaknesses.

For NAPS to become a more effective approach to reducing poverty and social exclusion in Ireland the following goals were specifically identified:

- stronger political and institutional will to "champion" the Strategy must exist;
- there must be a greater refinement of the Strategy and measures to enforce its implementation;
- additional resources must be allocated;
- set more ambitious targets;
- its consultative processes;
- increase public awareness and education;
- politically empower the poor.

1.2 The Long-Term Importance and Direction of NAPS

NAPS was considered by the respondents to have a number of long-term benefits. These benefits emanated from the official recognition of poverty, the adoption of specific poverty reduction targets, the use of a relative definition of poverty and the creation of institutional structures. On the strength of these issues, the respondents identified a number of issues as being central to the long-term importance and direction of NAPS. These included:

- placing poverty at the heart of the policy-making process;
- increasing public awareness of poverty;
- working towards reducing poverty and social exclusion;
- consolidating support on tackling poverty;
- addressing the multi-dimensional nature of poverty;

- creating an institutional mechanism for monitoring poverty;
- decentralising NAPS to local level;
- providing training, education and resources;
- strengthening poverty-proofing;
- improving the targets.

1.3 The Evaluation of NAPS

In response to the question "What, in your view, are the three main areas on which the evaluation of NAPS should focus?" the most frequently stated response related to the validity, achievements and methods of implementation of the various programmes and measures in alleviating poverty. In this context, respondents highlighted NAPS targets and institutional structures in particular and pointed to the need to ensure that they are adequately monitored and assessed. According to one respondent the evaluation of NAPS should focus on:

"... the institutional mechanisms and the barriers which have existed within them with regard to the implementation of NAPS [and] ... target setting, i.e. the quality of target setting, the processes used and related ways of measuring progress."

The following issues in particular were identified for consideration in the further evaluation of NAPS:

- the process, or lack thereof, of involving people/organisations in NAPS;
- resources for NAPS;
- poverty-proofing;
- public perception and understanding of NAPS;
- the disparity between the rich and the poor.

Respondents also suggested that a number of specific areas should be central to the evaluation of NAPS, and included the following:

- long-term unemployment;
- educational disadvantage, and in particular early school leaving;
- rural poverty;
- urban poverty;
- homelessness;
- children;
- the elderly.

These issues will be followed up through the establishment, by the Combat Poverty Agency, of an Evaluation Advisory Group.

2. Conclusions

In national, European and international terms the Irish National Anti-Poverty Strategy is an important and innovative approach to putting poverty and social exclusion at the centre of public policy. Key features include:

- the development of an ambitious national anti-poverty strategy involving extensive consultation;
- the acceptance of an agreed definition of relative poverty which also encompasses social exclusion;
- a shared analysis of the main causes of poverty;
- a cross-departmental initiative which recognises the multi-dimensional nature of poverty;
- targets for poverty reduction;
- structures through which the strategy can be delivered and which place poverty at the centre of public policy;
- the implementation of a system of proofing policies for their impact on poverty.

In recent years Ireland has experienced extraordinary economic growth. This has brought about a very welcome reduction in unemployment. In 1997, consistent poverty had substantially fallen to under 10% of the population.

It is important to acknowledge the great strides which have been made in poverty reduction in Ireland in recent years. However, it is important also to recognise that these changes bring with them new issues and challenges. NAPS needs to be able to identify and rise to these new challenges which include increasing income inequalities and the emergence of groups within the population with a high and/or increasing risk of poverty.

We are in the fortunate position that we now have the resources available to essentially eliminate poverty in Ireland. To do so will require the right policies and the resources and will effectively to implement them. Good quality data and research is required to ensure that changes are monitored on an ongoing basis and policies are adjusted accordingly.

A key question is the extent to which NAPS has contributed to the reduction in consistent poverty. This question is difficult to answer on the basis of this assessment. Some might argue that as the outcome of poverty reduction is being achieved, the process by which this is achieved is less important. However, it is essential that the process for tackling poverty is effective and efficient. It is also vital that the Strategy is perceived to be tackling poverty in terms of gaining support for this approach.

There is evidence to suggest that NAPS has made some difference:

- It has strengthened a political and societal consensus that there is a need to reduce levels of poverty in Ireland.
- It has raised awareness, particularly within the administrative system, of the need to address poverty, e.g. the introduction of poverty-proofing.
- The Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion has the promotion of social inclusion as its key focus.
- NAPS targets create a focal point for poverty reduction.
- At a European and international level Ireland is seen as a model in terms of economic growth. It is also seen as a model in terms of the development of a national anti-poverty strategy.

In conclusion NAPS is an important mechanism through which poverty reduction/elimination can be achieved. Even those who are critical of elements of NAPS or the speed of its implementation see it as a very important development in the struggle against poverty and social exclusion. However, it also has its weaknesses. Key among these is the difficulty in translating objectives into operational measures which can work towards the achievement of NAPS targets i.e. how to implement NAPS. The failure to involve the community and voluntary sector in the implementation of NAPS has also been a key weakness.

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* sets out a comprehensive work programme for the revision and revitalisation of NAPS. If this programme of work is implemented with energy and imagination, then in the current favourable economic circumstances, poverty in Ireland can be eliminated.

Appendix 1

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY (NAPS)

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) was launched in April 1997, following a commitment to develop an anti-poverty strategy and consultation with people living in poverty and organisations representing them.

NAPS set a ten-year target for poverty reduction in Ireland and identified 5 key areas as needing particular attention in tackling poverty: income adequacy, unemployment, educational disadvantage, urban concentrations of disadvantage and rural poverty. It identified a number of institutional mechanisms to implement NAPS.

The Combat Poverty Agency has responsibility for overseeing an evaluation of NAPS process. As part of this evaluation we are undertaking a review of progress on the implementation of NAPS to date and to identify key evaluation questions for NAPS.

It is in this context we are interested in getting your views on the following questions and any other comments you may wish to make. Views will be presented collectively under thematic headings so that your contribution or your organisation will not be personally identified in the subsequent report. You may wish to note that the Combat Poverty Agency will become subject to the Freedom of Information Act within the next 12 months.

Please complete and return the questionnaire by Thursday 9 September 1999. Your views will be very important in assessing progress on NAPS to date and the key issues on which to focus over the next few years. The results will help us to develop a longer-term in-depth evaluation.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Helen Johnston (Tel. 01 6026612; e-mail johnstonh@cpa.ie) or Veronica McNamara (Tel. 01 6026622; e-mail mcnamara@cpa.ie). If you wish to receive the questionnaire by e-mail please contact Veronica.

Infrastructure of NAPS: by this we mean the institutional mechanisms, procedures and consultation mechanisms of NAPS.

1. What, in your view, are the three main achievements in the implementation of the NAPS infrastructure?
2. What, in your view, are the three main weaknesses in the implementation of the NAPS infrastructure?
3. Are there any gaps in the infrastructural arrangements of NAPS? If yes, what are they and how should they be addressed?
 - a. Gaps in infrastructural arrangements of NAPS – yes/no (Please circle answer)
 - b. If yes, what are the gaps?
 - c. If yes, how should these gaps be addressed?

