



## Background

This conference was organised by the Community Platform as a Knowledge Exchange Forum under the Advocacy Initiative.

Workshop facilitators used the case studies to lead discussions among participants on how we can strengthen our grassroots advocacy work.

The case study presentations and the video of the plenary speeches are available from the Platform Secretariat and will be on the redesigned Community Platform website [www.communityplatform.ie](http://www.communityplatform.ie) shortly.

The organising group for the conference was:

Aoife O’Driscoll (NALA, National Adult Literacy Association); Anna Visser (Advocacy Initiative); Pat Tobin (CAN, Community Action Network); Pierre Klein (ATD, All Together in Dignity); Paul Ginnell and Robin Hanan (EAPN, European Anti Poverty Network, Ireland. Particular thanks to Maureen Gondipon, EAPN, for the working with Paul Ginnell on the practical arrangements.

Robin Hanan and Paul Ginnell, Community Platform Secretariat  
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## Contents and Conference Agenda

**Introduction:** Robin Hanan, Community Platform  
**Key Note Speaker:** Emma Aviles, 15M/Indignados social movement, Spain

**See video at**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KSpaim29AM>

### Workshops

Facilitated discussion on grass-roots advocacy today, learning from case studies and from our own experiences

- |    |                                  |               |
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| 3. | March for Marriage               | <b>Page 5</b> |
| 4. | Fighting Fracking                | <b>Page 6</b> |

**Interactive Feedback,** Anna Visser  
**Closing Speaker:** Siobhan O’Donoghue - Uplift

**See video at**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8f2ueaGW89E>

## Workshop 1: Rialto Rights in Action Campaign (CAN)

**Case study presented by:** Peter Dorman, Community Action Network (CAN)

**Facilitator:** Pierre Klein, ATD 4<sup>th</sup> World



### Background

Dolphin House in Dublin is the largest flats complex in Ireland following the demolitions at Ballymun. Home to some 900 people, it was built in the 1950s to accommodate people after the demise of the tenements. It remains to this day a strong community with strong intergenerational ties. But for generations the community has been subject to deplorable living conditions. Unable to cope with modern living, the flats became cold, damp and mouldy to the point of impacting seriously on peoples' health. Flats were often overcrowded. After years of campaigning regeneration was promised in 2008, but the collapse of the property market put paid to that plan. At the suggestion of Community Action Network, residents responded to developing a Rights Based approach to their plight. They formed Rialto Rights in Action and used knowledge of their human rights under international treaties to look for change.

Over a two year campaign, Dolphin House moved significantly closer to addressing the terrible housing conditions. The residents' work led to a refurbishment programme of the worst affected flats, and Regeneration is now underway.

### Feedback from participants in the Workshop

#### Question 1: Links to my experience

1. This issue around poor housing is still happening with no action being taken and looking at how things have changed for Rialto and not other areas is frustrating for those being left behind.
2. Came across a lot of barriers in my fight for housing.
3. No housing for me to live - I'm living in damp living condition
4. People's human rights have been affected. This happens to migrants who have been exploited through work - low pay and bad working conditions.
5. Council blames residents for damp and flooding.
6. Lack of interest by higher levels of government towards perceived smaller/less important groups and issues
7. The constant excuse of local government is the lack of funds. More input is needed into the allocation process.
8. Co-creating solutions as a twin track approach.
  - Collective responsibility.
  - Clarity - cutting through bullshit.
9. Important not to be 'cul-de-sac-ed' - don't get stuck with one limited level.
10. It is interesting to see how with education and team work coming together as a group can make a change.
11. Individual problem turns into collective empowerment.
12. The importance of communication & media and hurting the politician's image.
13. Crisis of values, political will and coverage.

