WOMEN'S COMMUNITY EDUCATION

QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

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AONTAS

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QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

WOMEN'S COMMUNITY EDUCATION

QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

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THE AONTAS WOMEN'S COMMUNITY EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Framework Purpose

The Women's Community Education Quality Assurance Framework was developed by AONTAS in partnership with women's community education groups and networks.

The Framework is a resource which
- Frames the social analysis and distinctive practice of women's community education
- Builds a shared language for women's community education
- Quality assures the practice of women's community education

Framework Vision

The vision of the quality assurance framework is to
- Faithfully reflect the work of women's community education
- Contribute to sustaining and enhancing quality practice
- Resource the practice of radical and women-centred education.

Framework Structure

The Quality Assurance Framework names the vision, aspirations and goals of Women's Community Education, the four principles that are its foundation and the four dimensions that make up the practice of women's community education.
Each of the four dimensions is divided into six elements.
Each element has descriptions of core practice and descriptions of extended practice.
Core practice describes the distinctive practice of quality women's community education.
Extended practice describes aspects of quality practice that are dependent on a secure resource base and often on experience that is built up over time.
The Framework structure reflects the variety and individuality of women's community education.
Any group can use the Framework, whether large or small, whether long established or just getting started.

VISION, ASPIRATIONS AND GOALS

The vision, aspirations and goals of WCE guide and direct the practice of Women's Community Education

Vision

The vision of women's community education is the achievement of equality for all women, regardless of their backgrounds, geographic location, country of birth, income, sexual identity, religious beliefs, citizenship status, abilities and interests, age, disabilities, 'race' or ethnicity.

It defines its vision for women as the achievement of equality for women across the affective, cultural, economic and political spheres of life and the transformation of the structures and systems of society that are essential for this vision to be fulfilled. Women's community education is guided and directed by this vision for women.

Aspirations

Women's community education aspires to being:

- Accessible and enjoyable - affirmation, recognition, dignity and leadership replace criticism, shaming, fear and control; allowing, enabling, empowering, and inclusion replace forbidding, restricting, inhibiting and isolation.

- Intercultural, holistic and diverse, where women have a voice and a sense of belonging, where life experience and critical awareness matter and where hope, self-worth, and courage are supported.

- Supportive of women fulfilling their sense of purpose in life without being restricted and confined, bringing their knowledge and experiences into every aspect of life, promoting their vision of equality, and making their full and collective contribution as women in the world.

Goals

Women's Community Education is committed to four goals – Celebration, Empowerment, Leadership and Equality.

Women's community education commits to maintaining the cycle of celebration, empowerment, leadership and equality in its work and practice.

Celebration:
Celebration instills pride, confidence and ambition, recognises and acknowledges achievement, reflects and values diversity and makes women's achievements visible in the world.

Empowerment:
Empowerment is built on the confidence, self-worth and visibility generated through celebration.
The empowerment of women is supported and sustained by sharing ideas and knowledge, by valuing women, their participation and their collective voice.

Leadership:
Women's community education builds leadership through inclusion, consultation about needs and responses to needs.
It gives leadership in maintaining the capacity, strength and confidence of women in their work for the achievement of equality.
It takes leadership in challenging injustice, exclusion, and oppressive uses of power.

Equality:
Women's community education works for equality through building awareness and through consultation and dialogue.
Women's community education challenges the injustices, inequalities and barriers that exclude women from equal participation in the structures and systems of society.

PRINCIPLES

Women's community education is rooted in four principles: -

- Women-Centred
- Quality
- Equality and
- Justice

Women's Community Education is grounded by its commitment to these principles.

The four principles are the foundations on which the practice of women's community education is built.

Through commitment to these principles women's community education groups contribute to the achievement of the goals of WCE - celebration of women and women's community education, the empowerment of women, women's leadership and the achievement of equality for women.

<div align="center">**The Women-Centred Principle**</div>

Women-centred education means commitment to education that is built on recognition of women's contributions to family and community, recognition of the reality of women's experiences, and recognition of the barriers that prevent women from participating fully and equally in society.

Women's Community Education works from the principle of women-centred education and training through:

- Holistic and creative education that grows out of women's lives, experiences and values and that is provided in a supportive, welcoming and non-threatening environment
- Education that is open to all women
- Education that is ambitious for women
- Education that encourages social and political awareness
- Education that enables women to challenge social structures that negatively impact on their lives

The women-centred principle in women's community education

A. CELEBRATES WOMEN'S LIVES

- Welcomes all women, concerns itself with all aspects of women's lives and empathises with the reality of women's experiences
- Believes that education is a shared process developed together through connection, communication and dialogue
- Understands and seeks to accommodate the demands and pressures that go with women's responsibilities as carers and nurturers as well as workers and learners
- Is aware of, marks and celebrates women's achievements and the process of transformation in women's lives
- Is ambitious for women and supports women to be ambitious for themselves and for each other

B. EMPOWERS WOMEN

- Acknowledges women's life skills, knowledge and learning and women's contributions to family, community and society
- Offers women a place to bring out their talents and skills, reclaim self-worth and value, gain confidence and build self-esteem

- Supports reflection on women's journeys through life and builds pride and confidence in abilities and achievements
- Acknowledges and seeks to address the struggles women encounter in their everyday lives
- Creates opportunities for women to exercise choice and to bring about desired changes in their lives

C. PROMOTES WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

- Develops women's capacity for leadership and creates opportunities for women to exercise leadership
- Develops women's confidence and the capacity to take a stand on issues that impact on women's lives
- Makes links between personal experiences, collective social experiences and structures of power
- Encourages women to build political awareness and to take action together on issues that impact on their lives

D. PROMOTES EQUALITY

- Works to support women's access to education and addresses barriers to access and progression in education
- Understands education as a process where members, staff and management committees are on a journey together as equals
- Challenges exclusion and marginalisation across the nine equality grounds specified in the Equal Status Act, 2000
- Brings a gender perspective to analysis of experience and of society
- Facilitates the development of critical awareness of the structural inequalities which underpin many of the life challenges women encounter
- Creates opportunities to bring about social change
- Creates opportunities for understanding and analysis of political and social development, of history and current issues
- Sees women's community education as part of a local, regional, national and international movement of women that is addressing barriers to women's full participation in society

The Quality Principle

The principle of quality means commitment to a form of education that carries a vision of the best that is possible for women and promotes excellence. Women's Community Education works from the principle of quality education and training through:

- Investing in the nurture, care and consideration of participants
- Taking a holistic women-centred and women-led approach to education that meets participants needs
- Valuing all stages of the education, training and lifelong learning process
- Commitment to the qualities that make women's community education different to traditional education
- Demonstrating commitment to women's community education understandings of quality in the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of its work

The quality principle in women's community education

A. CELEBRATES WOMEN'S LIVES

- Encourages collaboration - working together and a sense of togetherness in shaping and delivering quality education and training
- Contributes to quality communication: listening and being listened to, openness and respect
- Pays attention to details: believes that attention to detail is essential in quality provision
- Has clear outcomes which contribute to enhanced quality of life and the expansion of life choices for women

B. EMPOWERS WOMEN

- Involves and mentors members, provides them with supports throughout the education process and is woman-centred rather than provider – centred
- Offers a confidential environment where women's stories can be heard
- Brings the knowledge, experience and expertise of all together to create a shared learning environment
- Builds an atmosphere of trust through communication and participation
- Requires trainers and facilitators with skills, knowledge and experience in women's community education
- Builds up skills, knowledge and experience in adult, community and women's education
- Encourages questioning, flexibility and dialogue