Content of NAPS: by this we mean the thematic areas, principles, targets, objectives, policies and actions of NAPS.

4. What, in your view, are the three main achievements in relation to the content of NAPS?
5. What, in your view, are the three main weaknesses in relation to the content of NAPS?
6. In your experience, have any significant poverty priorities been missed? If yes, what are they and in what way should they be included?

- a. Have poverty priorities been missed? – yes/no (Please circle answer)
- b. If yes, what poverty priorities have been missed?
- c. If yes, in what way should these poverty priorities be included?

7. Should the profile of NAPS be further enhanced? If so, with whom and how?

- a. Further enhance profile of NAPS? – yes/no (Please circle answer)
- b. If yes, with whom?
- c. If yes, how?

8. What, in your view, are the three main areas on which the evaluation of NAPS should focus?

9a. What is your view of the long-term importance and direction of NAPS?

9b. How could the long-term importance and significance of NAPS be enhanced?

10a. Do you think the current economic growth in Ireland has changed the nature and experience of poverty (give reasons for your answer).

- a. Is economic growth changing the nature and experience of poverty? – yes/no (Please circle answer)
- b. If yes, in what way(s) is the current economic growth changing the nature of poverty?

10b. In your opinion what needs to be done to address poverty in the current economic climate?

11. In your view is NAPS the best approach to reducing poverty in Ireland or can you suggest a better alternative?

- a. Is NAPS the best approach to reducing poverty? – yes/no (Please circle answer)
- b. If no, please elaborate on a better alternative ...

Any Other Comments?

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this short questionnaire. This interim review exercise will help us to develop a longer term in-depth evaluation. However, if there is anything you wish to discuss further at this stage, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Appendix 2

Summary of Main Findings of the Postal Questionnaire Survey

This appendix provides a summary of the main findings of the questionnaire survey. In relation to the responses it is worth noting the following:

- The views expressed were in the main consistent across sectors. In particular, the statutory and the community and voluntary sectors tended to identify similar issues e.g. the need for more consultation and greater involvement of the community and voluntary sector in NAPS, and the need to enhance the profile of NAPS.
- Overall, the responses of the statutory sector tended to be general while the responses of the community and voluntary sector tended to relate to specific issues. This reflects the concerns of their work.

1. Achievements in the Implementation of NAPS Infrastructure

The three most commonly identified achievements in the implementation of NAPS infrastructure were:

- poverty-proofing;
- Target-setting;
- establishment of institutional structures, such as the Cabinet Subcommittee on Social Inclusion, NAPS Interdepartmental Policy Committee and NAPS Unit.

Other achievements identified by the respondents included:

- inter-agency/inter-departmental approach to poverty;
- improved coherence of policy-making;
- national focus on addressing poverty;
- increased awareness of poverty;
- improved cohesion, co-ordination and consultation around poverty issues.

2. Weaknesses in the Implementation of NAPS Infrastructure

A variety of weaknesses in the implementation of NAPS infrastructure were identified by the respondents and included the following:

- lack of involvement of key individuals, organisations and sectors;
- inadequate public awareness raising and education;
- inadequate resourcing;
- weak political backing;
- staff turnover, in NAPS Unit in particular;
- the language of NAPS.

3. Gaps Identified in the Infrastructural Arrangements of NAPS

Over three-quarters of the respondents indicated that there were gaps in the infrastructural arrangements of NAPS.

The specific gaps identified by the respondents were:

- lack of involvement with and of people living in poverty;
- lack of public awareness raising and education;
- lack of adequate structures;
- lack of resources (human and financial) and training;
- lack of consultation and exchange of information within and between organisations;
- lack of on-going evaluation.

A number of these infrastructural gaps reaffirm the weaknesses outlined above.

Suggestions given to address these gaps were as follows:

Lack of involvement with and of people living in poverty:

- Resource local development/government to ensure people living in poverty are integrated into the process;
- Place greater emphasis on user needs.

Lack of public awareness raising and education:

- Increase publicity e.g. newsletters, radio, television etc;
- Conduct Annual Plenary Conferences involving all players.

Lack of adequate structures:

- Decentralise to local dimension;
- Have inclusive structures involving community and voluntary sector;
- Involve social partners at central level.

Lack of resources (human and financial) and training.

- Increase resources e.g. NAPS staff and budget;
- Resource NGOs;
- Improve training.

Lack of consultation and exchange of information within and between organisations.

- Consult community and voluntary sector; Inform and involve the public through a structured mechanism.

Lack of on-going evaluation.

- Conduct regular reviews and produce progress reports through independent body.

4. Achievements in Relation to the Content of NAPS

Five main achievements in relation to the content of NAPS were identified. They were:

- The setting, achievement and revision of the targets;
- The official acknowledgement of poverty;
- Agreement on the definition and analysis of poverty;
- Support to people living in poverty;
- Initiatives to poverty proof policies.

“The setting, achievement and revision of targets” was by far the most frequently mentioned response to this question.

5. Weaknesses in Relation to the Content of NAPS

A number of weaknesses in relation to the content of NAPS were identified by the respondents. These included the following:

- Omission of certain themes;
- Conservative targets;
- Lack of formal review mechanism;
- Lack of promotion of NAPS.

6. Significant Poverty Priorities Missed

Just over 60% of the respondents said that significant poverty priorities had been missed by NAPS.

The missed poverty priorities fell into the following two categories:

- People and issues not part of the discourse;
- Ineffective and inadequate revision of targets.

Suggestions given to address missing poverty priorities were as follows:

People and issues not part of the discourse.

- Set up working groups, including social partners;
- Include/enhance issues as themes/targets e.g. housing and homelessness, health, drugs, specific groups (older people, children, and people with disabilities).

Revision of targets.

- Adopt more ambitious targets;
- Allocate resources to achieve targets;
- Monitor (with sanctions) progress towards targets.

7. Enhancing the Profile of NAPS

Over 75% of the respondents believed that the profile of NAPS should be further enhanced. They considered that it should be enhanced with the following groups:

- the general public/everybody;
- the wider community and voluntary sector;
- local government;
- government departments and state agencies/civil servants;
- social partners;
- Trade unions;
- The media;
- People living in poverty.

A number of suggestions were offered as to how the profile of NAPS could be enhanced. These included:

- introduce a PR dimension to NAPS;
- create a focused media/marketing strategy;
- promote education and training;
- improve the general dissemination of information.

8. The Evaluation of NAPS

Respondents were asked to indicate the areas on which the evaluation of NAPS should focus. Responses included:

- the validity of the various programmes and measures in alleviating poverty;
- the achievements of the various programmes and measures in alleviating poverty;
- the methods of implementation of the various programmes and measures in alleviating poverty;
- the process, or lack thereof, for involving people/organisations in NAPS;
- resources allocated for the implementation of NAPS;
- poverty proofing;
- public perception and understanding of NAPS;
- the disparity between the rich and poor.