#### Question 2: Lessons for advocacy in Ireland now

1. Passion and commitment can bring about change. Consistency + hard work pays off.
2. Mobilized themselves. Didn't wait for government support.
3. To shift from an individual perspective into a collective action without forgetting that there might be some very special individual issues that need to be addressed.
4. Inspiring to see how Human Rights can be used as a real tool - especially as Ireland faces first UN review on women's rights (CEDAW) in a decade.
5. Cohesion and collective action.
6. The importance of participation and empowering people who are directly affected the issues.
7. Sandwich effect - pressure from above, e.g., UN. Local movement drawing support from beyond the obvious.
8. Clarity of Message on Rights
9. Each step matters. Importance of continuing to build MOMENTUM & put your issue again and again on agenda even when no response from target.
10. Mobilised themselves. Didn't wait for government support.
11. The importance of communications and the use of media.

## Workshop 2

### Justice for the Undocumented Campaign

**Case study presented by:** Helen Lowry and Jayson Montenegro Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI)

**Facilitator:** Pat Tobin, Community Action Network (CAN)



#### Background:

In 2010 a number of undocumented migrants came together with the support of the MRCI and set up the Justice for the Undocumented campaign (JFU) to campaign for the introduction of a regularisation scheme in Ireland. A community work approach lies at the heart of JFU's collective efforts to bring about change. Key to this is;

- Building relationships with and active participation of undocumented migrants in campaign efforts (currently 1400 members)
- Creation of a credible evidence base informed by action research and costed solution
- Building a growing coalition of endorsers from across the business sector and civil society
- Political engagement strategy with clear demand and targets
- Moving the Irish media to build political and public support
- Organisation of high profile public actions and events (banner drops, use of film, photo calls)
- Supporting young people to get active through recent establishment of Young Paperless and Powerful (YPP) youth empowerment group

#### Feedback from participants in the workshop

##### Question 1: How is this familiar to me and my experience?

1. Medical help for the undocumented.
2. Children's education - undocumented, but they go to school.
3. Rights of the undocumented.
4. Difficult to pass individual needs and enter collective action.
5. Accessing services & discrimination.
6. Stigma, fear, voiceless.
7. How are they paying taxes?

##### Question 2: What are the lessons for advocacy in Ireland now?

1. Young adults empowered.
2. Importance of moving from individual to collective.
3. Importance of raising awareness amongst everyone.
4. The depth of the work required to make change where there is great oppression.
5. Use of artistic/creative methods. Strong communication.
6. Engage people about solidarity, compassion.
7. Use network of people we are working with
8. Advocacy - Pressure & Group support

## Workshop 3

### March for Marriage

**Case study presented by:** Anna MacCarthy, LGBT Noise  
**Facilitator:** Maura White  
Community Action Network (CAN)



#### **Background:**

Grass roots activist organisation, LGBT Noise, was founded in 2007 in response to the Government inaction on relationship recognition for LGBT people. At the time the Government stated that LGBT people didn't want marriage equality. A small group of activists felt that equal civil rights for LGBT people were overdue and decided that the LGBT community should take to the streets to demand relationship recognition in the form of marriage equality. LGBT Noise decided that the community itself had to start campaign for their rights. But first it meant convincing LGBT people that they were deserving of equality. LGBT Noise led the grassroots activist campaign which laid the ground work for the referendum campaign which was to come.

#### **Feedback from participants in the workshop**

##### **Question 1: How is this familiar to me and my experience?**

1. Education
2. Continue to build.
3. Importance of grassroots work.
4. Gave hope for elections in the future.
5. How to harness the energy.
6. Empowerment.
7. How to do it?

##### **Question 2: What are the lessons for advocacy in Ireland now?**

1. Working with the community.
2. Grassroots work.
3. Finding new ways.
4. Go to where people gather. Finding voice/respected.
5. Changing attitudes. Allow for the chaos. Take risks.
6. Media campaign. Networking. Graphic design - visuals.
7. Agree common goals/principles.
8. Social media.
9. Stop working in silos
10. work in solidarity.

