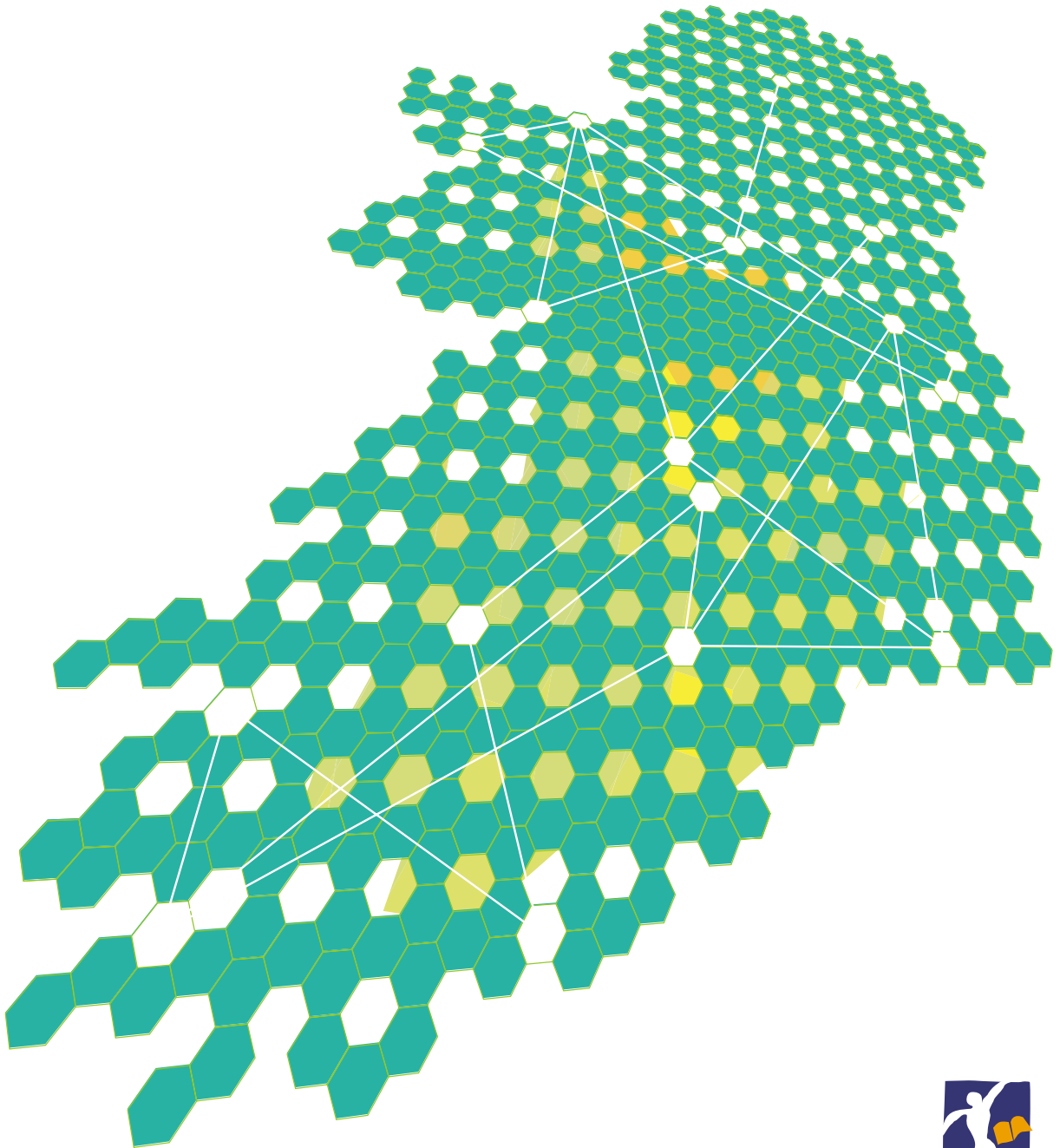
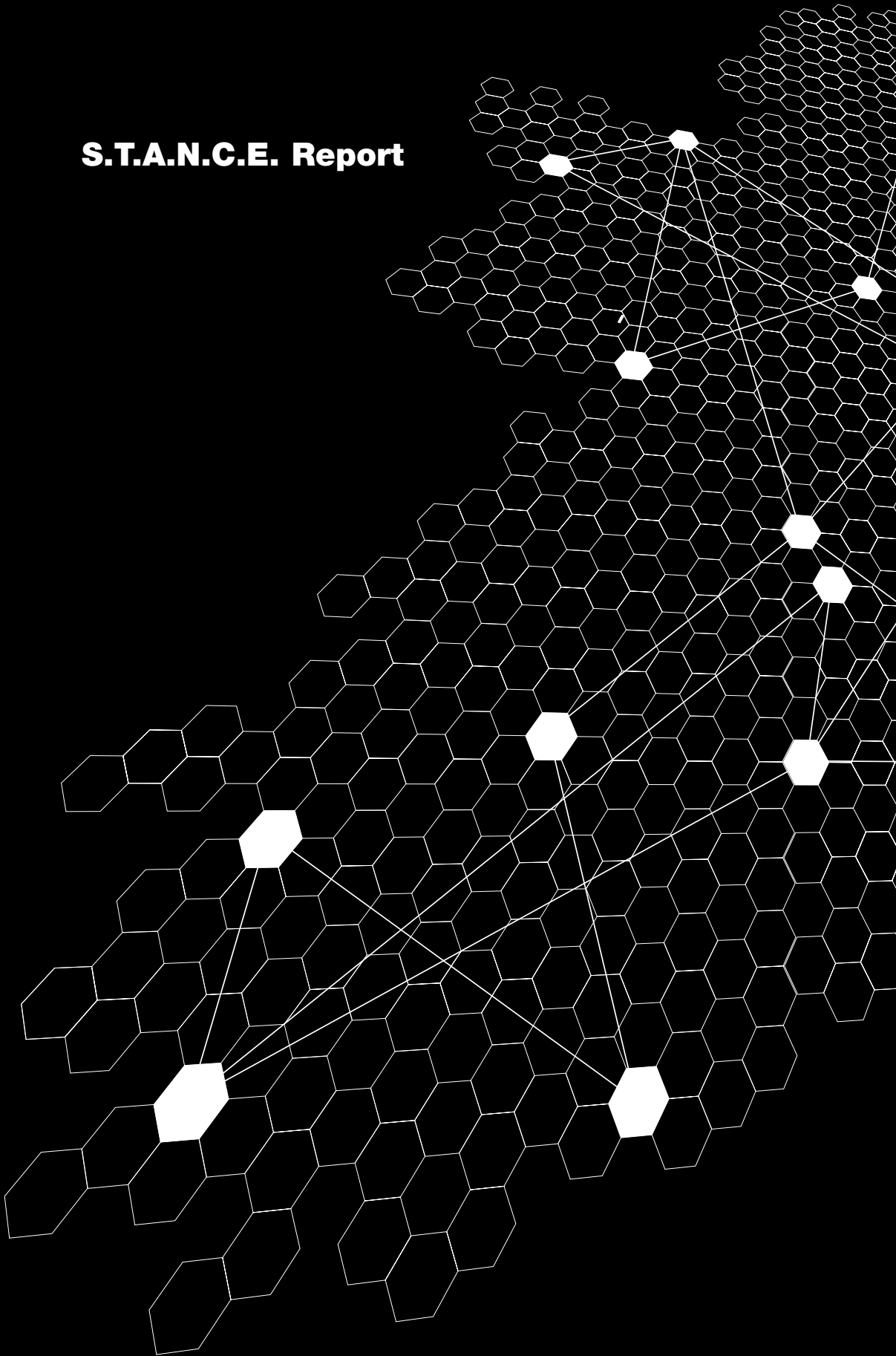