9. The Long-term Importance and Direction of NAPS

Respondents highlighted the following issues as being central to the long-term importance and direction of NAPS:

- making poverty an important component of policy-making;
- increasing public awareness of poverty;
- working towards the ‘elimination’ of poverty and social exclusion;
- consolidation around tackling poverty;
- addressing the multi-dimensional nature of poverty;
- introduction of an institutional mechanism for monitoring poverty.

In response to a question on *how* the long-term importance and significance of NAPS could be enhanced, respondents suggested the following:

- stronger political backing and support;
- decentralise NAPS;
- improve the profile of NAPS;
- improve training and education;
- increase resources;
- strengthen poverty proofing;
- improve the targets;
- strengthen the institutional mechanisms of NAPS.

10. Economic Growth in Ireland

85% of the respondents believed that economic growth in Ireland has changed the nature and experience of poverty.

The vast majority of these respondents believed that the current climate is having a negative effect on poverty, particularly in terms of:

- widening the gap between the rich and the poor;
- increasing feelings of exclusion/alienation/isolation;
- reducing tolerance for people living in poverty.

Respondents suggested a number of things that need to be done to address poverty during the economic growth in Ireland, such as:

- invest in education to tackle educational disadvantage;
- a greater focus on income inequalities;
- redirect resources towards anti-poverty measures;
- politically empower people living in poverty;
- invest in social infrastructure;
- conduct research on poverty.

11. Is NAPS the Best Approach?

Just under half of the respondents stated that NAPS was the best approach to tackling poverty in Ireland. The remaining respondents did not suggest alternatives to the strategy but rather suggested ways of enhancing it in order to make it more effective.

Suggestions included:

NAPS has the potential to be effective but it needs...

- stronger political and institutional will;
- greater refinement and enforcement;
- adequate resources;
- to set more ambitious targets;
- to improve consultative processes;
- to increase public awareness and become more actively involved in educating the public;
- to politically empower the poor.

NAPS is the key approach but it needs to be complimented by...

- an adequate minimum income standard for all;
- guaranteed educational standards;
- the introduction of a rights-based approach;
- a focus on housing;
- pre-school and family support services;
- locally-based programmes and initiatives.

Appendix 3

Membership of NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee

Joint Chairpersons:

Assistant Secretary-General

- Deirdre Carroll

Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs

Assistant Secretary¹

Department of the Taoiseach

Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands

- David Monks

Department of Health and Children

- Charlie Hardy

Department of Finance

- Joe Mooney

Department of Public Enterprise

- Gerry McDonagh

Department of the Marine and Natural Resources

- Tony Fitzpatrick

Department of Agriculture and Food

- Frank O'Donnell

Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation

- Susan McGrath

Department of An Taoiseach

- Mary Butler

Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

- Margaret O'Connor

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

- Leo Sheedy

Department of the Environment and Local Government

- Aoife Nic Reamoinn

Department of Education and Science

- Patricia O'Connor

Department of Foreign Affairs

- Dermot McGauran

ADM Ltd

- Tony Crooks

Combat Poverty Agency

- Hugh Frazer

FÁS

- Gerard Walker

Appendix 4

NAPS Liaison Officers - April 1997 to December 1999

Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs

- Cathy Barron, Paul Ryan, Yvonne White

Department of An Taoiseach

- Brian Collinge, Gerry Kelleher

Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands

- Pat Gernon; David Monks

Department of Health and Children

- John Collins; Christina McCarthy

Department of Finance

- Joe Mooney; Tom Clarke

Department of Public Enterprise

- Eugene Coughlan; Mary Farrell

Department of the Marine and Natural Resources

- Brian O'Neill

Department of Agriculture and Food

- Tony Burke; John Fahy

Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation

- Agnes Aylward; Tara Wharton

Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

- Garret Byrne

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

- Brendan Ward; Hugh Hayden

Department of the Environment and Local Government

- Joe Allen

Department of Education and Science

- Patricia O'Connor

Department of Foreign Affairs

- John Neville

Appendix 5

Objectives Identified in NAPS Strategy Statement Compared with the Achievements Highlighted in NAPS Annual Report

Note: Where information was not available for comparison across the reports, an appropriate reference is provided in square brackets, i.e. []

NAPS Statement of Strategy	NAPS Annual Report
Government of Ireland (1997) <i>Sharing in Progress – National Anti-Poverty Strategy</i> . Dublin: The Stationery Office	Inter-Departmental Policy Committee (1999) <i>Social Inclusion Strategy – 1998/99 Annual Report of the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee</i> . Dublin: The Stationery Office
Institutional Structures At the Political Level	
“A Cabinet Sub-Committee to deal with issues of poverty and social exclusion will be established. It will be chaired by the Taoiseach, and include all Ministers whose brief includes policy areas relevant to tackling poverty”. p 20	“The Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Taoiseach and including eight relevant Departments, meets on a monthly basis. It provides an integrated basis for Government’s activities in the social exclusion area in general, ensuring that the strategic priorities are being pursued and that effective co-ordination takes place”. p 8
[Senior Officials Social Inclusion Group]	“This group, comprising high level civil servants from relevant Departments, meets on a monthly basis to prepare the agenda and recommendations for the Cabinet Committee. It maintains a broad overview of social inclusion issues and ensures that emerging topics are brought to the attention of the Cabinet Committee. It is chaired by the Department of An Taoiseach”. p 8
At the Administrative Level	
“NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee [which was established to develop the Strategy] will remain in place. It will be jointly chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Social Welfare. The members of the committee will comprise senior officers for ensuring that NAPS provisions relevant to their Departments are implemented”. p 20	“This Committee ... continues to meet four to five times per year and provides the principal strategic focus for NAPS. It comprises senior civil servants as well as representatives of FÁS, Area Development Management Ltd (ADM) and the Combat Poverty Agency. It considers the ongoing progress on implementation of the Strategy as well as progress towards achieving NAPS targets. This Committee remains the key agent for addressing central NAPS issues and agreeing the future plans and programmes of activity. The Committee is co-chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs”. p 8-9

“An SMI team based in the Department of Social Welfare will be established which will be complemented at central level in the Department of the Taoiseach by the existing support structure. The SMI team will be provided with core staffing and will also include on a full-time or a part-time basis representatives from other Departments ... The team will liaise with and complement the role of the CPA and will draw on the Agency’s expertise on anti-poverty policies, programmes and research”. p 20

“Departments have been required to address the question of poverty in the development of their statements of strategy under the Strategic Management Initiative they will form an input into the further development of the Strategy. State agencies and local and regional bodies will also be required to address the question of poverty in their statements of strategy under the SMI.”. p 20

“Departments will produce annual progress statements to the Inter-Departmental Committee setting out progress achieved over the previous year in relation to the Strategy”. p 20

[The appointment of NAPS Liaison Officers is not mentioned in NAPS Strategy Statement. However, it is cited in subsequent documentation]

“The question of the impact of poverty will also be a key consideration when decisions are being made about spending priorities in the context of the national budgetary process and the allocation of EU Structural Funds”. p 21