## Workshop 4: Fighting Fracking

**Case study presented by:** Scott Coombes, Love Leitrim

**Facilitator:** Aoife, National Adult Literacy Association (NALA)

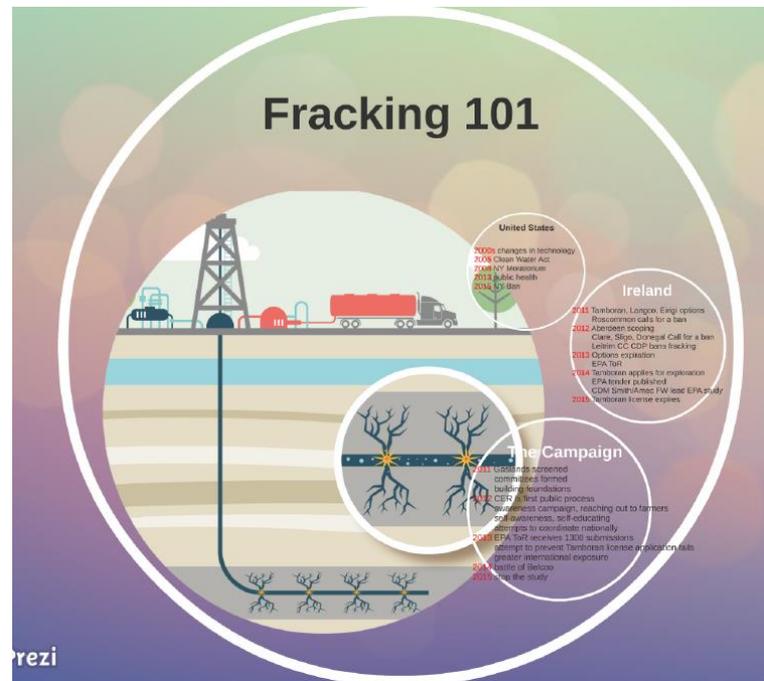
### Background:

Love Leitrim is an open community group formed in 2011 to celebrate all the positive aspects of our beautiful unique county and its contribution to the national wealth and heritage. The group advocates for the preservation of this beauty and heritage, and promotes sustainable development.

Currently the biggest threat to our objectives is UGEE (unconventional gas exploration and extraction); the process commonly known as fracking. Through an awareness campaign and non-violent direct action, Love Leitrim is fully committed to protecting the environment and public health in Leitrim and Ireland from fracking through an awareness campaign and non-violent direct action.

Love Leitrim is one of many groups that emerged between 2010 and 2011, when the plans for fracking in the Northwest came to light - partly through opponents of the Corrib Gas project, and partly through the screening of Josh Fox's "Gaslands" in Leitrim. From the beginning, Love Leitrim's vision was that it would be a positive group - promoting the beauty and uniqueness of Leitrim, as opposed to being solely against fracking.

Love Leitrim is one of a myriad of groups that simultaneously chart their own path in response to the threat of fracking, and work together to preserve and promote Leitrim's rural nature and potential for sustainable growth.



### Feedback from participants in the workshop

**Question 1: How is this familiar to me and my experience?**

1. There are no similarities. We have very fractured experiences.
2. Asthmatic - directly affected by air and water pollution caused by fracking.
3. Importance of the independent view.
4. Using collaborative & participative techniques in art practice to bring awareness or act around topics.
5. How to relate information and experiences from outside community back in - how to build solidarity.
6. Extending campaign to whole community.
7. Using different approaches to achieve a common goal.
8. Provision of accurate information.
9. Keeping people motivated.

**Question 2: What are the lessons for advocacy in Ireland now?**

1. Very simple use of words to bring across a message.
2. Look at all the issues. Independent bodies - we need these.
3. The positive message
4. Created awareness of the issue, research into alternative methods. Understanding what fracking is.
5. PR bit is important.
6. Positivity of message 'Love Leitrim' allows it to adapt - values centred.
7. Face to face contact can be effective.
8. Look at all the issues. Independent bodies - we need these.
9. Get informed by other value spheres - strategic.