S.T.A.N.C.E. Project

Final Report 2004



S.T.A.N.C.E. Report



Preface

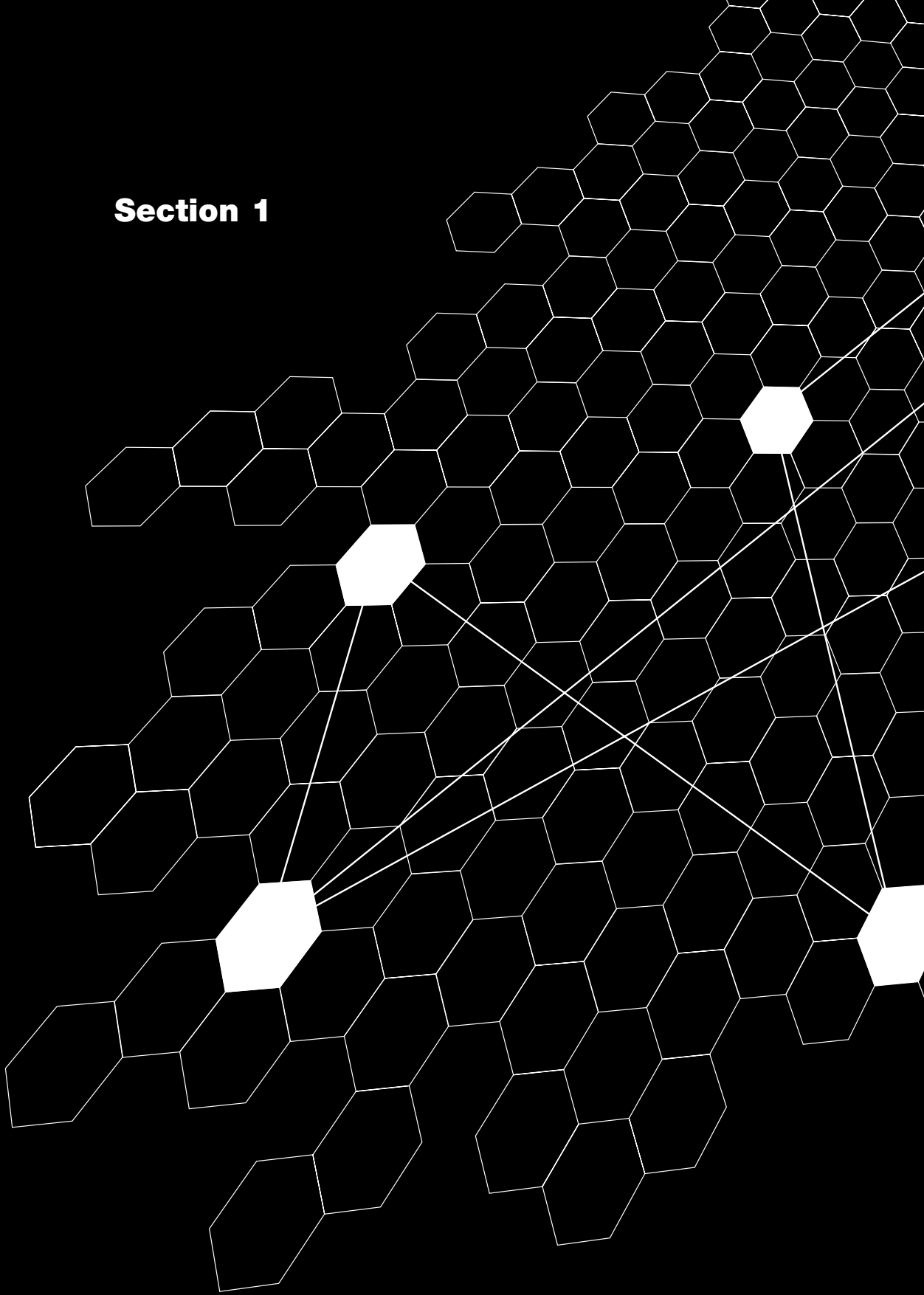
This report presents an overview of the S.T.A.N.C.E. project (Strategies to Advance Networks' Collective Empowerment), which was a three-year project, developed by AONTAS. This project ran from January 2001 – December 2003 and aimed to strengthen the capacity of women's networks regionally and nationally.

This report is based on quarterly reviews carried out during the project, a mid-way evaluation and a final evaluation. The final evaluation was carried out with women's networks that had participated in the project and took place from October 2003 – December 2003 at five regional meetings held in Galway, Sligo, Dublin, Tipperary and Kerry.

Niamh Keaveney
Project Development Worker

Table of Contents	Page
1: Setting the Context	6
1.1 Introduction	
1.2 S.T.A.N.C.E. Project	
1.3 Labour Force Participation	
1.4 Economic changes and government priorities	
1.5 Overall comment	
2: Project Implementation	11
2.1 Regional and Information Training Meetings	
2.2 Ongoing contact	
2.3 Dissemination of information	
2.4 Strengthening links between the women's networks	
2.5 National Collective of Community based Women's Networks	
2.6 Encouraging participation at AONTAS events	
2.7 Policy submissions and development	
2.8 Bringing learning from S.T.A.N.C.E. to other fora	
2.9 Key elements of the S.T.A.N.C.E. approach	
3: Case Study – Tipperary Women's Network	17
3.1 Participation in S.T.A.N.C.E.	
3.2 Policy Development	
3.3 Organisational Development	
3.4 National Level	
3.5 Conclusion	
4: Learning and Outcomes	21
4.1 Networking	
4.2 Critical Reflection	
4.3 Representation	
4.4 Being Strategic	
5: Conclusion	25
5.1 Specific targeting of resources	
5.2 The power of working collectively	
5.3 Being responsive to change	
5.4 Education for citizenship	
Appendix 1: Where have networks influenced policy?	27
Appendix 2: Participation List	28

Section 1



Section 1: Setting the Context

1.1: Introduction

AONTAS is the Irish National Association of Adult Education, a voluntary membership organisation. It exists to promote the development of a learning society through the provision of a quality and comprehensive system of adult learning and education, which is accessible to and inclusive of all. Since its inception in 1969 AONTAS has played a major role in progressing the adult education agenda and in representing the issues of the growing adult and community education sectors.