C. PROMOTES WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

- Is owned and directed by women who are involved in women's community education and standards are set with and by them
- Maintains quality organisations with voluntary and paid workers holding clear roles and responsibilities dedicated to women's community education
- Promotes quality practice in all aspects of the work including documentation, record-keeping and financial systems
- Stands for accountability and transparency
- Promotes sustainable models of work

D. PROMOTES EQUALITY

- Values quality assurance processes in education
- Demonstrates that women's community education values both the quality process and the quality outcomes of education
- Emphasises being part of a community and the collective dimension of women's community education
- Negotiates relevant and appropriate accreditation for education and training programmes
- Seeks to influence structures and systems that negatively impact on quality of life for women in society
- Encourages innovation – creative thinking and new ideas – in addressing barriers to equality

The Equality Principle

The principle of equality means addressing the conditions that limit women's freedoms and choices and the attitudes and behaviours that create fear in women's lives – barriers to education and income, racism, domestic violence, rape, pornography and all practices that deny women's rights in their homes, communities and wider society.

Women's Community Education works from the principle of equality through:

- Seeking to be inclusive of all women
- Building and maintaining equality of relationship between all involved in women's community education as members, staff and management committees
- Celebration of difference including differences in life experiences, in culture and language and in skills, talents and abilities
- Identifying barriers to women's participation in education and addressing these barriers
- Seeking adequate resources to address barriers to equality

The equality principle in women's community education

A. CELEBRATES WOMEN'S LIVES

- Values all the roles that women take up in their lives including the roles of learner, worker (paid and unpaid) and carer
- Creates an inclusive and non-judgmental environment that recognises and values women's different experiences and circumstances and the diversity of women's lives
- Promotes the value and worth of women's lives and experiences in a society where women have not achieved equality
- Works for freedom and security for women
- Welcomes diversity – diverse communities of women and women who do not feel part of any community

B. EMPOWERS WOMEN

- Relates to each woman as an individual, as well as part of a group and encourages sharing with each woman having an opportunity to be heard
- Believes that the experiences of belonging and being heard make a difference in women's lives and in work for equality
- Creates an environment that supports acceptance of self and others, that supports respect and inclusion and challenges judgmental attitudes towards others
- Seeks to address the resource implications of equality in education - providing disability access, childcare, elder care, transport, and educational resources
- Challenges the barriers to women's equality

C. PROMOTES WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

- Promotes a model of women's leadership through emphasis on inclusion, consultation, and the development of responses to what women identify they want and need from education
- Offers women the opportunity to exercise leadership
- Recognises visibility and presence as one of the markers of equality and challenges invisibility and marginalisation
- Promotes equality, transparency and working collectively as women's community education groups
- Understands and values diversity

D. PROMOTES EQUALITY

- Analyses how education's resources and privileges are accessed and identifies the blocks and barriers to access to education for women
- Contributes to equality through awareness-raising, communications and the creation of new and more equal education opportunities
- Recognises that the achievement of equality within education requires adequate resources
- Challenges attitudes and practices that undermine the equality of participation by women's community education organisations in social structures
- Believes that the achievement of equality is important to every group in society regardless of status – equality is about everyone, involves everyone and brings benefits to everyone

The Justice Principle

The principle of justice means raising awareness of the injustices experienced by diverse communities of women in Ireland, creating opportunities to highlight and challenge injustice and confront apathy, indifference and resistance to the achievement of justice for women.

Women's Community Education works from the principle of justice through:

- A process of empowerment that values the full range of achievements – personal, political and collective – of the education process
- Tackling the barriers that restrict equal access for women in education and training
- Actively challenging the injustices encountered by women and the oppression and subordination of women in Irish society

The justice principle in women's community education

A. CELEBRATES WOMEN'S LIVES

- Recognises that women have unequal access to choices, to resources and to power and influence relative to men
- Challenges the differences in resources and power and influence between men and women
- Makes justice for women a reality, visible in the world, through women's community education
- Celebrates women's community and diversity and challenges the injustices that women experience in Irish society

B. EMPOWERS WOMEN

- Recognises that many women as children were accorded less access to education and restricted choices in education
- Recognises that many women were in their childhoods and adolescence failed by the education system in Ireland, that such failure continues, and that permanent hurt and harm was caused by the shaming and other abuses that were part of the education system.

- Recognises that education in Ireland is class – biased; mainstream education uses methods of assessment and accreditation that contribute to a deeply flawed system that continues to fail and exclude many children and young people
- Builds awareness of injustice and confidence, knowledge and belief in women's entitlement to justice in education and in society

C. PROMOTES WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

- Commits to fairness, even-handedness, inclusion, consultation and openness in its organisation and work
- Provides supports including child and elder care supports that allow women to move into and through education
- Tackles the barriers and blocks that restrict access and progression
- Provides education that empowers women to address injustice
- Works to transform the social, cultural and political structures and systems that have marginalised women and to establish the conditions necessary for women to hold positions of leadership in society

D. PROMOTES EQUALITY

- Establishes women's right and entitlement to justice and engages in the struggles that are an essential part of justice-making
- Creates spaces in the public domain where women can identify and address justice issues and challenge the injustices women encounter
- Engages with political systems, works at raising awareness, and challenges barriers to the achievement of justice for women,
- Keeps channels of communication and dialogue open and seeks support for social and structural change

Women's community education groups quality assure their vision, their goals and their ethos and values through discussion and reflection on the vision, aspirations, goals and principles set out in this Framework.

DIMENSIONS

The quality practice of women's community education has four dimensions:

- **Rooted in the Reality of Women's Lives**
- **Women-Led**
- **Political**
- **Strategic**

Each of these dimensions is made up of six distinct elements which describe that practice.

Women's community education groups and networks quality assure their practice through these dimensions and elements.

Women live in a political, social and cultural environment that excludes many women from equal access to education and employment, the exercise of real choice in their lives and from taking up leadership roles in society. Women's community education is a women-led, political and strategic education process rooted in the complex and diverse realities of women's lives.
Women's community education keeps the focus of its practice on women, on collective empowerment and on the achievement of equality.

Elements:

Each dimension is divided into 6 sections called elements as follows:

Rooted in the Reality of Women's Lives:

1. **Outreach**
2. **Inclusion**
3. **Course development and delivery**
4. **Ongoing participation**
5. **Access, transfer, progression**
6. **Celebration**

Women-Led:

1. **Leadership**
2. **Voice**
3. **Consciousness-Raising Education**
4. **Learning Organisation**
5. **Empowerment**
6. **Organisation as a Collective**

Political:

1. **Visibility**
2. **Activism**
3. **Resources**
4. **Commitment to equality**
5. **Commitment to diversity**
6. **Representation**

Strategic:

1. **Creativity**
2. **Networking**
3. **Capacity Building**
4. **Tactical Work**
5. **Partnership**
6. **Systemic Change**

In the Framework the practice of each element is detailed.
All of the elements have core practice descriptions and extended practice descriptions.

Core practice
Core practice details aspects of the practice of women's community education that give it identity, distinction and cohesion.

Extended practice
Extended practice details aspects of practice that are dependent on a more established and secure resource base and are usually built up over time.

