

Towards Climate Justice

Exploring Community Work
and Human Rights Approaches to
Climate Action



Ballinasloe
February
20th 2020



CWI work is supported by the Scheme to Support National Organisations, funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Rural and Community Development. This seminar is supported by Galway County Council and Galway Rural Development

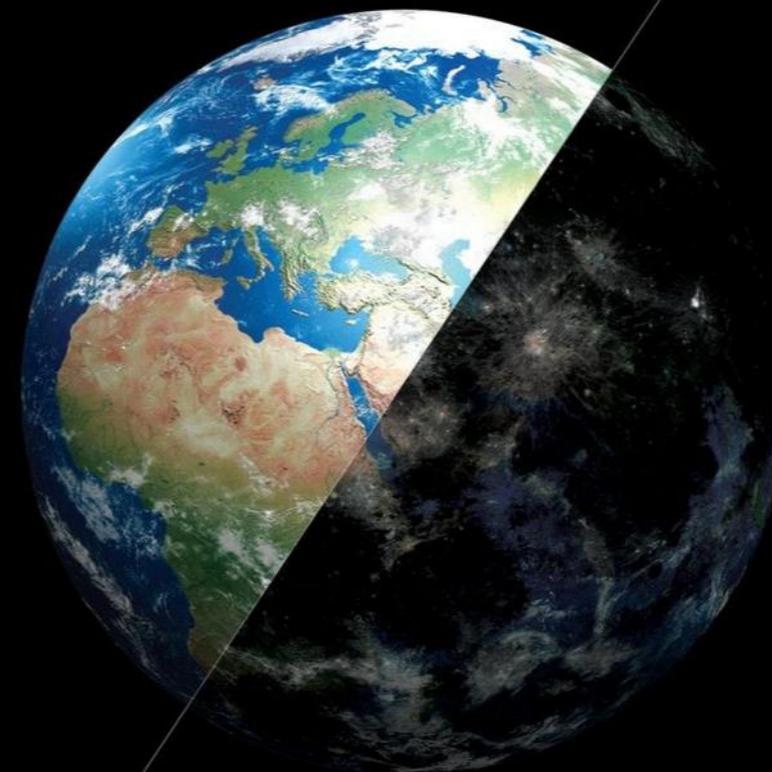




Ann Irwin,
CWI National
Co-ordinator



THE URGENT CASE FOR
CLIMATE JUSTICE
A COMMUNITY WORK IRELAND BRIEFING
PAPER



Community Work Ireland

- a membership organisation that seeks to support and promote community work as a means of addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

Community Work

- is a value-based approach that is *a developmental activity comprised of both a task and a process. The task is social change to achieve equality, social justice and human rights, and the process is the application of principles of participation, empowerment and collective decision making in a structured and co-ordinated way*



Towards Climate Justice

- In 2012, CWI (then the Community Workers' Co-operative) published ***Towards Climate Justice: A strategy guide for the community sector in responding to climate change.***
- Funded by the EPA, launched by Professor John Sweeney and with a foreword from Mary Robinson, the report was designed as a resource to build engagement between the community sector and the issue of climate change.



CWI Work Now

- Demand from CWI members
 - Briefing Paper
 - Initial seminar in October
 - CWI Climate Justice Working Group established
- *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland 2019-2024* launched by DRCD. Objective 11 in the strategy - Linking with the Government's Climate Action Plan 2019
 - provide training and capacity building in relation to Climate Change to community development and local development organisations,
 - pilot and develop models of good practice on Climate Change adaptation and mitigation at community level, and
 - include a focus on Climate Change in all community development and local development programmes and initiatives.



Challenge

- For many in marginalised communities climate is not on their agenda.
- These communities are Travellers, migrants, socioeconomically disadvantaged communities and others
-more concerned with preventing homelessness, mental health and wellbeing, avoiding food poverty and ensuring their children stay in education.
- Ironically, these are the very communities that are likely to be most affected by climate change *and* have the least ability to respond.
- The challenge is to see how the two agendas can be brought closer together?



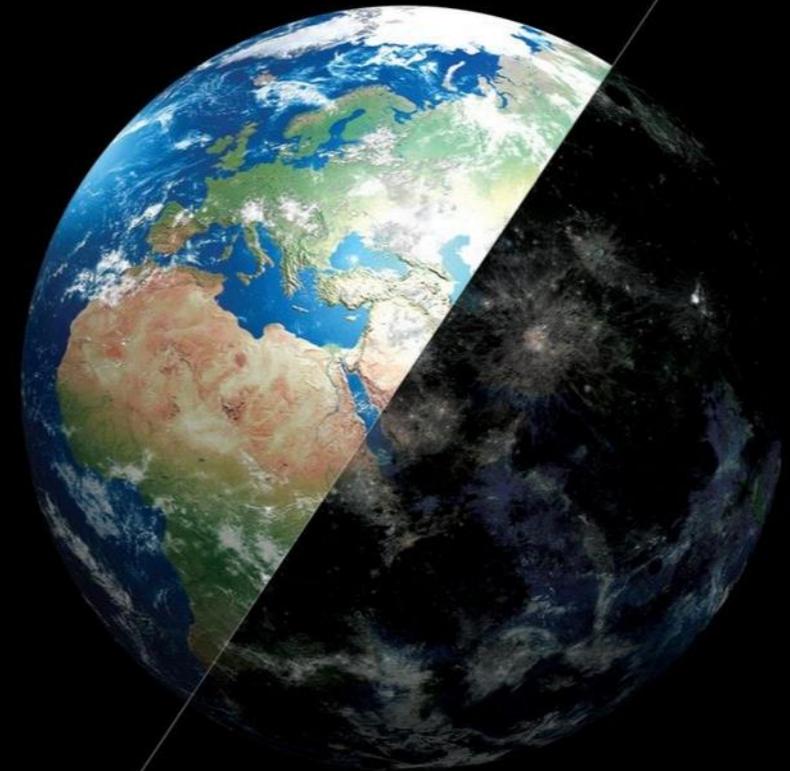
Why should community workers be engaged & what can they do?