The late eighties marked a major turning point for adult education as daytime community groups, mainly women's groups, established themselves across Ireland and developed their own system of adult education provision. This development spearheaded the growth of community education. Community education was the tool that encouraged women all over Ireland to raise their expectations, increase their skills, develop their confidence, and bridge the gap between personal and community life. The groups involved in providing these courses included local women's groups, day time education groups, women's centres and community based women's networks. Community based women's education has developed a distinctive holistic approach to women's education with the activities/courses it provides, taking in every aspect of women's lives, from leisure activities to personal development, skills training to academic courses. This in turn has contributed to the process of making women's experience more visible and has empowered women to collectively identify the barriers which exclude them from active citizenship.

During the nineties many of these groups became members of AONTAS, bringing with them their valuable experience and analysis and thus making an enormous contribution to shaping the work of AONTAS. AONTAS itself has played a major role in supporting the work of this sector of membership through two N.O.W. (New Opportunities for Women) programmes and research. The AONTAS research "*At the Forefront; the Role of Women's Community Education in Combating Poverty and Disadvantage in the Republic of Ireland*" recognised the valuable contribution women's groups and networks have made in tackling women's disadvantage. In 1998 – 2000 the W.E.N.D.I. Project (Women's Education Networks Development Initiative) recommended the necessity to continue to develop the capacity of the sector in order to enable it to address the barriers to women's active citizenship.

1.2: S.T.A.N.C.E. Project

Recognising the power of networks locally and their potential collectively through W.E.N.D.I. AONTAS developed a three-year project to strengthen the sector and build its capacity to influence the social inclusion agenda. The S.T.A.N.C.E. (Strategies to Advance Networks Collective Empowerment) Project was jointly funded by the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs now the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

The aims of STANCE were:

- to develop women's networks as regionally based infrastructures of support in addressing women's social exclusion
- to facilitate the development of a partnership approach to linking women's networks and key agencies at national level with a view to influencing policy

The S.T.A.N.C.E. programme was implemented in the context of a number of important developments affecting the women's community sector. These developments initiated significant changes in the overall state of relationships, policy and thinking within the sector and caused the sector itself to evaluate its direction and ways of working.

Key developments included:

- publication of the White Paper on Adult Education
- publication of the White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector
- establishment of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
- increasing numbers of women in the labour force
- economic changes and government priorities

The White Paper on Adult Education "Learning for Life" (2000) marked a new era for the adult education and community education sector as a whole. Key recommendations included:

- development of structures
- professionalisation of the sector
- increased resources

The White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector was published by government in 2000. This represented the first substantial articulation by the Irish state as to how it saw its relationship with the voluntary and community sector.

Key recommendations included:

- recognition of the value of the voluntary and community sector and its contribution towards social inclusion, solidarity, diversity, trust, dialogue and the rights of the individual
- establishment of voluntary support units
- additional and multi annual funding to the sector
- the State to be an enabler of the voluntary sector

The Qualifications Act 1999 led to the establishment of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland in 2001. Its overall functions are:

- the establishment and maintenance of a framework of qualifications for the development, recognition and award of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners
- the establishment and promotion of the maintenance and improvement of the standards of awards of the further and higher education and training sector, other than in the existing universities

- the promotion and facilitation of access, transfer and progression throughout the span of education and training provision

1.3: Labour Force Participation

Between 1997 and 2002 the female labour force grew from 601,700 to 771,300, an increase of 28%. In the same period the number of women actually at work increased from 539,700 to 702,500 an increase of almost 30.2%. The female participation rate increased from 41.4% in 1996 to 48.9% in 2002 and is approaching the E.U. target of 57% by 2005.

In mid April 1996, almost 41% of women aged 15 and over described themselves as being in home duties while this figure had declined to 35% in 2002. Between 1996 and 2002 the female participation rate for women aged 50 and over increased from 16.3% to 22.7%. The Quarterly National Household Survey 2002 show that women account for over 80% of part time workers.

1.4: Economic Changes and Government Priorities

The events of September 11 and the period of economic uncertainty, which has followed, have led to a contraction in the Irish economy. The rate of Gross Domestic Product fell from 10.4% in 2000 to 2.9% in 2002 and has had an immediate effect on the tightening of the public finances in Ireland. Voluntary and community organisations have been particularly hard hit with their state funding being reduced by 17% in 2002 with a marginal increase of 2% in 2003.

Yet, Ireland continues to have record rates of poverty, inequality and social exclusion in the European Union. Recent statistics published by the Combat Poverty Agency show 18% of Irish people live under the 60% poverty line compared to 15% in Europe as a whole. Ireland has the third highest rate of persistent poverty in the E.U. and is the fourth most unequal country in the member states. During 2002/2003 the government reviewed the National Anti Poverty Strategy and recommitted itself to the reduction of poverty across a broad range of groups and issues.

In February 2003 the government announced a major review of community and local development structures. This review aimed to improve local services, streamline structures to avoid duplication and bring transparency and improved controls to funding the sector. Clearly, a shift has occurred in overall government priorities to concentrate on strengthening the Irish economy. Consequently, the development of civil society and tackling social exclusion has moved further down the political agenda. As more resources and energy is directed at stimulating the Irish economy, community and voluntary organizations have found it increasingly more difficult to develop and sustain their work.