DIMENSION 1: ROOTED IN THE REALITY OF WOMEN'S LIVES

Women's Community Education is rooted in the reality of women's lives

The first Dimension of Women's Community Education is - **Rooted in the Reality of Women's Lives.**
Women's community education groups root their education and training programmes in the realities of women's lives.

The 6 elements which comprise the Rooted in the Reality of women's lives dimension are:

1. OUTREACH
2. INCLUSION
3. COURSE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY
4. ONGOING PARTICIPATION
5. ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION
6. CELEBRATION

Element 1 – Outreach - is built on understanding the issues and challenges that returning to education presents for many women.

Element 2 – Inclusion - underlines groups awareness of the barriers women encounter in accessing education and the impact of negative experiences of schooling.

Elements 3 and 4 - Course Development and Delivery and Ongoing Participation – focus on the possibilities that an education programme rooted in women's lives offers women and the ongoing supports, space and encouragement women are entitled to in their journey through education. Women make a difference for and with each other by sharing life stories, by affirming the power and strength that comes through in those stories and by rooting their education and training there.

Across Elements 5 and 6 – Access, Transfer and Progression and Celebration – women's community education makes a radical contribution to adult education practice locally, regionally and nationally, resourced by the relevant statutory authorities.

ELEMENT 1: OUTREACH

Women's community education recognises that schooling has been oppressive for many. Many women were further marginalised and excluded from education due to factors such as class and ethnicity. Women's community education recognises that the return to education is fraught with difficulties and challenges. Outreach work is based on understanding the issues and barriers that the traditional education system has generated. It is committed to building trust, confidence and equality of relationship.

OUTREACH PRACTICE

Through outreach work, women are invited to rejoin education in a new way and with new direction as women together.

Core Practice
We
    a) Make informal contact with women: word-of-mouth invitation, discussion and promotion with neighbours, friends, acquaintances
    b) Promote our group: posters and other forms of promotion are placed in key points around the neighbourhood (examples school, surgery, supermarket, social services and community centres, FAS, MABS) with contact names and numbers, group times and location
    c) Work proactively to make contact with excluded and isolated women

Extended Practice
We
    a) Make contact with women through community and women's organisations;
    b) Make contact with those who work with women in the locality (examples include teachers, public health nurses, community workers, education workers, youth workers, social workers, employment services)
    c) Promote our work: articles in newspapers, giving talks where requested on the benefits of being part of a women's community education group
    d) Establish connections with outreach workers / neighbourhood workers working with women
    e) Engage in intensive face-to-face work to encourage hard – to –reach women (for example through the neighbourhood work approach)
    f) Develop specific initiatives targetted at traveller women, refugee and asylum seeking women, women in minority groups and women experiencing isolation

ELEMENT 2 INCLUSION:
Women's community education encourages a sense of belonging and inclusion by all participants in the education process.

INCLUSION PRACTICE

Core Practice
We
   a) Provide a welcoming and inviting environment
   b) Ensure that the room lay-out promotes the ethos and atmosphere of women's community education (e.g. circle of chairs, heating, lighting, cleanliness, comfort)
   c) Offer an individual and personal welcome to a new member with a cup of tea / coffee and a chat
   d) Give attention to new members until they feel comfortable
   e) Help them establish contact with other women in the group
   f) Provide new members with information on our education programme, our activities and our group
   g) Provide information on childcare and other supports that are available
   h) Respect social, leisure and relaxation goals in relation to education including contact, company, sharing with other women, personal space from caring responsibilities / employment responsibilities
   i) Identify our members formal and informal education interests
   j) Ensure that courses respond to members stated needs
   k) Consult with group members in relation to the design and delivery of the course
   l) Ensure that the timetable is flexible and based around women's lives and responsibilities
   m) Recognise the needs of different groups of women – traveller women, migrant women and refugee and asylum seeking women, women with literacy needs

Extended Practice
We
   a) Work proactively to bring in women experiencing exclusion and isolation
   b) Ensure that our premises and our work reflects the lives of different communities of women
   c) Ensure that our education and training programmes are relevant to the needs of different groups and communities of women

ELEMENT 3 COURSE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY
Women's community education encourages participation by women members in all aspects of the development and delivery of education and training.

COURSE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY PRACTICE

Core Practice
We
a) Ensure that the facilitator / trainer understands the principles and practice of women's community education
b) Structure our courses to ensure that they can be responsive, adaptable and flexible to meet participants needs and to their experience of the course as it is delivered
c) Ensure groups maintenance through good group work practice e.g. check-in time, participation
d) Understand the importance of creativity and innovation in education
e) Provide women with the opportunity to reflect on their life story and experiences from social analysis and gender perspectives
f) Work from an understanding that women's community education is an education process for all
g) Respect the equality of all involved in education and welcome the contributions of members to the education and training process
h) Cooperate with others, organisers and members, in the development and delivery of each education and training programme
i) Provide support for childcare and elder care, for travel and course materials where possible
j) Structure evaluation into the course delivery
k) Provide programmes and activities which are outcome oriented with demonstrable outcomes in three key areas 1) women's confidence and sense of well-being, 2) specific learning outcomes and 3) critical reflection for social change

Extended Practice
We
a) Explore new possibilities in methods of assessment
b) Provide creative assessment methods
c) Research the relevant accreditation that facilitates progression into further education, training and employment
d) Identify and address the barriers to relevant accreditation
e) Record / keep track of the barriers to securing accreditation and communicate these to key actors in the sector regionally and nationally

f) Ensure the relevant accreditation that facilitates women's access, transfer and progression is secured
g) Participate in research projects designed to resource and give direction to the women's community education sector
h) Research the gaps in provision in relation to women's education and training needs
i) Seek resources to address such gaps
j) Build partnerships, where appropriate, to resource and address such gaps
k) Organise in partnership with key others research and development work relevant to the women's community education sector

ELEMENT 4 ONGOING PARTICIPATION

Women's community education organisations understand that women's roles and responsibilities in relation to social care can inhibit women's ongoing participation in education. Therefore the sector strives to ensure that women are provided with the necessary opportunities, encouragement and supports in order to complete the education programme of their choice. Women's Community Education is committed to the right of women to an enjoyable and successful education experience.

ONGOING PARTICIPATION PRACTICE

Core Practice
We
a) Have an open door – open ear approach with women learners
b) Ensure that supports are available
c) Promote peer support systems
d) Recognise that there are many reasons for women embarking on and considering leaving education
e) Respond to issues which arise seriously, recognising their impact on the individual woman and their part in maintaining the structures that impede women's progression into and through education
f) Take clear steps to address issues
g) Ensure that participants are given information on the ways their issues and concerns may be addressed and have options about how issues may be pursued
h) Contact women who leave the group or course, ask them about their experiences and evaluate practice in the light of their feedback
i) Seek out and learn from the experience of other women's community education organisations
j) Identify the key issues that impact on ongoing participation, endeavour to address them and communicate these through the relevant networks
k) Seek the resources to enhance women's ongoing participation in education

Extended Practice
We
a) Provide learning supports with assignments
b) Provide programmes and activities which have demonstrable outcomes in four key areas 1) women's confidence and sense of well-being, 2) specific learning outcomes 3) critical reflection for social change and 4) provision of supports and challenges to barriers inhibiting women's progression through education and training

c) Identify the key issues that impact on ongoing participation with the women's community education sector and work to address these issues with key others including funders and policy makers

ELEMENT 5: ACCESS TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

Women's Community Education organisations are committed to a meaningful education process that facilitates women to engage in education, move through different levels of education and progress into further education, training and employment programmes of their choice.