“A dedicated NAPS Unit [i.e. SMI team] has been established in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs with responsibility for co-ordinating and developing cross-Departmental action in support of social inclusion initiatives. The Unit also acts as a secretariat to the IDPC and liaises with all Government Departments, other agencies, both national and international, and the social partners in promoting and progressing the Strategy”. p 9

“In line with the principles of the Civil Service Strategic Management Initiative (SMI), NAPS recognises the multi-faceted nature of the problem of social exclusion and, as such, the focus at all times is on a cross-Departmental and integrated approaches to tackling disadvantage. Each Department retains the lead role in progressing policies under its own areas although there have been several initiatives specifically resulting from NAPS, most notably perhaps, the introduction of a poverty proofing process ...”. p 8

[These progress statements form the basis of NAPS Annual Report]

“Each relevant Department has appointed a NAPS Liaison Officer who fulfils an important communication and co-ordination role within Departments. They act as a first point of contact in relation to NAPS issues within Departments and are supported by each Department’s IDPC representative as well as the Senior Officials Group representative, where applicable”. p 9

“One of the most significant developments during 1998 was the introduction of a system, known as Poverty Proofing, whereby significant policy proposals would be assessed at design stage for their impact on poverty. It was agreed at the first meeting of the IDPC that such a system would be developed and a framework document, within which the Poverty Proofing exercise would be carried out, was agreed by the social partners in the context of P2000. Following a decision in July 1998, Poverty Proofing was included as a requirement in the updated Cabinet Handbook for the preparation of memoranda for Government”. p 12-13

“The current Cabinet Handbook, issued in October 1998, requires that Memoranda for Government should, inter alia, “indicate clearly, as appropriate, the impact of the proposal for ... persons in poverty or at risk of falling into poverty, in the case of significant policy proposals””. p 13

"The poverty proofing guidelines are currently being implemented on a one year pilot basis in Civil Service Departments only. The process will be reviewed at the end of the pilot year at which point its expansion to other areas of the public service will be considered". p 13

"The Poverty Proofing Framework lists several areas where the proofing process should be applied. These are:

- in the preparation of SMI Statements of Strategy and Annual Business Plans
- in designing policies and preparing Memoranda to Government on significant policy proposals
- in the preparation of the estimates and Annual Budget proposals (including expenditure reviews and programme evaluations)
- in the preparation of the National Development Plan and other relevant EU Plans and Programmes
- in the preparation of legislation". p 13-14

Monitoring and Evaluation

"The National Economic and Social Forum has responsibility for monitoring the social inclusion element of Partnership 2000 and in that context will be specifically asked to report on the progress of implementing the National Anti-Poverty Strategy". p 20

"The Combat Poverty Agency will constitute another key element of the monitoring arrangements. It will oversee an evaluation of NAPS process, which will include consideration of the views and experience of the voluntary and community sector, and will present the results of the evaluation to the Inter-Departmental Committee. As well as having a role in relation to the provision of information and education, the Agency will also support, in an advisory capacity, individual government departments and local and or regional structures in the development of anti-poverty strategies. The Agency will be particularly called upon to advise on anti-poverty strategies in the context of the local government reform process". p 21

[The role of the IDPC in relation to monitoring and evaluation of NAPS is not outlined in NAPS Strategy Statement]

The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) and the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), which constitute the two main social partnership bodies, contribute to the analysis and monitoring of economic and social policies. In particular, the NESF, as part of its work programme, will report from time to time on particular initiatives in relation to social inclusion and equality which form part of NAPS. p 6

"The [Combat Poverty] Agency is assigned a specific role in NAPS in monitoring and evaluating the strategy as well as providing ongoing support and advise to NAPS Unit and Departments. NAPS is accorded a high priority in the Agency's Strategic Plan 1999-2001". p 9

"Monitoring and Evaluation of NAPS is overseen by the IDPC and is assisted by the production of reports by Departments. The Combat Poverty Agency contributes to the evaluation process, which is still being refined after the first full year of activity. The P2000 monitoring arrangements also focus on many of the relevant initiatives and programmes". p 12

Partnership

"Consultation with and the involvement of the community and voluntary sector, users of services and those with first hand experience of poverty has been a central feature of the development of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. It is essential that if the National Anti-Poverty Strategy is to be successful, this partnership between all the relevant key actors in the process continues and develops. When appropriate or necessary the community/voluntary sectors will also, as in the preparation of the Strategy, be invited to participate in working groups to look at particular issues arising during the course of the strategy. They will also have an ongoing role in relation to the monitoring of the Strategy in the context of the arrangements for monitoring Partnership 2000". p 21

"The voluntary and community sector has a wide ranging and particular experience of the difficulties faced on the ground which proved invaluable in arriving at a coherent strategy. The forthcoming White Paper on the Relationship between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the State will set out a cohesive framework for statutory support of the sector and set the background for further development of a meaningful consultation process on continued implementation of the Strategy and the many and varied elements, across a range of Departments, which provide the framework for the implementation of the Strategy. Research, commissioned by the Combat Poverty Agency, on "Models of consultation and on-going participation between the statutory sector and the community and voluntary sector to inform the implementation of NAPS" has formed the basis for a paper on this issue which is being considered by the IDPC in the context of the White Paper". p 7

"Another development of note was the launching of the Foundation for Investing in Communities in November 1998. This is a joint initiative between the State and the major employer bodies which aims to establish a permanent structure to support voluntary and community activity through financial and volunteering support from the corporate sector. The Foundation will focus on support for voluntary and community based projects on the basis of additionality, rather than duplication or replacement of existing State funding, continued development of the Local Enterprise Networks currently supported through the Enterprise Trust and seeking new ways of addressing the needs of disadvantaged children. One of the functions of the Foundation is to build up an endowment fund, through corporate and private donations which will provide a permanent funding for voluntary and community activity. The Government provided a grant of £750,000 in 1998 to help kick-start the Foundation and a further £300,000 has been allocated for 1999". p 33

"Work on the production of a White Paper on the relationship between the State and the Voluntary and Community Sector is ongoing. The White Paper is expected to be finalised by end-Summer 1999 and will, among other things, establish a framework for more cohesive support by the State for the voluntary and community sector. This will help to inform the future development of NAPS and partnership with the voluntary sector". p 37

At Local and Regional Level

"...Community and Enterprise Groups will be responsible for developing plans, including local area action plans which will focus on social exclusion, with intensive programmes across a range of activities. This may involve the development of local anti-poverty strategies". p 21

[This issue is not explicitly mentioned in IDPC Annual Report]

NAPS Profile and Public Opinion

"The public needs to continue to be informed concerning the extent, depth, trends in and location of poverty in Ireland and of its negative consequences for all of society. In this regard, it is intended that the provision of information to the general public relating to the Strategy will be of key importance to both individual Government Departments and the Combat Poverty Agency as the Strategy develops". p 22