1.5: Overall Comment

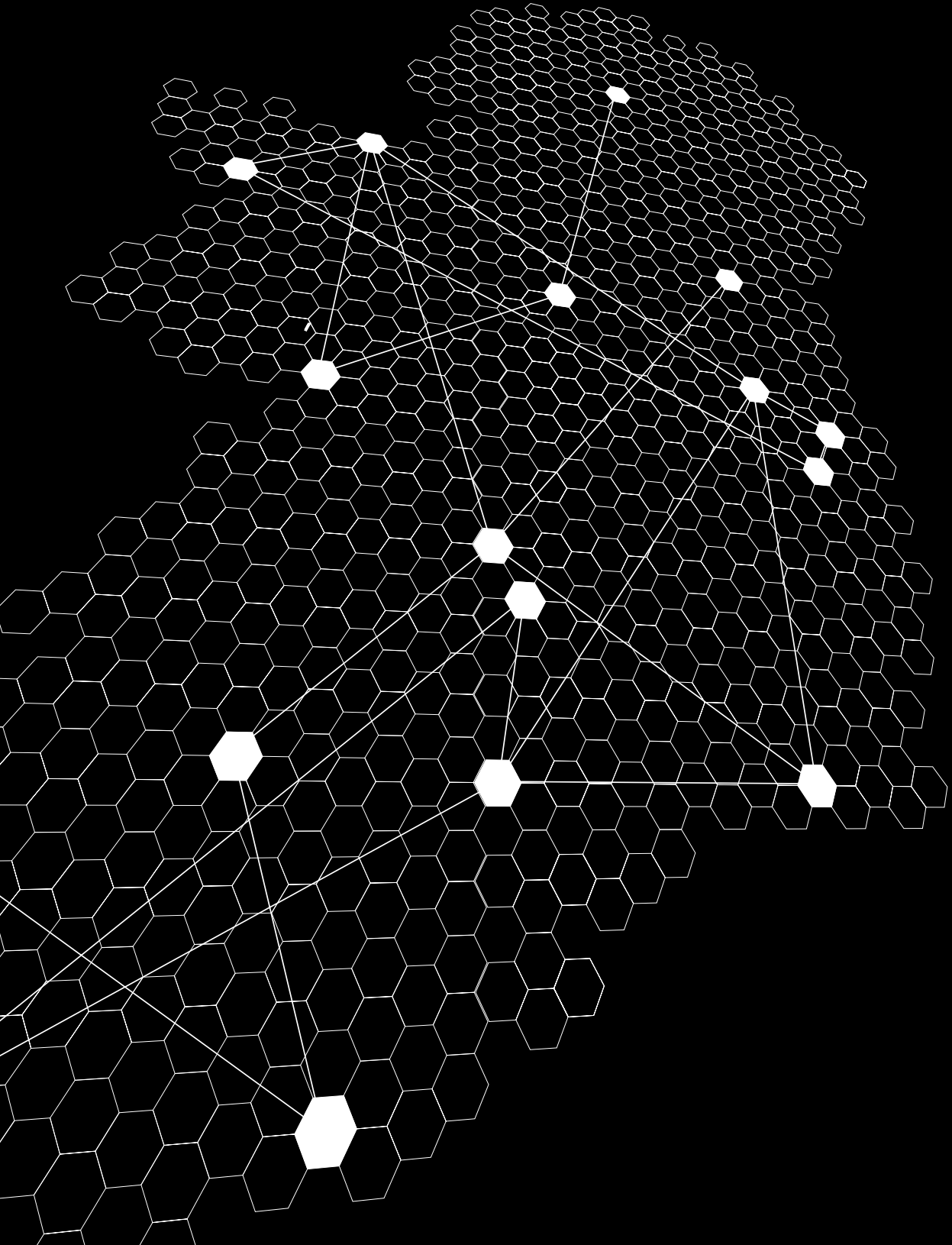
It is clear from this brief summary that the S.T.A.N.C.E. project was implemented during a period of enormous change. The development of major policies gave the women's community education sector a new impetus and created new challenges. Information on new structures – such as County Development Boards, the National Adult Learning Council, R.A.P.I.D. – their role and areas of work needed to be understood by the sector. In turn, this new level of awareness necessitated the sector to develop strategies on how best to influence or be part of these new decision-making structures.

In particular, the potential for increased resources for the sector was a major breakthrough. The opportunity to determine effective resource allocations was a major thrust of both White Papers. However, few would have predicted the swift turnaround that occurred as the economy slowed down and government focused its priorities on strengthening it. Decisions on cutbacks and adjustments made by central government had major consequences on the community and voluntary sector. Reduced budgets resulted in programmes being shelved, staff being lost, Community Employment schemes reduced, cutbacks in childcare subsidies to access education etc. The women's community education sector faced a precarious situation and an uncertain future. A sense that all the gains of the previous five years in terms of policy, resources and recognition were being eroded.

Women's lives have changed enormously, particularly in recent years as more women enter the labour force. This has had inevitable consequences for women's community education as it strives to meet the changing needs of women. A number of women's groups and networks struggled to carry out their work as the numbers of women able to give their time voluntarily decreased, particularly at management level.

Thus the S.T.A.N.C.E. Project was implemented at a time of enormous change but offered women's networks the opportunity to come together to understand these developments, discuss emerging issues and respond strategically and collectively.

Section 2

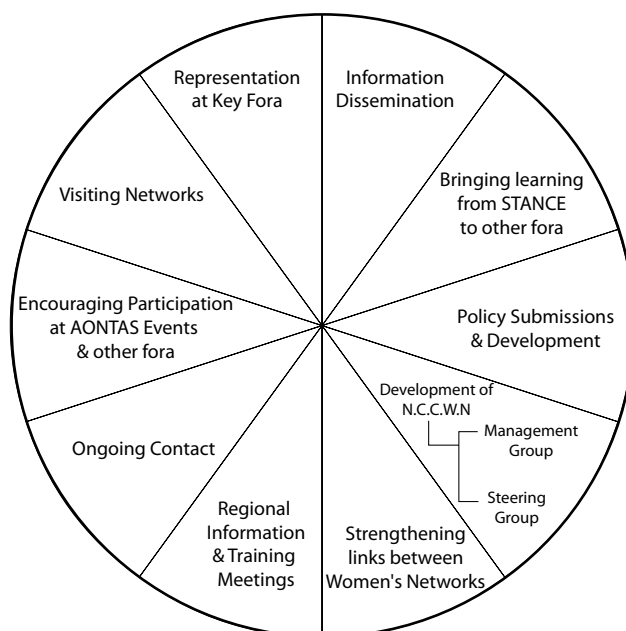


Section 2: Project Implementation

S.T.A.N.C.E. worked with women's education networks across the country who were members of AONTAS. Each of these networks supports women's groups in their area through a range of activities that include, information dissemination, provision of training, newsheet and seminars. The networks are also involved in representation and lobbying to articulate the voices of women at different policy making fora.

Originally S.T.A.N.C.E. was developed to work with sixteen women's networks. However, during the three years this number increased to twenty-four as the profile of the project increased and as more women's networks were developed across the country. One hundred and eighty eight women participated in the S.T.A.N.C.E. project.

S.T.A.N.C.E. worked with the women's networks through a broad range of actions, which are illustrated below. This section also outlines the key elements of the approach used to build the capacity of the women's networks.



2.1: Regional and Information Training Meetings

Five regions were developed during the S.T.A.N.C.E. project (south-east, south-west, east, west and north-west). Thirty-six regional meetings of women's networks were held during the project. These regional meetings were aimed at enhancing the knowledge of women's networks and developing their skills to be more proactive within their work as well as building their regional capacity. Key areas of training were as follows:

- what is policy
- policy proofing
- research dissemination and how to use research as a tool
- new structures
- skills to influence policy
- defining community education / adult education

2.2: Ongoing Contact

Maintaining contact with the women's networks involved in the project was a key component of the S.T.A.N.C.E. Project. This involved keeping in touch with the women's networks by phone on a regular basis and visiting networks in their premises. Ongoing contact with the networks was an important way of keeping informed of what was happening for this key sector of the AONTAS membership. It also provided a means of informing networks of new developments, discussing possible project ideas, exploring and sharing models of good practice and providing information.

2.3: Dissemination of Information

Provision of relevant and up to date information was a major part of the work of the S.T.A.N.C.E. project. Networks had recognised in the initial consultation that access to information was key to enabling them to plan their work, keep informed of developments and ensure that they remained in touch with the broader environment. Information was developed and disseminated on a broad range of issues including:

- back to education initiative
- funding opportunities
- Beijing platform for action
- national qualifications authority of ireland and the national adult learning council
- the work of AONTAS
- the role of community education facilitators and county enterprise and development officers
- social partnership
- policy developments
- upcoming events / conferences etc.