ACCESS TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION PRACTICE

Core Practice
We

a) Organise our programmes in a community – based premises or other location where participants feel "at-home"
b) Pay attention to the creation of a welcoming and holistic atmosphere (examples include food and beverages, plants and pictures, flowers, candles…)
c) Time our courses to respect women's childcare roles and responsibilities
d) Recognise that many women do not have the freedom or resources to organise their lives around an education course
e) Provide a Crèche or other forms of childcare supports
f) Organise our courses around the expressed needs of learners
g) Facilitate awareness and critical thinking of the barriers to women's progression from Women's Community Education
h) Provide information on education and training offered by other key providers

Extended Practice
We

a) Provide travel/transport support where needed
b) Make support available for women in relation to into their progression options
c) Map out progression routes from one course to the next level
d) Ensure that where progression within our group is not possible information on progression routes through other groups or providers in the area is available
e) Have forged the necessary connections to support women make the transition to the next stage in the progression route
f) Provide or organise through others follow-through with women in relation to the uptake of progression routes, CV preparation, interview preparation, life issues
g) Ensure our premises are accessible to all women

ELEMENT 6: CELEBRATION:

Celebration is an essential element of women's community education. Through celebration we collectively affirm our achievements and create a culture that supports and empowers women.

CELEBRATION PRACTICE

Core Practice
We
a) Ensure that all education and training programmes conclude with appropriate celebration
b) Organise a collective celebration with all participants annually
c) Understand the importance of collective and public celebration of women's achievements and contributions in the field of education and training
d) Highlight celebration in our group newsletter and local newsletters / publications / media

Extended Practice
We
a) Organise and participate in regional and national celebrations of women's community education
b) Encourage media coverage of local, regional and national celebrations
c) Build links with the broader community and adult education field as part of local, regional and national celebrations
d) Build appropriate links with funders and policy makers as part of local, regional and national celebrations of women's community education

DIMENSION 2: The WOMEN-LED Dimension

Women's Community Education is women-led education

Women's community education reflects the truths of women's lives and recognises women's experiences of inequality.

Many women identify as outside or excluded from mainstream society and collectively women in Ireland are on the margins of leadership and decision-making. Women- led education works to bring these issues and perspectives into the centre of the education process.

Society as it is currently structured poses many challenges for women. Women's community education believes that women's leadership and women's organisations are essential in the work for social change.

Through women's community education women take leadership in bringing about structural and systemic change within education, within community and within society.

The 6 elements that comprise the women-led dimension are:

LEADERSHIP
VOICE
CONSCIOUSNESS - RAISING EDUCATION
THE LEARNING ORGANISATION
EMPOWERMENT
ORGANISATION AS A COLLECTIVE

Women—led education is characterised by a cycle of women members moving into positions of leadership as

- Group leaders and organisers
- Members of management committees
- Trainers, facilitators and tutors,
- Coordinators
- Development workers
- Policy advisors and
- Lobbyists, activists and representatives

The model of women's leadership in women's community education evidence is characterised by listening, consideration and inclusion.

Leadership is developed and encouraged through dialogue, openness, freedom of participation and expression, capacity building, education and training.
These leaders over time facilitate the emergence of new cycles of leadership. Women's Community Education generates a qualitatively different leadership model. In contrast to the hierarchical leadership-over model this model emphasises leadership-with women, leadership-by women and leadership-to effect change.

ELEMENT 1: LEADERSHIP
Women's community education practitioners and leaders are committed to opening doors with and for other women. Leadership is not solely invested in key roles but in the knowledge, wisdom and experience of the whole group.

LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

Core Practice
We
    a) Bring awareness of our own experiences and our own journey to leadership
    b) Offer a model of leadership that women can identify with
    c) Believe in the importance of the personal and take the personal into account
    d) Put time and planning into our leadership
    e) Take time and care with each other and with women learners

Extended Practice
We
    a) Offer a model of leadership that lifts the lid on the "taboos" and silences that surround women's experiences
    b) Set up structures that allow our leadership to be informed by women's experiences
    c) Have procedures in place to ensure that our agenda as leaders is determined by what women learners need and want
    d) Provide a cycle of management and leadership that facilitates women to move from participation in our programmes to leadership roles
    e) Manage conflict through consultation and communication with a deep respect for and understanding of difference

ELEMENT 2: VOICE

In this element women's community education offers a model of leadership that is a real voice for women and gives expression to their goals, experiences and achievements.

VOICE PRACTICE

Core Practice
We
  a) Keep track, talk about, celebrate and promote our achievements
  b) Express our mutual appreciation of all the work and efforts of all those involved in and supportive of women's community education
  c) Bring everyone's experiences into the work of creating a way forward together, ensuring that every women has an opportunity to have an input and to be heard
  d) Build our identity as a group, as a collective and develop a group voice

Extended Practice
We
  a) Encourage each other to challenge taboos and address issues, such as the isolation, loss, violence and racism that many women encounter in their lives
  b) Are a voice in the public domain through attendance at seminars and networking events, through presentations and performance, through publications and through lobbying on issues affecting our lives and those of other women

ELEMENT 3: CONSCIOUSNESS - RAISING EDUCATION

Consciousness - raising education means reflection on the realities of women's experiences and analysis of the social systems that underpin that experience.

Women's Community Education creates and maintains education that relates to the truths of women's lives and experiences.

CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING EDUCATION PRACTICE

Core Practice
We

a) Provide opportunities for women to identify the common issues and structures that have impacted on their life choices and life paths
b) Introduce women learners to social and gender analysis by creating opportunities for groups of women to collectively analyse their life experience
c) Facilitate gender analysis and political analysis that develop out from personal life experience

Extended Practice
We

a) Are committed to gender-specific education that facilitates women's engagement with social analysis and gender studies
b) Plan and resource approaches which allow diverse groups of women access gender-specific education, social analysis, anti-racism and intercultural training and gender studies

ELEMENT 4: THE LEARNING ORGANISATION

Women's community education groups are participant centred learning organisations committed to collective planning and evaluation of their work.

Women's community education is committed to the pursuit of excellence in the quality and relevance of its contribution to women's leadership, to women's experience of education and training and to women's lives

Women's community education groups conduct research into issues that impact on women's lives and women's access to and progression through education. They seek to address the research findings in the content, planning, delivery and evaluation of their work.