"A survey on public perceptions of poverty conducted by Research Evaluation Services, on behalf of the Combat Poverty Agency, as part of the Irish Social Omnibus Survey, was released in December 1998. The vast majority of people (81%) felt that the Government should be involved in an anti-poverty strategy while only 8% were aware that NAPS existed. This showed the information gap that exists in terms of public awareness of poverty. To address this issue, a NAPS Profiling Group has been convened. Comprising selected Departmental Press and Information Officers as well as representatives from the Combat Poverty Agency and NAPS Unit, this group will advise on raising the profile of NAPS and ongoing developments in tackling social exclusion and on implementation of NAPS Information and Public Education Strategy approved by NAPS IPDC in 1998. An outline report on NAPS was invited and submitted to the UN for inclusion in the 1998 UN Human Development Report". p 37

Research

"Up-to-date reliable data is also essential for the ongoing development of the Strategy. In this regard related research will continue to be undertaken and commissioned by relevant Government Departments, the Combat Poverty Agency and other bodies to strengthen the collection, analysis and discussion of core data on poverty and identify gaps". p 22

"The ESRI has now finalised the report *Monitoring Poverty Trends*, commissioned by the Combat Poverty Agency and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. This report is based on the 1997 Living in Ireland survey and it updates the 1994 data on which the original NAPS targets were based". p 36

"A survey on public perception of poverty conducted by Research Evaluation Services, on behalf of the Combat Poverty Agency, as part of the Irish Social Omnibus Survey, was released in December 1998 ... ". p 37

[for additional information on this study see section on 'NAPS profile and public opinion' above]

"The need to build responsibility for tackling poverty into the strategic objectives of all government departments and agencies has been recognised and is now being done". p 8

"In the first half of 1998, Departments submitted their baseline documents which provide a broad strategic statement on social inclusion policy relevant to each Department. These documents cover a period of several years and it is intended that they will be updated periodically. In August 1998, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs published its baseline document 'Social Inclusion Strategy of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs' ... Departments

also submitted their 1998 workplans setting out what they intended to pursue and achieve in terms of programme development and expansion as well as new initiatives identified over the shorter-term of the immediate year ahead". p 12

NAPS Targets

"Pursuit of the targets set will require a greater emphasis on measuring the impact of programmes and improving their design and delivery to achieve the required results. Insofar as additional resources are required, this will require a re-ordering of Government spending priorities with increases in expenditure in some areas, e.g. measures to reduce long-term unemployment, being compensated for by reductions in other areas". p 7-8

"While a further £525 million was committed for social inclusion under Partnership 2000, the challenge for NAPS will be to re-distribute resources in the most effective way on anti-poverty policies across the spectrum of public expenditure and taxation programmes". p 8

"To tackle the deep-seated underlying structural inequalities that create and perpetuate poverty " ... government departments and agencies are setting targets to ensure that their policies and programmes contribute to achieving a fairer distribution of resources and opportunities in all areas of day-to-day life and do not create or perpetuate excessive inequalities". p 8

"... there is also a need to give particular attention to a number of key areas if any significant advance on tackling poverty is to be achieved. These have been identified as follows:

- (i) Educational disadvantage;
- (ii) Unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment;
- (iii) Income adequacy;
- (iv) Disadvantaged urban areas; and
- (v) Rural poverty." p 8-9

"What is required to advance the Strategy is the adoption of a series of overall objectives, overall targets and supporting policy actions in the five key areas." p 9

"P2000 committed the Government to additional spending of £525 million in full year terms on social inclusion measures during the period of the programme. As a result of the various social inclusion measures announced in the 3 relevant budgets, additional spending of some £950 million in full year terms will have taken place over the period. It is estimated that gross current expenditure on social services generally in 1999, at £11.2 billion, will be one quarter higher than in 1996". p 12

"The most recent data available from the ESRI and the Central Statistics Office show that the main Strategy targets have now been substantially achieved and in some cases exceeded (the original target date was set for 2007". p 3

"... there have already been significant developments in the areas in which NAPS has set specific targets; unemployment, educational disadvantage and income adequacy. This indicates the need for targets to be revised to take account of the changed circumstances. The rapidity of developments in the relatively short time since NAPS was launched also brings into question the appropriateness of targets with a very long, 10 year timeframe. Shorter term rolling targets with periodic reviews may be a better model". p 50

"Given that the ESRI report 'Monitoring Poverty Trends' has only recently been finalised, it has not yet been possible to give sufficient consideration to what appropriate targets may be for the future ... " p 50

Information on issues around revising each of the targets is contained on the following pages of the IDPC Annual Report:

- (i) Global target, p 50-51;
- (ii) Educational disadvantage, p 52-53;
- (vi) Unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, p 51;
- (iii) Income adequacy, urban and rural disadvantage, p 53.

Global Target

"... in developing the National Anti-Poverty Strategy it was decided to set an overall or global target to measure ongoing success with the implementation of NAPS over a ten year period". p 9

Overall Global Target:

"Over the period, 1997-2007, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy will aim at considerably reducing the numbers of those who are 'consistently poor' from 9-15% to less than 5-10%, as measured by the ESRI". p 9

Progress on Global Target:

"The number of people in consistent poverty has been reduced from 9-15% to 7-10% - with NAPS target of 5-10% almost achieved". p 3

Educational Disadvantage

Overall Objective:

"To ensure that children, men and women living in poverty are able to gain access, participate in and benefit from education of sufficient quality to allow them to move out of poverty, and to prevent others from becoming poor". p 9

Overall Target:

"To eliminate the problem of early school leaving before the junior certificate, and reduce early school leaving such that the percentage of those completing the senior cycle will increase to at least 90% by the year 2000 and 98% by the year 2007, and having regard to the assessment of their intrinsic abilities, there are no students with serious literacy and numeracy problems in early primary education within the next five years". p 9

"Within the resources released by the demographic dividend in primary education, preventative strategies at pre-school and primary levels will have a high priority". p 10

"The following strategies are identified as necessary to achieve the overall objective and targets:

- Participation
- Pre-school Education
- Preventing Educational Disadvantage
- Special Educational Needs
- Travellers and Education
- Early-School Leaving
- Lifelong Learning". p 10

Progress on Overall Target:

"The latest figures available are taken from the 1997 Annual School Leavers Survey, carried out by the ESRI on behalf of the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Education and Science and relate to students who left second-level education in the year ending August 1996. This research shows that while the number leaving with no qualifications continues to fall (3% in 1996), there remains a substantial cohort (16% in 1996) who left having completed the Junior Certificate only. 81% of the cohort remained in upper secondary education, which represents a significant increase over the 60% retention rate at this level in 1980 but is unchanged from the 1996 survey and represents a levelling out over the previous 3 to 4 years". p 20

"NAPS target is representative of school leavers to completion of senior cycle only and does not take cognisance of those leavers who entered legitimate education and training programmes such as apprenticeships, Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training Centre programmes or other further education opportunities on leaving the second level system ... The Department of Education and Science is currently working on achieving a more complete picture in this area by enhancing data collection from programmes such as apprenticeships, Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres". p 20