2.4: Strengthening Links between the Women's Networks

This was a deliberate action of the project, which was aimed at developing the infrastructure at regional level to enhance the capacity of networks. The regional meetings were an important forum for women's networks to get to know one another, share information and models of good practice and gain important insights into the work of other networks. The S.T.A.N.C.E. project also supported the networks to develop links with each other outside of these meetings, both regionally and nationally with other networks across the country.

2.5: National Collective of Community based Women's Networks

In 2001 S.T.A.N.C.E. facilitated the women's networks to explore the possibility of setting up a national network of women's networks. The support of this development became a key element of the S.T.A.N.C.E. work through:

- organising the first national seminar of women's networks
- supporting the networks to come together regularly
- facilitating the process
- development of internal structures – steering group and management committee including regional representation
- information exchange between networks
- development of a strategic plan
- submission to the department of community, rural and Gaeltacht affairs review of community development support programme
- accessing funding from the combat poverty agency for regional training
- developing a pre-budget submission
- holding the N.C.C.W.N. national conference "stronger, surer, bolder"
- accessing three year core funding under the white paper scheme of grants for federations and umbrella bodies
- development of three year work plan and recruitment process

2.6: Encouraging Participation at AONTAS Events

While a number of networks would have participated at AONTAS events prior to the S.T.A.N.C.E. project, many did not or failed to see the relevance of these events to their own work. A significant outcome of the project was the recognition by networks of the variety of ways to influence policy. Opportunities to participate in policy debate, become informed of developments, inform discussions and raise the profile of the network were identified through the project as being important areas of work which needed to be addressed by networks. The AONTAS events including A.G.M. General Meetings, Round Table Discussions, National Conference, Regional Meetings became important vehicles for networks to participate at a national level. The provision of child /elder care and travel expenses to these meetings facilitated the participation of many women from the networks. Moreover these events gave women's networks the opportunity to network, develop relationships with other voluntary and statutory groups, and develop their analysis of the sector and the issues pertaining to it.

2.7: Policy Submissions and Development

The S.T.A.N.C.E. programme was an opportunity for women's networks to exchange learning and information and develop their capacity to influence policy. Through participation on the programme many networks made individual submissions to a wide range of policy making fora e.g. Combat Poverty Agency Strategic Plan, County Development Board Strategic Plans etc.

The S.T.A.N.C.E. project made two submissions to particular policy making fora based on the experience and analysis of the women's networks. These were the

- National Plan for Women
- Community Development Support Programme Review

The S.T.A.N.C.E. project also facilitated the National Collective of Community based Women's Networks (N.C.C.W.N.) to develop a submission to the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs Review of the Community Development Support Programme. In an effort to influence the Budget (2003) the S.T.A.N.C.E. Project also facilitated N.C.C.W.N. to make a pre budget submission.

2.8: Bringing Learning from S.T.A.N.C.E. to Other Fora

Through the development of S.T.A.N.C.E. AONTAS was able to use its insight and knowledge of the sector to inform its representational role and to raise the issues particular to the sector, at national level. AONTAS is currently represented at a number of fora including:

- Educational Disadvantage Committee
- National Adult Learning Council
- Adult Education Guidance Initiative Steering Group
- National Framework of Qualifications Consultative Group
- Education Equality Initiative
- National Women's Council of Ireland "In from the Margins" Advisory Group

AONTAS has also brought the experience of the S.T.A.N.C.E. project to many other fora at both national and European levels to inform discussions and contribute to policy development.

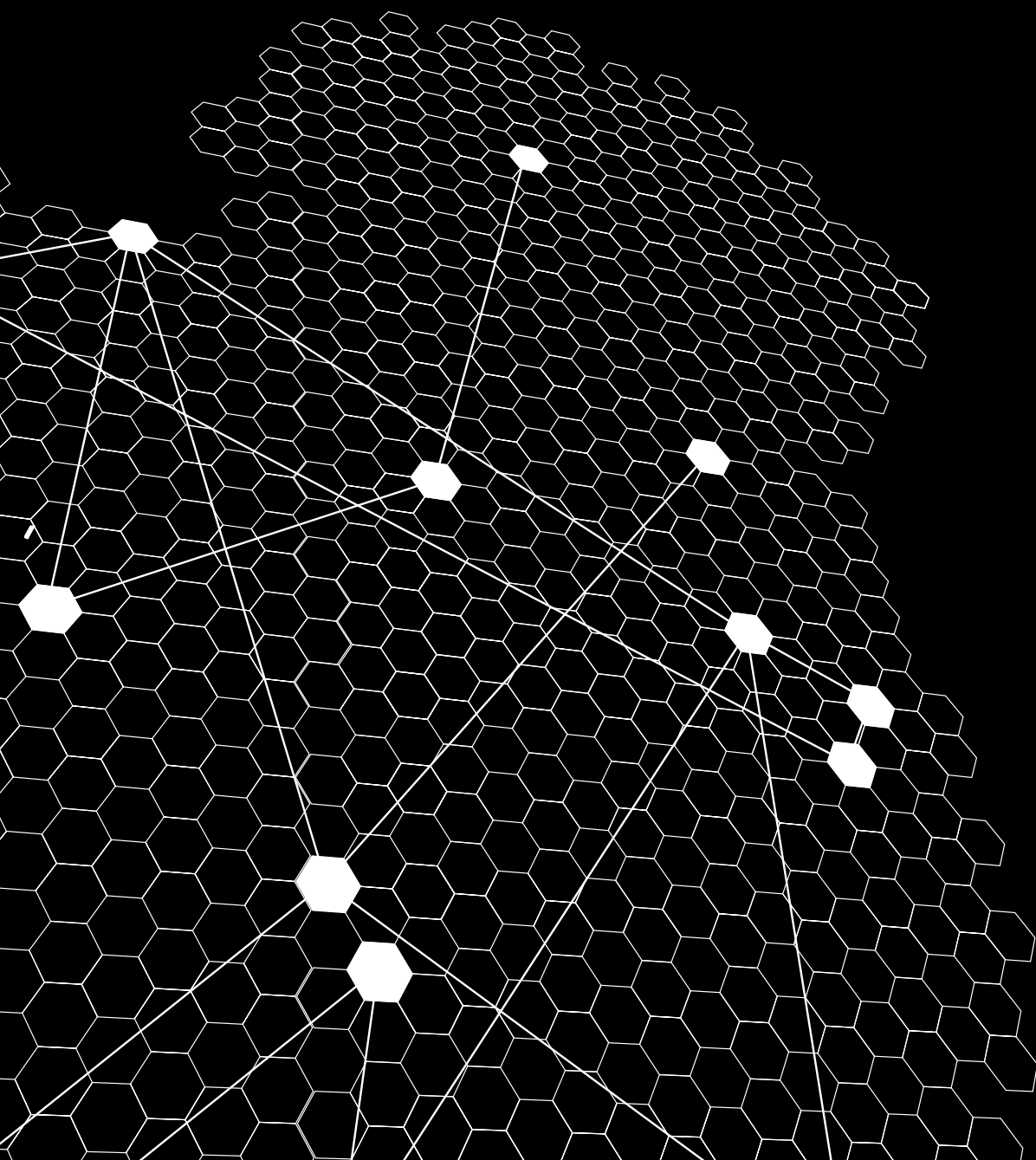
2.9: Key Elements of the S.T.A.N.C.E. Approach