LEARNING ORGANISATION PRACTICE

Core Practice
We
a) Draw on our personal reflections, analysis and knowledge about our lives as women in Ireland in developing our learning programmes
b) Believe in the importance of listening as a method of research into issues and circumstances of women's lives
c) Keep track of feedback from participants and use feedback to inform course planning and delivery
d) Build evaluation into the course delivery and into our way of working as an education provider
e) Have a shared ethos, values, principles and practices which we document and make available
f) Transparently account for our funding
g) Know that much more can be learned and achieved through a group, networks and collectives than can be learned and achieved alone
h) Commit to taking time for reflection, creativity and celebration

Extended Practice
We
a) Understand women's community education as a process in which we are learning and developing in partnership with members and others through a cycle of research, reflection and evaluation
b) Create spaces for thinking through and analysis, drawing our experiences together and learning and communicating our learning across the sector
c) Develop our education programmes organically and dynamically with our members

d) Maintain a focus on the systems and structures that oppress and subordinate women – barriers to education, training and employment opportunities, lack of childcare, violence against women, racism, poverty

e) Conduct research into the needs, issues impacting on women in our community

f) Use research findings to inform the planning and delivery of our education and training programmes, our leadership training and our networking and representation activities

g) Are committed to learning, and to making links between women experiences and social theories that address women's experiences

h) Commit to becoming expert on the systems that oppress women, that impact negatively on their lives

i) Commit to learning together how to access information on these systems and how address their negative impacts on women's lives

j) Ensure that our work is relevant to women's lives and experiences through a work cycle of research into women's experiences and issues, planning, reflection and evaluation

k) Commission research into the realities of women's lives and use research findings to inform our agenda and the direction of our work and to lobby and challenge service providers and politicians

l) Communicate our findings to community organisations and lobbyists, politicians, decision-makers and the media

m) Engage in strategies to progress the issues identified

n) Recognise that the allocation of resources for reflection, evaluation and teasing out lessons and learning to influence future planning and direction is essential for the sector to achieve its goals

o) Evaluate our set-backs strategically with a desire to learn about effectively progressing towards the vision, aspirations and goals of women's community education

ELEMENT 5: EMPOWERMENT

Women's Community Education is led and driven by the idea of empowering women to take their place as equal members of society.

EMPOWERMENT PRACTICE

Core Practice
We
  a) Provide opportunities for women to take their first steps into group participation
  b) Facilitate empowerment by valuing the social and leisure dimensions of education and of life
  c) Develop inclusive, creative and holistic education and training processes which reflect women's diversity
  d) Participate in, and encourage the participation of our members, in activities organised by women's community education groups, local community projects and wider networks

Extended Practice
We
  a) Reflect the breadth and diversity of women's experiences in our education and training programmes
  b) Facilitate women to step back and critically reflect on their lives and their communities
  c) Bring a radical perspective on community and gender to women's community education
  d) Respect difference, minority experiences and questioning of structures and systems
  e) Work to transform competitive and oppressive relations between women to relations of equality and solidarity

ELEMENT 6: ORGANISATION AS A COLLECTIVE

Women's community education groups acknowledge and affirm their collective contribution to women, to community and to education and seek to value each unique and distinctive voice that makes up that collective.

ORGANISATION AS A COLLECTIVE PRACTICE

Core Practice
We
a) Listen to each voice, particularly the minority voice
b) Work collectively by gathering and sharing information and pooling our knowledge and experience
c) Have a transparent and representative structure as an organisation
d) Organise locally, regionally and nationally in formal and informal networks
e) Encourage equality as a collective of women
f) Believe in the value of holding different perspectives and questions
g) Strive for effective communication and solidarity with other groups within the sector – acting collectively and responding to issues together

Extended Practice
We
a) Believe that transparent and accountable representation is an important way for women to realise their right to active participation and leadership in society
b) Organise the sector as a collective, linking up and networking regionally and nationally
c) Develop the appropriate training and supports that maximise collective empowerment and effectiveness
d) Support our representatives participation in political and strategic networking
e) Are committed to learning from analysis of achievements and challenges
f) Understand the long-term nature of the collective women's community education project

DIMENSION 3: The POLITICAL Dimension

Women's Community Education is political education

Women's lives are rooted in a political, social and cultural environment that excludes many women from accessing education and employment and fulfilling their potential.
Women have not achieved equality with men in holding positions of power, influence and decision-making.

In the Quality Assurance Framework political means to
- Break the cycle of silence, isolation and disempowerment that marks many women's lives and experiences
- Provide information and support to women on issues that affect their lives
- Identify the social and educational structures which oppress women
- Address the issues that affect and impact on women's lives
- Develop liberatory and participatory alternatives for women
- Provide opportunities for women to build their analysis and awareness of how society works and promote women's unique model of leadership
- Promote women's community education as radical education for women

The 6 elements which comprise the political dimension are:

1. VISIBILITY
2. ACTIVISM
3. RESOURCES
4. COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY
5. COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY
6. REPRESENTATION

The women's community education sector recognises that responsibility for care and nurture is still taken up largely by women. Commitment to the care of children, the ill and the older generation is essential for human development and for human society and makes an inestimable contribution to the collective good.
However, responsibility for care presents a significant barrier to women's access to education, training and employment and to political influence and representation.
The issue of women's access to education, and to the resources, power and influence that education gives access to, is a political issue.

Women's absence in positions of power relative to men, income inequality, lack of respect for difference and diversity and lack of political commitment to social care are challenged in the political dimension of women's community education.

ELEMENT 1: VISIBILITY

Women's visibility is an essential element in the political dimension of women's community education.

Women's community education organisations encourage women's visibility. Dialogue with women, and the creativity that comes out of this dialogue, is made visible through drama, creativity and public performance. The regular communication of achievement is an important part of being visible. Participating in the public arena, representation and lobbying is part of visibility.

VISIBILITY PRACTICE

Core Practice
We
  a) Organise our education and training programmes to support women's confidence, assertiveness and visibility
  b) Are creative and flexible in the ways we promote our groups' presence and its achievements
  c) Create opportunities for women to stand up and be visible within our education and training programmes
  d) Are visible in our engagement with decision-makers and policy makers at local level

Extended Practice
We
  a) Support women's visibility through fact-finding, drama, and creativity
  b) Document and publish accounts of our work
  c) Organise public gatherings where we recount and celebrate our work and our achievements and those of women learners
  d) Create a newsletter, contribute to our Network's newsletter and to the newsletters of women's community organisations regionally or nationally
  e) Maintain visibility and public presence through our premises
  f) Use our premises and the premises of ally organisations to their full advantage in promoting and making visible women's activities and achievements
  g) Encourage media coverage of our work through local and national print, radio and television
  h) Are visible in our engagement with decision-makers and policy makers at local, regional and national levels
  i) Secure resources to build the communications and representation skills of the women's community education sector locally, regionally and nationally

ELEMENT 2: ACTIVISM

Women's community education believes that the opportunity must be created for all women to become active on issues affecting their lives if they so wish. Women's Community Education groups are expressions of women's activism. Groups give women the option of becoming politically aware and active on women's, community and education issues.

ACTIVISM PRACTICE

Core Practice
We
   a) Participate in the activities of local, regional and / or national women's community education and women's organisations
   b) Participate in and celebrate International Women's Day events to raise consciousness and public awareness about women's lives and issues
   c) Organise voter awareness and political awareness education and training for members, staff and management committees
   d) Participate in protest events to challenge policies and practices which deny equality and justice for women

Extended Practice
We
   a) Understand local structures relevant to women's community education
   b) Have contacts with our area's local and national political representatives on issues affecting women and women's community education
   c) Engage in political lobbying and awareness raising work with political representatives particularly at strategically important times
   d) Have a particular interest in and engagement with women politicians and elected representatives
   e) Develop links and contacts with public and statutory sector staff appropriate to the work of women's community education
   f) Identify the barriers to women's engagement with the political process and work with others to address such barriers
   g) Understand the workings of Government Departments and local structures relevant to women's community education including local government, the public service and statutory service structures
   h) Have information available on the current policy platforms of political parties in relation to women's community education, community development, poverty, women's health, interculturalism, domestic violence and social inclusion and the financing of social inclusion measures
   i) Make this material accessible to women's community education groups

j) Maintain women's issues on the political agenda through our public presence, visibility and activism
k) Publicise our work and our achievements through the media
l) Believe that protest is an important part of activism, visibility and public presence

ELEMENT 3: RESOURCES

Women's community education's work to secure funding and develop as women's organisations is political activity. The sector is committed to securing the resources to maintain and develop women's community education. Women's community education sources resources to facilitate the access, transfer and progression of communities of women through education, training and where they so desire, into employment and self-employment. The allocation of resources to capacity-building programmes may include the appointment of specialist support and development workers, low-cost childcare and crèche facilities and outreach education and training programmes. Resources are essential to realise the vision of access by all women to education and training that meets their needs.