The Department of Education and Science runs a number of programmes aimed at countering educational disadvantage. They include the Home School Community Liaison Scheme, the development of a

National Educational Psychological Service, expansion of the Remedial Teacher Service, Youthreach and Traveller Training Centres, the Early School and the Women's Education Initiative. see p 39-40

Unemployment

Overall Objective:

"Paid employment should be available to all men and women currently in poverty who are seeking employment. This should be capable of providing adequate income, either on its own or when combined with other forms of support, sufficient to lift them out of poverty and should be available without barrier of discrimination". p 10-11

Overall Target:

"To reduce the rate of unemployment on an internationally standardised basis (ILO) by the Labour Force Survey, from 11.9% in April to 6% by 2007; and to reduce the rate of long-term unemployment from 7% to 3.5% with a particular focus on reducing the number of very long-term unemployed who are especially at risk of being consistently poor". p 11

"This is the area which has, perhaps, shown the most significant progress to date". p 14

Progress on Overall Target:

"The latest available figures from the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) are for the period September to November 1998 and they indicate that the unemployment rate had fallen to 6.4% and the long-term unemployment rate to 3.1% at that stage. This reflects a continued increase in the numbers at work - rising from over 1.3 million in April 1996 to over 1.5 million by September-November 1998 while the number of people unemployed fell from 179,000 to 106,000 over the same period. Encouragingly, this is also mirrored in the figures for the long-term unemployed which fell from 103,000 to under 52,000 in the same period. This means that the target set out in the Government's Employment Action Plan (EAP), published in April 1998, of a 7% unemployment rate by the end-year 2000 has already been exceeded. In addition, NAPS target of a 6% unemployment rate by 2007 has almost been achieved while NAPS target of 3.5% for long-term unemployment has now been exceeded, a full eight years before the target date". p 15

Income Adequacy

Overall Objective:

"Policies in relation to income support, whether these policies relate to employment, tax; social welfare, occupational pensions or otherwise should aim to provide sufficient income for all those concerned to move out of poverty and to live in a manner compatible with human dignity". p 13

Overall Target:

"Policy actions in relation to income adequacy will be targeted at contributing to the overall reduction in the percentage of the population whom the ESRI have identified as being 'consistently poor' from 9 to 15% to less than 5 to 10% over the period 1997-2007. All social welfare payments will be increased to the

Progress on Overall Target:

"The ESRI report *Monitoring Poverty Trends*, commissioned by the Combat Poverty Agency and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, indicates that very significant progress was made between 1994 and 1997 towards meeting NAPS targets ... The report shows that the numbers of

minimum of the lower recommended by the Commission on Social Welfare, in line with the commitment set out in Partnership 2000". p 13

consistently poor, defined by reference to 50% and 60% of average household disposable income combined with the presence of basic deprivation, had reduced from 9% to 15% of the population in 1994 to 7% to 10% by 1997 with NAPS target, particularly at the 60% threshold, almost achieved ... This contrasts, however, with a further increase in the numbers of people falling below the relative income lines (40%, 50% and 60% of average disposable income) which, according to several commentators, including the ESRI, is largely attributable to the fact that increases in social welfare rates have lagged increases in earnings over the period 1994 to 1997". p 17

Urban Disadvantage

Overall Objective:

"The overall objective in relation to urban disadvantage is to bring about sustained social and economic development in disadvantaged areas in order to improve the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas, by empowering them to become effective citizens, improving the quality of their lives, helping them acquire the skills and education necessary to gain employment and providing them with employment opportunities". p 16

Overall Target:

"To reduce the numbers of people suffering the greatest deprivation in disadvantaged urban areas by increasing their standard of living and providing opportunities for participation thus significantly reducing the measured indicators of disadvantage in the area, especially the rate of unemployment and particularly the rate of long term unemployment over the period 1997-2007". p 16-17

Progress on Overall Target:

The target on urban disadvantage is unspecific and it is therefore difficult to measure progress on meeting this target. However, a number of measures have taken place to reduce urban disadvantage since the launch of NAPS. These include the following:

- The Area Based Partnership Companies and Community Groups which are funded through the Operational Programme for Local and Urban Development (LURD)
- The URBAN initiative
- The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act which was enacted in July 1998
- The Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) Rent and Mortgage Supplementation Scheme
- The new Urban Renewal Programme
- The National Drugs Strategy.

Rural Poverty

Overall Objective:

"The problems of poverty and social exclusion have a distinct impact in a rural context as they are compounded by aspects of physical isolation and demographic dependence. The overall objective is to tackle poverty and social exclusion in rural areas in a comprehensive and sustained manner by ensuring the provision of an adequate income, through employment and/or income support and access to adequate services and infrastructure, co-ordination of responses and empowerment of local people and communities". p 18

Overall Target:

"The overall target is to ensure that strategies are developed with regard to the provision of services in rural areas, especially those concerned with educational disadvantage, unemployment and income adequacy so that the overall targets of NAPS are already stated are achieved in rural areas". p 18

Progress on Overall Target:

The target on rural poverty is also unspecific and as such, it is difficult to measure progress on achieving this target. A number of initiatives are underway which have the potential to reduce poverty in rural regions. These include:

- The Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development (LURD)
- The Farm Assist scheme
- The Fishing Assist scheme
- The LEADER programme
- The Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. see p 27-30

A White Paper on Rural Development has also been prepared. It highlights the need to address poverty and social exclusion in rural areas and contains a specific recommendation in regard to rural proofing. p 29

Revised Targets

"It is envisaged that, in the light of progress with the Strategy, and the development by Departments of their SMI Statements of Strategy, objectives and targets will be refined, following a process of monitoring and evaluation". p 9

"The Government has agreed, in the light of the latest ESRI data which is now available, to ambitious new targets as follows:

- Consistent poverty to be reduced to below 5% by 2004;
- Unemployment to be reduced to below 5% by 2002;
- Long-term unemployment to be reduced to 2.5% by 2002.

"In addition, [the Government] has asked the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee to draw up new targets to reflect the changed environment, for example in relation to education and adult literacy, and to consider action targets in relation to particular groups such as children in poverty". p 3

Other Developments

Note: This section documents a number of additional developments which were included as NAPS initiatives in the Annual Report

Childcare

"Following the publication of the Report [of the Expert Working Groups on Childcare], the Government has set up an Inter-Departmental Committee on Childcare, chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, to consider the issue of childcare in a broader context". p 30

"In response to the Review of the Carer's Allowance published by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs in October 1998, the 1999 Budget included a range of measures to improve the position of carers. These measures will benefit an additional 3,300 carers in addition to the £45 million spent in 1998. Other proposals in the

Review, including the introduction of a needs assessment, are currently being advanced by the relevant Departments in consultation with the care groups". p 31-32

Family

"In line with the Government's 'families first' policy, a new Family Affairs Unit was set up in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs in 1998. Its function is to co-ordinate family policy, pursue the findings of the Commission on the Family and to undertake research and promote awareness about family issues". p 31