The implementation of a regional support programme which builds the capacity of any organisation or sector takes particular approaches, depending on the needs and capacity of the groups involved and the resources available. In this project a number of elements were key to its success. These were:

- implementing the project because member networks identified this as their way forward
- having a consultation process with member networks to identify the areas in which the project could support them and how best this could be achieved
- presenting a template for the project based on the consultation, to the networks
- developing appropriate regions (5 regions) taking into account geographical boundaries, spread of networks across the country and distances between networks
- organising three regional meetings per year in each region
- supporting networks to participate in other regions of S.T.A.N.C.E.
- encouraging participation of both management and staff from each network
- providing participant supports including child / elder care and transport to all participants at meetings
- having an agreed agenda for each meeting with content appropriate to the region
- provision of appropriate materials and relevant information
- encouraging critical thinking and open discussion spaces within regional meetings
- maintaining ongoing contact with networks through phone, email and visits

The next section will demonstrate the involvement of one of the participating networks in the S.T.A.N.C.E. Project – Tipperary Women's Network. It will describe its involvement in the project and show how this impacted on the work of the network.

Section 3



Section 3: Case Study

The impact of the S.T.A.N.C.E. project can best be illustrated through the experience of the participating women's networks themselves. This section uses a case study to describe the development of Tipperary Women's Network as it participated in the S.T.A.N.C.E. project and the impact this had on the network as an organisation and its work.

The case study below describes the background to Tipperary Women's Network, its participation in S.T.A.N.C.E. and gives a number of examples of how the women's network applied the learning.

Set up in 1996 by Knockanrawley Community Development Programme, today Tipperary Women's Network (T.W.N.) involves six women's groups and is managed by a voluntary management committee. Key areas of work include information exchange, networking, encouraging women to take up leadership roles in their communities and raising a collective voice on relevant issues.

3.1: Participation in S.T.A.N.C.E.

Tipperary Women's Network has participated in the South East region of S.T.A.N.C.E. This became a movable region – with each network taking turns to host a S.T.A.N.C.E. regional meeting. The regional training and information meeting became an important forum for the network to meet with other networks, participate in training, share ideas and information, identify common issues and plan together. More importantly it strengthened the networking between Tipperary Women's Network and the other networks in their region. Tipperary Women's Network began to link with other networks outside of S.T.A.N.C.E. meetings as the project developed.

Regional training and information workshops occurred three times per year and focused on a number of different themes. These included:

- what is policy
- structures
- adult and community education
- presenting your case effectively
- identifying stakeholders
- policy proofing

Four to six representatives from Tipperary Women's Network attended these meetings including workers and voluntary members. This was seen as essential in order to bring the learning back to the network, develop strategies, change direction and ultimately, challenge the work of the Network and the local decision making structures.

*"It would have been very difficult to try and do something different to what we normally did back in Tipperary if there hadn't been so many of us learning together, being challenged and working on what we could do with what we've learned."
(T.W.N. Management Committee Member)*

3.2: Policy Development

Training and information on structures enabled Tipperary Women's Network to explore its relationships with other agencies and to be informed of the role of other organisations and common areas of interest.

County Development Boards (C.D.Bs) were relatively new structures and through S.T.A.N.C.E. Tipperary Women's Network became more aware of the role of the South Tipperary County Development Board and the importance of developing links. The network identified that it was essential to be involved with their CDB and made contact with their County Enterprise and Development Officer (C.E.D.O.). Following a presentation from their C.E.D.O. the network decided to be part of the process of the county's ten year Strategic Plan and worked with its member groups to develop a submission to the County Strategic Plan. By raising awareness of gaps in the Draft Plan, Tipperary Women's Network was successful in having women named as a target group of the County Strategic Plan. The action of putting in a submission raised the Network's profile and the County Development Board invited it to take a seat on two working groups. TWN now sits on the Social Inclusion Measures (S.I.M.) and Local Agenda 21 working groups.

Tipperary Women's Network recognises that a key learning from participation in S.T.A.N.C.E. has been the relevance of policy to their work and the actions which they can take to influence policy. The Network held a consultation with local women on the Draft National Plan for Women, and made a submission based on relevant local women's issues. However when the National Plan for Women was published it was clear that there was very little of their submission reflected in the plan.

3.3: Organisational Development

The S.T.A.N.C.E. Project has also challenged Tipperary Women's Network to look at its work and has encouraged the Network to rethink its focus. Consequently Tipperary Women's Network has begun to outreach to more rural areas of South Tipperary. This is an enormous challenge to any organisation but it represents real progress in the development of Tipperary Women's Network as an effective representative voice for women in South Tipperary. The Network has gained three new member groups from outlying areas of Tipperary.

3.4: National Level

A major outcome of the S.T.A.N.C.E. project has been the establishment of the National Collective of Community based Women's Networks (N.C.C.W.N.) Tipperary Women's Network took the decision to be actively involved because it recognised the potential it offered to women's networks like itself and the contribution it could make to the lives of women. A representative from Tipperary was elected as secretary for NCCWN Management Committee and is also active on the Steering Group. Consequently Tipperary Women's Network has played a major role in directing the development of N.C.C.W.N and the focus of its work.

Undoubtedly one of the major unforeseen outcomes for Tipperary Women's Network from participating in S.T.A.N.C.E. has been its increased involvement in AONTAS and the benefits that this brings. Participation at AONTAS events, general meetings, annual general meetings, conferences, making presentations, raising issues at open forums and the development of relationships with other members has brought much learning and confidence to the Network. This has also greatly increased its organisational profile.