RESOURCES PRACTICE

Core Practice
We
  a) Research funding sources and secure funding necessary for women's community education
  b) Are knowledgeable about current statutory and voluntary funding sources
  c) Make our political representatives aware of the resource needs of our groups

Extended Practice:
We
  a) Network within the sector in relation to funding and resource issues
  b) Identify the barriers to accessible education created by inadequate resources for women's community education
  c) Lobby together to secure adequate mainstream resources for quality – assured women's community education
  d) Work collectively to ensure that women's community education has the resources to provide quality assured women's community education
  e) Keep the resourcing of women's community education as a live issue on the political agenda

ELEMENT 4: COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY

The commitment of women's community education to equality is rooted in the experiences of inequality, exclusion and oppression of women as a community. Women's community education groups are committed to equality and understand that commitment to equality means standing for the value of difference and diversity. Women's community education challenges exclusion and marginalisation. It challenges inequality across the grounds of gender, class, 'race', ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, age and citizenship status and inequalities due to geographic location and lack of infrastructure and public services.

EQUALITY PRACTICE

Core Practice
We
    a) Enjoy equality as women within women's community education whether as participants, members, facilitators, trainers, staff and voluntary management committee members
    b) Develop with our members, staff and management policy statements on equality issues including gender equality, anti-racism and interculturalism, violence against women, and community education
    c) Are members of local and regional networks that stand for equality

Extended Practice
We
    a) Work in solidarity with other groups and organisations that stand for equality
    b) Are members of national organisations that work to achieve similar goals to ours
    c) Make links between women's experiences locally, nationally and transnationally
    d) Make connections between the experiences of women in the past and present in Ireland and the experiences of women globally
    e) Raise our awareness and that of others of the world community of women
    f) Are committed to work at policy levels on issues relating to women's equality in education, training and access to employment
    g) Pursue the implementation of polices to achieve equality

ELEMENT 5: COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

Women's Community Education believes that recognition of diversity is essential for the achievement of equality. Each woman is unique, different and individual. Commitment to diversity communicates the value we place on difference and the essential contribution diversity makes to women's community education.

Within the general category of women there is great diversity across 'race' and ethnicity, health, age, sexual orientation, disability, class, income, and citizenship status.

Women's community education reflects the diversity of women in Ireland and addresses the causes of marginalisation of specific communities of women.

DIVERSITY PRACTICE

Core Practice
We

a) Seek to be inclusive of all women
b) Recognise that women can be discriminated against not only on the basis of gender but across all the grounds of the Equal Status Act, 2000
c) Promote awareness of discrimination against women and challenge such discrimination through our work

Extended Practice
We

a) Provide capacity building and training to build political awareness and consciousness of diversity
b) Take specific steps to ensure our organisation is inclusive of all women
c) Work in solidarity with organisations addressing racism and marginalisation
d) Challenge racism and exclusion and promote interculturalism
e) Actively celebrate diversity

ELEMENT 6: REPRESENTATION

Women have traditionally been a small minority within or absent from senior levels of decision-making and from political life. Women's community education represents the interests of women involved in women's community education and training through local, regional and national networks, partnerships, organisations and alliances. Representation places the issues affecting women's community education and its members on the agendas of a range of organisations and works to address these issues.

Representation means gathering information and building the expertise to inform and influence decision-making bodies in relation to issues affecting women's lives.

Representation means bringing learning about the barriers to women's access to employment, education and training to those who make decisions about structures and about resources. Representation means using knowledge of how systems work to inform and empower women. Representation means using this knowledge to challenge the ways that systems maintain gender inequality

REPRESENTATION PRACTICE

Core Practice

We

a) Are part of informal networks in our area on issues that impact on women's community education
b) Are part of formal women's community education networks
c) Participate in activities and celebrations organised by the women's community organisation sector and its allies
d) Represent our groups and contribute to collective learning, practice and solidarity through collaborating, organising and participating in relevant workshops, training and consultations

Extended Practice

We

a) Take up a representative role to ensure that women and women's community education issues are placed on the agenda and kept on the agenda
b) Represent women locally, regionally, nationally and internationally on needs and issues identified by women involved in women's community education
c) Represent women's issues in local, regional, national and international networks
d) Evaluate strategically and collectively the achievements, barriers and learning from our representation activities
e) Secure the resources, supports and training necessary to engage in networking and representation
f) Maintain our professionalism, commitment, follow-through, and delivery of sustainable outcomes

DIMENSION 4: The STRATEGIC Dimension

Women's Community Education is strategic education

In the strategic dimension the focus of women's community education is on equality for women, on collective empowerment and on the expansion of choices available to women in their education and in their lives.

In the Quality Assurance Framework strategic means to
- Identify and strengthen the practices which contribute to the growth and sustainability of women's community education
- Identify and address the factors which undermine the capacity of the sector to effect change
- Work towards the fulfillment over time of the long-term goals and aspirations of women's community education

The 6 elements which comprise the strategic dimension are:

1. CAPACITY BUILDING
2. CREATIVITY
3. NETWORKING
4. TACTICAL WORK
5. PARTNERSHIP
6. SYSTEMIC CHANGE

The first three elements – Capacity Building, Creativity and Networking– identify strategic work practices within groups and networks.
The next three elements – Tactical Work, Partnership and Systemic Change – identify strategic work practices as part of the broader women's sector, with the community and voluntary sector and with other sectors.
Empowerment is an ongoing process within women's community education because the capacity to be strategic on behalf of women rests on personal and collective empowerment.
Every women's community education group, whatever its size or scale, can make its own unique contribution to the strategic dimension of women's community education.

ELEMENT 1: CAPACITY BUILDING

Women's voluntary commitment to their group is the heart of the women's community education movement and the driving force which mobilizes and energises the sector.
Capacity building means giving women opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge essential for the management of women's groups and the maintenance of women's community education.
Capacity building demonstrates that volunteer management committee members are respected and valued as the core providers of women's community education.

Women's community education believes that management and staff have an entitlement to training and supports in their work and provides and encourages participation in capacity building education and training programmes.
Training and capacity building supports management committees and staff to remain energised and proactive and is part of a commitment to holistic women-centred education.
The capacity building element ensures that those who give to the organisation of women's community education also receive back benefits from their work.