"The Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme also contributes to tackling social exclusion in local communities. Centres funded under this programme aim to combat disadvantage by improving the functioning of the family unit by targeting families who are disadvantaged and by outreaching to the most marginalised, often providing special services for lone parent families, young mothers and others considered in need of extra support". p 31

Young People

"In January 1998, the Government established the Young People at Risk Programme which has as its centre the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (YPPSF). Mr. Fahy TD, Minister of State with special responsibility for children, was given approval by the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion to spend £7.2 million over the 3-year period, 1998 to 2000, on 14 pilot projects for children at risk". p 31

People with Disabilities

"There has also been considerable progress in combating the barriers faced by people with disabilities. The Establishment Group, set up by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, to bring forward detailed proposals for the establishment of a National Disability Authority and a Disability Support Service submitted its report to the Minister in June 1998. The Government approved the adoption of the Establishment Group's Report and the implementation in full of its recommendations. The Disability Authority Bill was published and passed by the Seanad in December 1998 ... " p 32

Traveller Community

"With regard to the Traveller Community a Monitoring Committee on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community was established in June 1998 under the auspices of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. In 1998, new structures were put in place to give Travellers an input both at national and local level into the planning and delivery of services". p 32

Appendix 6

Strategic Result Area (SRA) Networks in New Zealand's Public Service Management System ²

Introduction

Strategic Result Area (SRA) networks are an approach to improving strategic management in New Zealand's public service management system. They have been suggested to address problems which have been identified in the existing system. These problems include:

- lack of clarity about government strategic objectives;
- lack of leadership/sponsorship for individual SRAs;
- weak accountability for outcomes;
- lack of co-ordination across government strategic priorities;
- weak 'intervention logic'³ from outputs to outcomes to SRAs;
- weak alignment between the Budget and strategic management;
- lack of 'double loop'⁴ learning.

Overview of How the Proposed SRA Networks Operate

SRA networks are designed to refocus the public service on the achievement of the government's key priorities. They operate on an three-year cycle, with an emphasis on clear strategy, good leadership and good co-ordination.

SRA networks are based on good SRA specification. For example, from the government's vision of what sort of society it wants to promote, and drawing on strategic policy advice, government identifies a select number of areas (8 to 10) on which to focus. Each of these areas is encapsulated in an SRA. It is important that only a small number of SRAs are set to keep the focus on the main priorities.

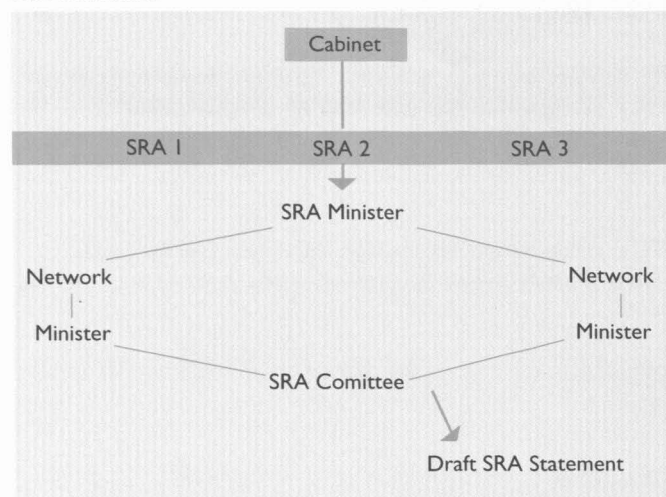
At the start of a three-year cycle, each SRA is disaggregated into a set of SRA outcomes drafted to 'ex ante' (before the event), SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound) criteria. At the same time, performance indicators for ex post (after the event) assessment – strategic results indicators (SRIs) – are established; and information requirements for these SRIs are also specified. This whole process makes up an SRA statement which forms the 'ex ante' specification. The SRA statement is written with a three-year focus, but with annual review.

Each SRA is championed by a senior Minister, known as the SRA Minister, who is responsible to Cabinet for the achievement of the SRA. Each SRA Minister is also the Minister responsible for co-ordination related to that SRA. The SRA Minister chairs an SRA Committee. The SRA is thus the organising principle for the SRA networks.

SRA Committees consist of those Ministers (Network Ministers) whose departments have strategic outputs which make a substantial contribution in support of a particular SRA. This is illustrated in the diagram below.

2. This information is based on a summary of the New Zealand State Services Commission's Occasional Paper No. 3, "A Better Focus on Outcomes through SRA Networks". (October 1998). Further information is available in the Paper.
3. This refers to departments being poor at explaining (ex ante) the logic of how their outputs will contribute to government's SRAs, and at evaluating (ex post) how well their outputs have contributed to the SRA. In other words there is not an emphasis on providing "an intervention logic" between each output and the desired outcomes.
4. This is where there is information about efficiency (what outputs are being produced, at what cost etc.), but there is little information related to effectiveness. The lack of information on effectiveness makes it almost impossible to make informed decisions. This is because there has been little outcome-based evaluation which contributes to 'double loop' learning.

SRA Networks



The SRA is resourced through either baseline or baseline-plus-new initiative funding. The SRA Committee's role is to identify the mix of interventions and related outputs to achieve the SRA. Each Minister is responsible for providing information which shows how the outputs contribute to the achievement of the outcomes set out under the SRA.

Effective operation of networks requires considerable co-ordination – of people, information and resources. Therefore, the effective functioning of networks depends on the number of SRAs being kept small. This is consistent with the principle that the SRA networks are designed to enhance the effectiveness of the public service in advancing the government's key priorities. They are not designed to capture all desired outcomes.

While they focus on *how* to deliver a government's priorities, SRA networks are also likely to have spin-off benefits for the public sector as a whole. They will provide the starting point for shifting the behaviour of the public service towards generating the sort of information Ministers need to determine a desired set of outcomes – including the mix of outputs that is likely to help them achieve those outcomes. The good practice they promote, and the sort of information generation they facilitate, should also permeate to other non-priority/non-SRA activities.

Implications of having SRA Networks

- **Better SRA specification** – the success of SRA networks is dependent on good quality SRAs. In essence there should be a cascading strategy from outcomes to outputs. SRAs are the main drivers of the strategic management system because they represent targeted priority areas. Therefore it is essential that any proposed strategic management system has clear, well specified SRAs. Having good quality criteria is critical for the development of good quality SRAs. For example, SRAs can be judged against the following criteria:
 - *material*: the goal should clearly relate to the welfare of ordinary citizens, and be a key lever to improve well-being;
 - *controllable*: results should be able to be directly influenced by government action within the time-frame chosen;
 - *simple*: an SRA should comprise a single overall objective, be easily understood and be able to be operationalised;
 - *assessable*: an SRA should be defined in a way that allows progress in working towards the desired outcome to be monitored. It should be possible to offer regular updates on the current status of the SRA, and to set targets for improvements;
 - *robust*: a SRA needs to be perceived as durable over a given time period. Thus, each SRA needs to be explicit enough to be meaningful, but broad enough to remain relevant in the face of changing conditions.
- **Improved Evaluation** – SRA networks are based on good information about what works and what does not. This requires systemic evaluation, both at the level of the SRA Committee (to test the mixes of interventions and policy settings) as well as at departmental level. In the absence of evaluation, SRA Ministers and Network Ministers cannot know whether the outputs they link to the SRA will actually have an impact on outcomes. Resetting priorities should only be based on evaluation/review of current policies and interventions. SRA networks create significant incentives to evaluate. These include:

- *enhanced Ministerial demand*: SRA networks require evaluation information, therefore Ministers have an incentive to demand it;
 - *better links between outputs and outcomes*: SRA networks are based on better specification of outcomes and make it clear that organisations are required to provide information on links between their outputs and desired outcomes;
 - *budget incentives*: departments will realise that they need good evaluation information to prove that their activities should be funded as crucial to strategic priorities.
- **Integration of the Budget Process into Strategic Management** – It is important that resources are allocated according to SRAs. For SRA networks to provide government with a better facility for strategic management, the identification of resources for SRAs should occur early in the Budget process. Only at this stage can trade-offs be made, so that desired SRAs in one area are weighed up against desired SRAs in another.

Clarity around resourcing is dependent on the quality of the SRA. SRAs should provide better alignment with government strategic priorities because they embed discussion of strategic priorities into the Budget cycle. Thus SRA allocations, and trade-offs, will be more transparent. The creation of SRA Ministers and SRA Committees provides a more co-ordinated approach to the allocation of resources for the achievement of strategic priorities. In time, the SRA evaluation and reporting information required for SRA networks should feed into the annual Budget cycle to inform resource allocation. While not all resources in the Budget would be linked to a SRA, the level of resources attached to SRAs send signals about their relative importance. If resources are marginal, or confined to new initiatives, there is a risk that SRA networks will not achieve the aim of refocusing resources and energies towards government strategic priorities.

Appendix 7

Material Produced on NAPS Since April 1997

Material	Producer	Date	Dissemination	Irish version	Comments
<i>Poverty Today</i> (CPA Quarterly Journal) – NAPS Special Issue; 11 articles on NAPS	Combat Poverty Agency	July 1997	CPA Mailing List	No	Comprehensive reaction to NAPS from a range of perspectives
<i>Poverty Today</i> – 4 page Guide to NAPS	Combat Poverty Agency	July 1997	CPA Mailing List	No	Factual summary of NAPS
<i>Poverty Today</i> – 1 article on Implementing NAPS by Bernadette Lacey, Principal Officer of NAPS Unit	Combat Poverty Agency	October 1997	CPA Mailing List	No	Outline of the structures being put in place to deliver NAPS
<i>Poverty Today</i> – 1 article on Assessing NAPS by Helen Johnston of CPA + Viewpoint	Combat Poverty Agency	March/April 1998	CPA Mailing List	No	An initial assessment of NAPS progress one year on
<i>Poverty Today Supplement</i> – NAPS and the 1998 Budget	Combat Poverty Agency	March/April 1998	CPA Mailing List	No	Budget '98 assessed against NAPS
<i>Poverty Today</i> – 1 article on Poverty Proofing by Bernadette Lacey, Principal Officer of NAPS Unit	Combat Poverty Agency	September/October 1998	CPA Mailing List	No	Article on the design and implementation of poverty proofing
<i>Poverty Today</i> – direct references in 2 articles	Combat Poverty Agency	December/January 1999	CPA Mailing List	No	Reference to knowledge of NAPS in Public Attitudes survey and UN critical of NAPS in relation to child poverty
<i>Poverty Today</i> – 1 article on NAPS Strategy progress by Deirdre Carroll, Assistant Secretary at Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs	Combat Poverty Agency	April/May 1999	CPA Mailing List	No	Outlines progress on NAPS in 1998
<i>Poverty Today Supplement</i> – NAPS and the 1999 Budget	Combat Poverty Agency	April/May 1999	CPA Mailing List	No	Budget '99 assessed against NAPS

Material	Producer	Date	Dissemination	Irish version	Comments
<i>Poverty Today</i> – Special Issue – NAPS 2 years on; 4 articles + viewpoint	Combat Poverty Agency	July/August 1999	CPA Mailing List	No	Range of views on progress on NAPS and how it could be strengthened
<i>Poverty Today Supplement</i> – Poverty-Proofing Childcare in the context of NAPS	Combat Poverty Agency	July/August 1999	CPA Mailing List	No	Example of poverty-proofing in action
Combat Poverty Agency <i>Annual Report 1997</i>	Combat Poverty Agency	July 1998	CPA Mailing List	Irish Foreword	NAPS key element of Chairperson's Foreword and Overview
Combat Poverty Agency <i>Strategic Plan 1999-2001</i>	Combat Poverty Agency	April 1999	CPA Mailing List	Yes	Objective 1 focuses on NAPS
Combat Poverty Agency <i>Annual Report 1998</i>	Combat Poverty Agency	June 1999	CPA Mailing List	Irish Foreword	NAPS key element of Chairperson's Foreword and Overview
National Anti-Poverty <i>Strategy Sharing in Progress</i>	Government	April 1997	Publicly available & through Government Publications	No	The main NAPS document – Strategy and Appendices
Social Inclusion Strategy	Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (DSCFA)	August 1998	Publicly available & through Government Publications	No	Comprehensive NAPS Baseline Document of DSCFA
NAPS Unit Leaflet	NAPS Unit, DSCFA	August 1998	From NAPS Unit	No	Outlines function of NAPS Unit and gives contact numbers
1998/99 <i>Annual Report</i> of NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee	Government	June 1999	Publicly available & through Government Publications	No	Documents progress on NAPS over 2 year period and sets some new targets
<i>Monitoring Poverty Trends</i>	ESRI, CPA and DSCFA	June 1999	Publicly available & through Government Publications	No	Updates poverty data on which NAPS is based from 1994 to 1997
Baseline documents, annual workplans and annual reports from Government Departments	Individual Government Departments - centrally held by NAPS Unit	1997 - 1999	Disseminated internally within the civil service, available on request & in CPA library	No	Quantity and quality varies – see Chapter 7
<i>Policy Proofing in the Context of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy</i>	NAPS IDPC	July 1998	Disseminated internally within the civil service, available on request & in CPA library	No	Sets out what poverty proofing is about

Material	Producer	Date	Dissemination	Irish version	Comments
Guidelines for the Implementation of Poverty-Proofing Procedures	NAPS IDPC	April 1999	Disseminated internally within the civil service; available on request	No	Focus on implementation of poverty proofing with worked examples
News & Views – 2 articles on NAPS, 1 on key elements and 1 a critique of the Strategy	Community Workers' Co-operative (CWC)	June 1997	CWC Mailing List	No	A factual account of the Strategy and an assessment of its development
News & Views – 1 article on NAPS progress by Chris McInerney	Community Workers Co-operative	January 1998	CWC Mailing List	No	An assessment of progress on NAPS & a critique in relation to the '98 Budget

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