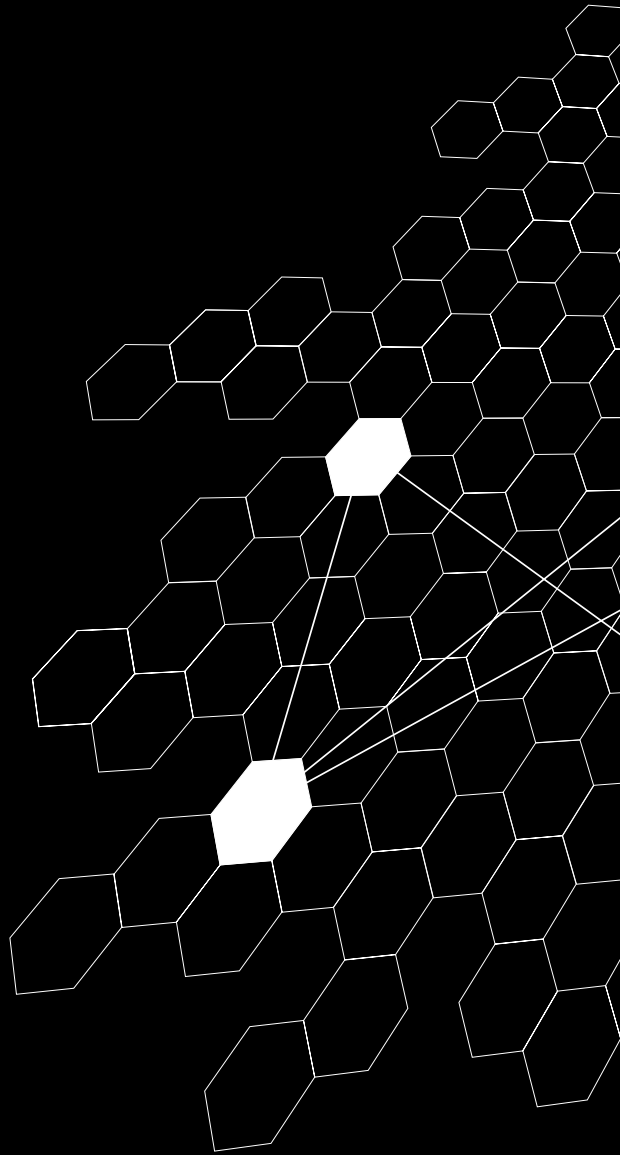
3.5: Conclusion

Tipperary Women's Network has made considerable progress through its involvement in S.T.A.N.C.E. over the three years. This includes:

- making a number of policy submissions to different fora
- taking on representational roles at Social Inclusion Measure and Local Agenda 21 of county development board
- developing relationships with key agencies at local, regional and national levels

The future remains an enormous challenge as it focuses on strengthening its out-reach work, continuing to inform policy and effectively representing views of women at various fora locally, regionally and nationally. The need to access secure funding to sustain the network and ensure its development will be a key challenge for this organisation. However, S.T.A.N.C.E. has given Tipperary Women's Network the confidence and belief to continue. It has enabled the Network to raise its profile and ensured that it is aware of the value of its contribution to the decision-making and policy process.

Section 4



Section 4: Learning and Outcomes

The final evaluation with women's networks involved in the S.T.A.N.C.E. project identified particular areas of learning and how the networks used the learning to enhance their effectiveness. Four main areas were identified i.e. networking, critical reflection, representation and being strategic. Examples are used below to illustrate the various way networks applied their learning.

4.1: Networking

The enormous strength in coming together has played a major role in strengthening the sector. Meaningful networking can only happen once organisations / groups commit to exchanging with and learning from each other.

S.T.A.N.C.E. was an innovative programme in a number of ways, particularly, in that it focused on developing the capacity of community based women's networks at regional and national levels. While each network is involved in supporting the development of its member groups at a local level, S.T.A.N.C.E. was the first programme to facilitate the collective development of women's networks regionally and nationally.

Outcomes

- stronger regional connections have led to greater exchange of information and greater networking within the sector
- development of the national collective of community based women's network's whose overall aim is *"to provide a collective mechanism for womens networks to participate in, develop and respond to national policy development and to strengthen the capacity of our member networks to be involved in regional, national, european and global policy issues"*

4.2: Critical Reflection

S.T.A.N.C.E. created a space for networks to challenge and be challenged. It was an opportunity for reflection and evaluation of the work of networks.

"S.T.A.N.C.E. made us look beyond our current work and ways of working to move into other more relevant spheres" – Participant

During the S.T.A.N.C.E. Project a number of networks voiced their concern at the difficulties women's groups faced in attracting new women. Women's lives and their communities have changed enormously in recent years, forcing women's networks and their member groups to relook at their focus in order to ensure their work remains relevant to the needs of women.

Outcomes

- South West Kerry Women's Association accessed resources to implement its outreach strategy through the Equality for Women Measure.
- Tipperary Women's Network successfully targeted women's groups in rural South Tipperary.

4.3: Representation

Representation of the women's agenda is key to addressing women's social exclusion. Participation in S.T.A.N.C.E. has given women's networks the confidence to support them to take on greater representative roles. The political landscape and in particular the potential to influence policy has become a greater part of the work of the community and voluntary sector in recent years. Through the S.T.A.N.C.E. project the women's networks were facilitated to identify stakeholders in their region and develop ways of impacting on the work of these organisations through a variety of ways. Many women's networks embarked on a lobby to ensure direct representation of women's issues at the decision making table. Over the three year programme women's networks succeeded in taking up representation roles at a variety of fora.

Outcomes

- Tipperary Women's Network represented on County Development Board Policy Forum
- Waterford Women Centre represented on Waterford County Development Board Social Inclusion Measure
- Clondalkin Women's Network represented on AONTAS Executive
- Donegal Women's Network represented on North Western Health Board Strategy Group

4.4: Being Strategic

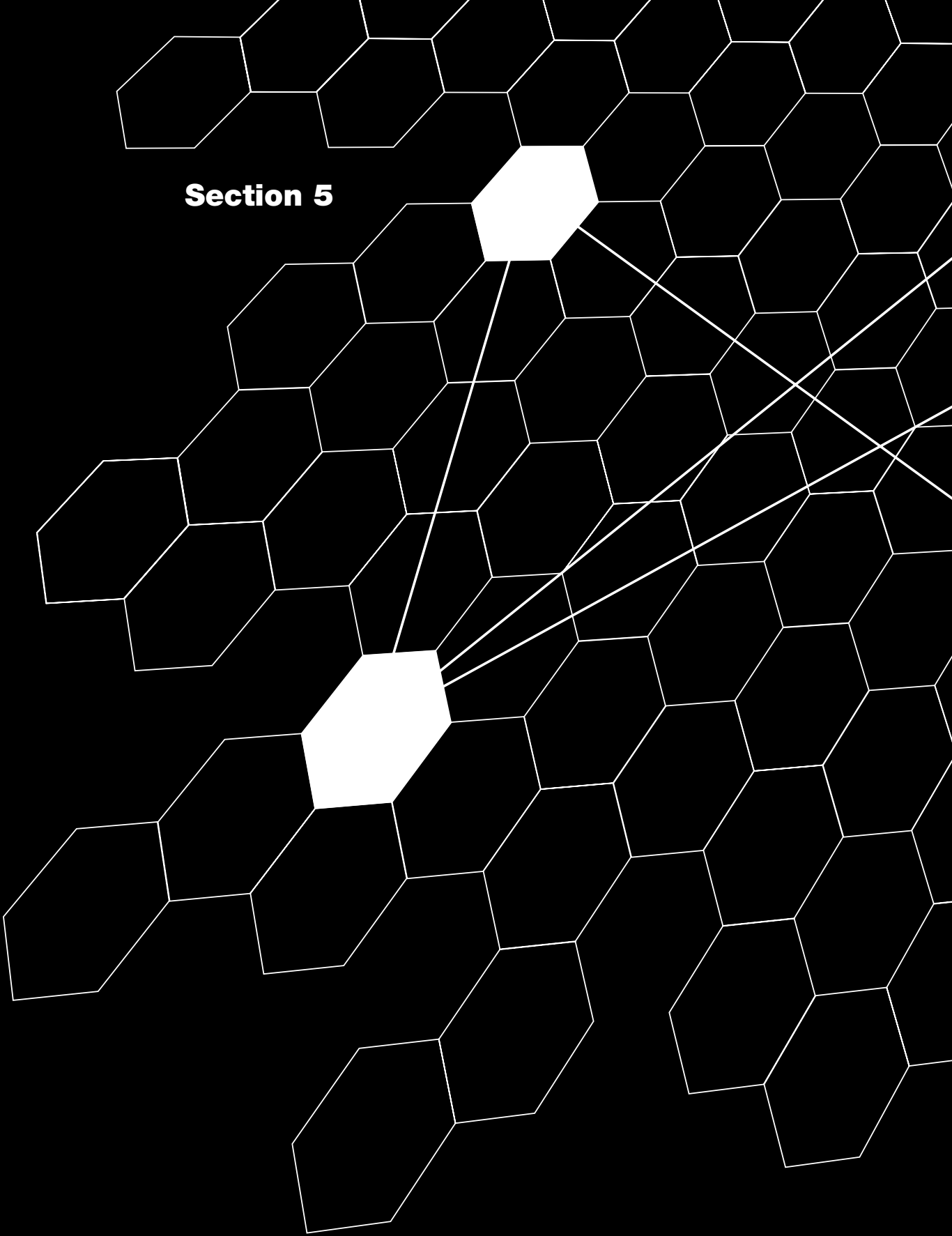
Networks have become more strategic and proactive within their work, focusing their energy and expertise at key fora. During the development of S.T.A.N.C.E. a variety of opportunities have developed where issues and policy discussions that affect women are explored and debated. The devolution of power and authority at more regional and county level has changed the ways in which individuals and groups access decision-making. The establishment of County Development Boards, City Development Boards, County Childcare Committees, Community Development Programme regional policy fora, etc have sought to engage with representative groups like women's networks. In addition, national consultation processes such as the National Plan for Women, Forum on Educational Disadvantage, Community Development Support Programme Strategic Plan and Review endeavour to ensure that the views of those who are or should be beneficiaries of a service / initiative are included.