CAPACITY BUILDING PRACTICE

Core Practice:
We
  a) Value and appreciate ourselves, our work and our promotion of women's community education
  b) Provide staff and management committee support and training which includes
      o Induction, information sharing and informal networking
      o Group work and communications
      o Funding sources and procedures
      o Planning and review / evaluation processes
  c) Source premises for the provision of women's community education
  d) Continue to work on our collective empowerment as women

Extended Practice:

We

    a) Secure resources for the provision of quality, accessible and accredited training programmes

    b) Develop and promote in partnership with other key providers a cycle of theoretical and practical training for members which includes
- Communications and group work which we place at the core of capacity - building
- Leadership training
- Facilitation
- Team development
- Social and Gender Analysis
- Participation and representation
- Policy work
- Anti-racism and interculturalism

    c) Establish and maintain a premises dedicated to women's community education

ELEMENT 2: CREATIVITY
Creativity in women's community education is a process in which the imagination, resources and experiences of the group provide opportunities for women's self-expression. Creativity allows new approaches to women's collective empowerment and new responses to the issues encountered by women to emerge.

CREATIVITY PRACTICE

Core Practice:
We
   a) Recognise the importance of creativity in empowering women
   b) Encourage story-telling, creative writing and the recording of women's stories and lives
   c) Provide opportunities for craft work
   d) Value creativity in its various forms - arts, celebration, performance, drama
   e) Recognise the power of community arts within women's community education
   f) Provide opportunities for creativity and creative expression throughout our work
   g) Value the importance of humour - humour helps us confront the issues that impact on women's lives

Extended Practice
We
   a) Celebrate and raise awareness about women's lives and experiences through creativity
   b) Value creativity and the power of the imagination in our planning and reviews
   c) Are able, from these creative processes, to set clear goals and move forward with confidence in our work for social change and for an inclusive society
   d) Collectively and publicly celebrate women's creativity

ELEMENT 3: NETWORKING

Women's community education groups share their experiences, learning, achievements and issues with each other through networking. At local, regional, national and international levels women generate ideas, energise each other, chart directions and work out strategies together.

NETWORKING PRACTICE

Core Practice:
We
   a) Share experiences within our own group and with women in other groups
   b) Exchange information and learn from the experiences of other groups
   c) Take part in joint information and awareness sessions on common issues
   d) Celebrate together
   e) Are dedicated to grassroots women's groups, activities and issues

Extended Practice:
We
   a) Organise support, information meetings and workshops on issues affecting women locally, regionally, nationally and internationally
   b) Organise seminars and workshops relating to the issues of women, community and education
   c) Publicly and collectively celebrate the achievements of our sector

ELEMENT 4: TACTICAL WORK

Tactical work means being able to come up with skilful courses of action which contribute to dismantling the barriers to women's full and equal participation in society.

Core Practice:
We
   a) Are committed to naming the issues affecting women's lives
   b) Are committed to developing the resources, skills and knowledge to address these issues
   c) Know where to source reliable information on these issues and take the time to do so
   d) Know which key systems impact on women's lives

Extended Practice:
We
   a) Build up our understanding of local, regional and national statutory systems, structures and strategies that impact on women's lives
   b) Work at building our expertise and being well-informed about issues, practices and developments in relation to those systems
   c) Plan in advance, making decisions about the key arenas and where to put our energy based on the likely returns from our work
   d) Work on having a presence in strategic positions
   e) Place women's equality and justice issues on the agenda
   f) Build alliances to ensure these issues are progressed
   g) Know the importance of direct communication with key people
   h) Work from the ethos of making our point rather than scoring points
   i) Assess every situation for its potential to contribute to gains in relation to our long-term goals
   j) Emphasise creativity, patience, persistence and appropriate timing
   k) Prioritise our actions around what we consider sustainable, realistic and achievable and which offer a return on our time
   l) Make regular assessments on progress – gauging when the environment and agenda is primarily about holding ground and when the environment and agenda is conducive to growth, development and systemic change
   m) Allocate time as a sector for reflection together on the strategic dimension of our work
   n) Keep the long-term goals of justice and equality for women in mind

ELEMENT 5: PARTNERSHIP

Partnership allows individuals and groups with different perspectives, resources and skills to come together to work towards collectively agreed goals. In women's community education partnership means that each partner is accorded equality of respect and equality in the decision-making process.

Women's community education representatives keep their focus on progressing women's equality issues.

PARTNERSHIP PRACTICE

Core Practice
We
  a) Are committed to the principles and practice of partnership within our own group –management committee, staff, members and participants work in a spirit of equality and partnership with each other
  b) Identify mentors who will support us in making partnership work for us
  c) Source resources for the capacity-building necessary for women's community education to be represented effectively as an equal partner within partnership
  d) Work in partnership with representatives of community and voluntary and statutory organisations within our community

Extended Practice
We
  a) Represent our groups and networks in partnership structures
  b) Seek partnerships with groups and organisations which have a strategic focus related to the goals of women's community education
  c) Establish partnerships with other organisations across the community, voluntary and statutory sectors in order to address barrier's to women's full and equal participation in society
  d) Seek in partnership a commitment to equality of relationship and status for all partners
  e) Evaluate and review the outcomes of partnerships in relation to achievement of the goals of women's community education
  f) Make a strategic assessment over time on the return on our investment of time and resources
  g) Invest strategically in places where we are likely to get the greatest return in relation to our short and long term goals
  h) Work with our own sector and with our partners to build awareness of good partnership practice and commitment to the factors that create and maintain effective partnerships

ELEMENT 6: SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Systemic change means changes throughout organisations, structures and systems that impact on women's lives. Systemic change involves changes in ways of thinking, and ways of working and organising so that society reflects the reality and diversity of women's lives.

Women's community education recognises that women's groups alone cannot bring about the scale of social and attitudinal change that is required to achieve equality for women. Through alliances, networks and partnerships and through activism and policy work women's community education seeks to contribute to systemic change.

Women's community education seeks to extend its influence in and on local, regional and national structures in order to contribute to such change.

It does this by building and maintaining key alliances, by securing the resources for strategic work, by engaging in challenge and protest, and by keeping the focus on the achievement of women's community education's vision and goals.

SYSTEMIC CHANGE PRACTICE

Core Practice
We

- Identify the key issues for women's community education
- Identify the key players in our community who are responsible for these issues
- Maintain an up-to-date list of such key players - local politicians and local agency staff
- Inform local politicians and local agencies on issues impacting on women's community education
- Challenge local politicians and local agencies to address issues impacting on women's community education
- Keep in mind the people who engage with the issues facing women's community education and endeavour to work reciprocally with them

Extended Practice
We

- Seek allies within the systems and build relationships and alliances there
- Work at different levels within the systems –aiming for the most senior levels of decision-making and also using channels within the system in order to exert our influence on developments
- Recognise our interdependence with other groups and organisations and strive to build effective strategies with them
- Recognise the reality of power plays, and the agendas that can and cannot be tackled at any one time

- Recognise and create opportunities to exert influence outside formal decision-making arenas
- Work out and name the specific changes to systems and organisations that progress women's equality
- Lobby and challenge public representatives, policy makers and policy administrators to implement the necessary changes in systems and organisations that secure equality for women in Irish society

CONCLUSION

The Women's Community Education Quality Assurance Framework provides an integrated method for:

1. Quality assuring the practice of women's community education
2. Framing the distinctive social analysis and practice of women's community education
3. Building a shared language for dialogue

Women's Community Education groups are invited to use the AONTAS / Women's Community Education Quality Assurance Framework as

- An opportunity to name and celebrate the specific and unique contribution that each women's community education group makes to quality women's community education practice
- A strategic planning, quality assurance and evaluation resource
- A guide to quality practice

This Quality Assurance Framework has evolved through a process of consultation and dialogue with women's community education groups and networks.