## Attendance

Aileen Nix, LSAD, Limerick  
Alice-Mary Higgins, NWCI  
Ann O'Connor, Longford Community Links  
Anna MacCarthy,  
Anna Visser, Advocac y Initiative  
Anne Devlin, INOU  
Aoife O'Driscoll, NALA  
Aoife Maguire, LCRL  
Barbara Smith, LCRL  
Bernadette MacMahon, Vincentian  
Partnership for Social Justice  
Billy Shelley, MRCI  
Carol Dillon, Charlemont Community  
Resource Centre Ltd  
Chiara Antolovi, SICCDA  
David Lynch, South Dublin County Partnership  
Eileen Donovan, All Together in Dignity 4th  
World  
Eilis Mahon,  
Eilís Ní Chaithnía, National Women's Council  
of Ireland  
Emma Avilés Thurlow, Spain  
Emma Farrell, INOU  
Erika Fleming, INOU  
Eszter Nemethi, LSAD, Limerick  
Eugene Flynn, 54 Degrees  
Fabriene Klein, ATD Fourth World  
Gabi Florica Muntean, Roma Project, Pavee  
Point  
Garreth McCarthy, INOU  
Gerard Keane, INOU  
Grainne McGettrick, Acquired Brain Injury  
Ireland  
Helen Lowry, MRCI  
Ineke Durville, IASW  
Jayson Montenegro, MRCI  
Jean Ichter,  
Joan O'Donnell, Disability Federation of  
Ireland

Junyu Wang, Cairde  
Kieran McNeill, INOU  
Laura Howe,  
Laura Pierce, INOU  
Liz Nilsson, LSAD, Limerick  
Lucie Goharel, ATD Fourth World  
Maria Costello, INOU  
Marianna Prontera, Cairde  
Marilyn Lennon, LSAD, Limerick  
Marine Le Calvez, All Together in Dignity 4th  
World  
Martina Toal, INOU  
Maura White, Community Action Network  
Maureen Bassett, Independent Consultant  
Maureen Gondipon, EAPN  
Marianne O'Shea, Maynooth University  
Niamh Harold, INOU  
Pamela, AKIDWA  
Pat Tobin, Community Action Network  
Paul Ginnell, EAPN  
Paul Watchorn, INOU  
Paula Quirke,  
Peter Dorman, Community Action Network  
Pierre Klein, All Together in Dignity 4th World  
Robert Smyth, INOU  
Robin Hanan, EAPN  
Rosaleen Neavin, LSAD, Limerick  
Sarah McDowell, LSAD, Limerick  
Sara Bourke, Social Justice Ireland  
Scott Coombs, Love Leitrim  
Séamus Orr, Springlawn RCDG  
Siobhan O'Donoghue, Uplift  
Shane Kenny, INOU  
Tara Deasy, Clondalkin Drugs & Alcohol Task  
Force  
Theresa Colgan, INOU  
Tica Muntean, Roma Project, Pavee Point  
Winnie, AKIDWA

## The Community Platform

Founded in 1996, the Community Platform acts as a mechanism to facilitate solidarity amongst organisations in the community sector that work to address poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

The members of the Community Platform are:

- Age Action Ireland
- ATD 4th World
- Community Action Network
- Community Workers' Co-operative
- Cairde
- Debt and Development Coalition Ireland
- European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland
- Focus Ireland
- Gay and Lesbian Equality Network
- Immigrant Council of Ireland
- Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
- Irish Penal Reform Trust
- Irish Refugee Council
- Irish Rural Link
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
- National Adult Literacy Agency
- National Network of Women's Refuges and Support Services
- National Traveller Women's Forum
- National Women's Council of Ireland
- Older Women's Network
- Pavee Point Travellers Centre
- Rape Crisis Network Ireland
- Simon Communities of Ireland
- Threshold
- Voluntary Drug Treatment Network
- Vincentian Partnership for Justice
- Women's Aid

### Some recent publications



COMMUNITY PLATFORM  
CHALLENGING POVERTY & INEQUALITY

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16 Upper Ormond Quay, Dublin 7  
[communityplatform@eapn.ie](mailto:communityplatform@eapn.ie);  
[www.communityplatform.ie](http://www.communityplatform.ie).