Through the S.T.A.N.C.E. programme women's networks became more aware of the importance of engaging with these fora and recognised that while all are important, it is essential to prioritise where they can have most impact and what area is of the utmost relevance to their work. However networks recognized that it is impossible to participate at every forum. The key to women's networks being more strategic in their work was identifying where they would be best placed to have the greater influence. Moreover they learned to develop and value other ways of influencing and feeding into policy.

Outcomes

- Access 2000 Wexford – submission to Forum on Educational Disadvantage.
- National Collective of Community based Women's Networks – submission to Community Development Support Programme.
- Tipperary Women's Network – lobbying to ensure women would be a target group of the R.A.P.I.D. Strategic Plan.
- Women Together Tallaght Network – submission to Tallaght Area Partnership Area Action Plan.
- Drogheda Area Women's Network – negotiation with Peace II to resource their work.
- Western Women's Link – developing strong relationships with Local Partnership and V.E.C.

Section 5



Section 5: Conclusion

Building the capacity of the women's networks has been a major initiative by AONTAS. The S.T.A.N.C.E. Project offers a model of good practice which may be replicated among many other sectors and organisations. The following key lessons were learned from the project.

5.1: Specific Targeting of Resources

Targeting resources to develop the networks at regional levels has strengthened individual networks at local level. This has significantly enhanced their capacity at regional and national levels to be considered recognised stakeholders. Funding bodies must recognise that resourcing projects to carry out their work is not enough in itself to be truly effective. Specific resources are also needed which facilitate greater collaborative networking among organisations to work collectively to tackle social exclusion.

5.2: The Power of Working Collectively

S.T.A.N.C.E. as a model demonstrated the impact of women's networks coming together regionally to reflect on and explore their work and plan strategically for the future. By doing this collectively women's networks developed greater confidence and power to engage more strategically and with greater effect. By coming together at regional and national levels networks have recognised their collective power and the importance of sustaining this through the development of the National Collective of Community based Women's Networks.

5.3: Being Responsive to Change

The S.T.A.N.C.E. project was implemented during a period of huge change in Irish society, which had significant effects on the work of all organisations in the community and voluntary sector. Despite enormous challenges the networks have consistently shown their ability to reflect and take on board these challenges. This has ensured that as a sector they remain vibrant and responsive to the changing needs of women in order to effectively represent them.

5.4: Education for Citizenship

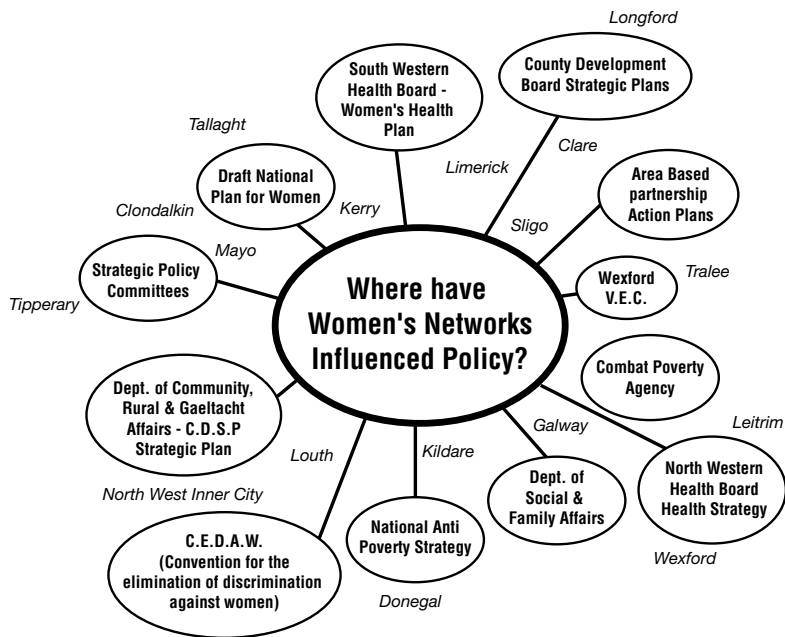
Women's networks and women's groups have developed a particular way of working that give women the confidence, skills and knowledge to become more active in their local communities. They have also pioneered the value of community education in enabling women to access education and training opportunities. In particular, women's networks have created supportive ways of facilitating women to participate on local, regional and national decision making structures. Women's community education networks provide an effective model of education for citizenship. 2005 is designated European Year of Citizenship through Education. This will provide an excellent opportunity to promote the value of women's community education as an effective model of citizenship.



Appendices

Appendix 1: Where have women's networks influenced policy?

The diagram below illustrates a wide range of spaces where the womens networks have influenced policy.



Appendix 2

S.T.A.N.C.E. (Strategies to Advance Women's Collective Empowerment)

2001 – 2003

Participant List

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Longford Womens Centre

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Longford Womens Centre
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