The *'AONTAS Women's Community Education Quality Assurance Framework Project Report'* which accompanies this Quality Assurance Framework documents the stages in that process and the learning from the project.

GLOSSARY

Access, Transfer and Progression: *right or ability to get into education, to move from one course to another and to move from one course to another course at a higher level*

Access is the process by which learners may commence a programme of education and training having received recognition for knowledge, skill or competence required; Transfer is the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme having received recognition for knowledge, skill or competence acquired; Progression is the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme, where each programme is of a higher level that the preceding one (Definitions from the Qualifications Act, 1999)

Accreditation: *a standard of education that is publicly recognised is set and reached*

Accreditation is the formal recognition of the fulfillment of a minimum publicly stated standard. It implies that a standard was intended and was reached. The accreditation process usually results in an award being made. The awarding body acts as a quality assurance authority, validating the standards of the course deliverer. (AONTAS)

Critical Analysis: *investigating, interpreting, presenting and reflecting on issues; going beyond simple explanations and exploring issues in a more complex way (A Plain English Guide to Citizenship Terms, NALA, 2005)*

Empowerment: *a process of realising potential for growth, creativity and change and reconnecting with the confidence and capacity to take action, especially action that requires courage and imagination. (derived from readings in 'Wickedary', Daly, Mary 1987, Beacon Press)*

Equal Status Act 2000: *The Equal Status Act includes in its measures the prohibition of discrimination in the provision of education. The nine discriminatory grounds are gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, race, age, disability and membership of the Traveller community (section 3 (2) (a-I)*

Equality: *having and holding with others the same rights, opportunities, status and respect and conditions; equality of worth and importance, concern and respect; prohibitions against inhuman and degrading treatment, protection against violence; commitment to equality in the key areas that affect peoples conditions and quality of life – respect and recognition, resources, love, care and solidarity, power, working and learning*

Equality Spheres – Affective, Cultural, Political, Economic: *equality in the key areas of love, care, relationship, solidarity (affective sphere); in the social institutions and systems of education, religion, arts and culture, the mass media (cultural sphere) in the making and enforcing of collectively binding decisions – government, the public service and the legal system (political sphere); in the production, distribution and exchange of goods and services – including businesses and companies, the state, the banking system and money markets, trade unions (economic sphere) (The equality references are derived from 'Equality- from Theory to Action', Baker et al, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pps 23 – 24 and pps58 – 60)*

Evaluation: *reviewing, reflecting and analysing practices to identify the outcomes, benefits, impacts and learning particularly in relation to inclusion and exclusion; using this learning to make changes to contribute to social inclusion and equality (Combat Poverty Agency Glossary)*

Exclusion: *The social, political and economic processes whereby individuals and communities are distanced from job, income and education opportunities and networks resulting in little or no access to power and decision-making bodies; this means that they have little chance of influencing decision and policies that affect them and therefore little chance to better their standard of living and quality of life (Combat Poverty Agency Glossary)*

Facilitation: *Group facilitation is the art of guiding a group process towards agreed objectives and working through the challenges and issues that arise on the way*

Facilitator: *A facilitator uses knowledge, skills and aptitudes in a process called facilitation. The role of a facilitator is to make it easier for a group to achieve a goal and to take collective responsibly for the work involved in that process. The facilitator has three key tasks. One is to maintain awareness of the individual people who constitute the group, the group as a whole and the task they aim to complete. The second is to have an attitude of confidence that the resources that the group will need to achieve its task are present even if this is not fully recognised by the group. The third is an attitude of openness to the unanticipated and the unexpected as a contribution to the group process and to the achievement of the task or goal. (Facilitation references adapted from ' The Zen of Groups', Hunter et al, Tandem Press, 1992)*

Gender: *the social differences between women and men that are learned, changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures e.g. while only women can give birth (biologically determined) biology does not determine who will raise the children (gendered behaviour)*

Gender Equality: *means that women and men have equal conditions for realising their full human potential, for enjoying civil rights and for contributing to and benefiting from economic, social, cultural and political development*

Gender Perspective: *looking at the way society, communities, groups and organisations work to achieve gender equality or do not work to achieve gender equality*
(The gender references are taken from 'Developing and Implementing a Gender Equality Policy' Crawley and O`Meara, 2004, p.6 and published by The Gender Equality Unit, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform)

Grass- Root Movements: *group, usually formed by people who have no political ambitions, who are so concerned about and affected by a particular issue that they feel compelled to organise with like-minded people; such groups are part of and stay close to the basic level of society from which they get their mandate and their support (adapted from A Plain English Guide to Citizenship Terms, NALA, 2005)*

Inclusion: *processes and practices which ensure that those who have been marginalised have greater participation in and influence over decisions that impact on their lives, allowing them to improve their overall well-being and quality of life and their living standards (Combat Poverty Agency Glossary)*

Interculturalism: *valuing exchanges between cultural groups within society and seeing these exchanges as mutually enriching (NALA, 2005)*

Interculturalism is essentially about interaction, understanding and respect; it is about ensuring that cultural diversity is acknowledged and catered for; it is about inclusion for minority groups by design and planning not as a default or add on; it further acknowledges that people should have the freedom to keep alive, enhance and share their cultural heritage
(NCCRI 'Guidelines for Developing a Whole Organisation Approach to Address Racism and to Support Interculturalism')

Mainstream: *principle channel, central system, prevailing trend of thinking and opinion – (from the Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus 111, Oxford University Press, 2001)*

Marginalisation: *the processes whereby certain groups such as those living in poverty, the unemployed, those who had limited gains from formal education are pushed to the edges of society's power and decision-making systems, and denied the means to improve their conditions of life (Combat Poverty Agency Glossary)*

Neighbourhood Work: *Neighbourhood Work specifically targets the most excluded in society and those who are least represented in mainstream education and training. Neighbourhood Work engages directly with people on a one-to-one basis. This approach creates space for them to name their own realities, build their confidence and identify their own needs. Neighbourhood Work facilitates people in a community to get to know each other in a group context and at the same time learn more about themselves. It motivates and encourages people to be concerned about their own personal development and the development of their community. The aim of the work is to give voice to those most excluded and support them to bring about social change. (Definition from Neighbourhood Work of the North West)*

Racism: *Racism is a specific form of discrimination and exclusion faced by black and ethnic minority groups including Travellers. It is based on the false belief that some 'races' are inherently superior to others because of different skin colour, nationality, ethnic or cultural backgrounds. It denies people their basic human rights, equality and respect. (NCCRI)*

Sustainable, sustainability: *broad-based, long-term and collective human growth which encourages the development and renewal of skills, capacities and talents to the fullest possible extent as a means to challenging poverty and social exclusion and achieving equality (adapted from the Combat Poverty Agency Glossary)*

Sustainable Development: *development that meets the needs of the people today without harming the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (NALA, 2005)*

The Combat Poverty Agency Glossary can be accessed at www.combatpoverty.ie
NALA is the National Adult Literacy Agency. NALA published 'A Plain Guide To Citizenship Terms' as a contribution to The European Year of Citizenship through Education 2005
NALA – 01 855 4332 www.nala.ie
NCCRI is the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism.
NCCRI – 01 8588000 www.nccri.ie
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