- Inherent in the climate crisis and our societal responses is the issue of social justice and equity.
- Marginalised communities and groups in Ireland and globally will **bear the brunt of the impacts of climate change** and have the **least resources to adapt and make the necessary transition** to a zero-carbon society. This is a collective challenge requiring structural change across Irish society and globally.
- **Yet** - dominant conceptualisation of environmental issues in policy tends to focus on **individual actions and consumer choices** - As well as unfairly burdening marginalised communities and groups, this individualising of environmental action can feel disempowering and futile given the scale of the challenge.
- Community work principles and methods offer an important means of responding to the climate crisis in a collective way which is commensurate with the challenge and which places social justice and human rights at the centre of climate action.

Briefing Paper

- Current Irish and International Policy
- Progress to date
- A just and equitable transition – key issues for community development
- Why should community workers be engaged & what can they do?
 - Consciousness raising and education
 - Collective action addressing systemic pollution
 - Supporting sustainable alternatives

THE URGENT CASE FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE A COMMUNITY WORK IRELAND BRIEFING PAPER



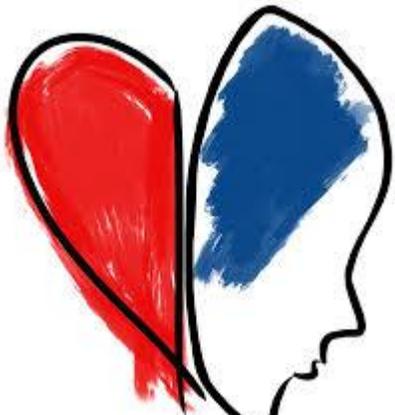
A just and equitable transition

- Key concern for Community Work Ireland and our members
- Environmental justice - 'no less than a decent environment for all, with no more than our fair share of the earth's resources'
- Environmental justice considers the social and political drivers and implications of climate change
- Calls attention to the ways in which different groups and communities experience environmental burdens (such as pollution or fuel poverty) or enjoy environmental benefits (such as access to green space and fresh, local food).



Consciousness raising

- Community workers can play an important role by opening up space for dialogue about the climate crisis.
- Practitioners do not need to be experts in climate science but instead facilitators of a participatory consciousness raising process guided by community work values and methods, such as popular education.



Heart

What does it feel like when we sit with the reality of climate crisis? What thoughts and emotions come up for us?

Head

What is needed politically and practically to deal with the climate crisis? What is being done by the state?

Hand

What can we do in our community to build resilience locally, impact on policy nationally and act in solidarity with other communities globally?

Figure 3: Thinking about climate crisis with heart, head and hand



Collective action

- School strikers and Extinction Rebellion illustrate the power and importance of collective action in holding states to account and creating a mandate for action.
- Community workers can play an essential role in supporting those they work with to engage as appropriate with mobilisations for climate justice and ensure that the concerns and perspectives of marginalised communities and groups are central to campaign demands.



Like Comment Share

261 55 comments 134 shares

Supporting sustainable alternatives

- Many of the positive solutions to the climate crisis involve building sustainable and resilient local economies, energy systems and food systems.
 - Join the SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities programme
 - Establish allotments or a community garden
- Bring equality and inclusion focus and skills such as group work and organisational development.



Policy, Networking & Alliances

- Use the work on the ground to influence policy
- Ensure that policy is literate and conscious of how it affects your community
- Build alliances with environmentalists and environmental groups and network – locally, regionally, nationally and internationally



Conclusion

- Community workers and the community work sector is in a unique position both to support responses to climate change and to ensure that the experience of the most marginalised are represented and included in climate change and sustainable development policy and implementation.
- Essential
 - Capacity building and the provision of analysis of the current situation in relation to climate change and an analysis of current policy initiatives;
 - Encourage community workers to begin or deepen their engagement in climate action;
 - Explore the supports that are required for community work approaches to climate action.
- It is about acknowledging that community workers do not have to be expert in this area but both sectors – community and environment – need to build alliances and to work together
- It is about persuading government that the frameworks need to be developed to facilitate and promote this agenda



Next Steps

- Join Community Work Ireland (its free!!)
- Join the CWI Climate Justice Working Group (meetings are over Zoom)

Thank
you!

Towards Climate Justice

Exploring Community Work and Human Rights Approaches to Climate Action

Community Work Ireland Galway Environmental Network

Save the Date

Ireland has declared a climate and biodiversity emergency.

Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities, the new strategy to support the community and voluntary sectors in Ireland, includes an objective to support community development and local development to engage with Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies.

There is an increasing awareness of the importance of knowledge and action at community level. Join us to explore community work and human rights approaches to Climate Action. This event is primarily aimed at community work organisations, community workers and others interested in working with communities on issues of climate change and climate justice.

February 20th - 11am (registration from 10.30am) in the Shearwater Hotel, Ballinasloe

Keynote address

- John Sweeney, Emeritus Professor of Geography, Maynooth University and International Expert on Climate Change

Register Here
<https://climatejustice2.eventbrite.ie>

Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe Galway County Council GALWAY RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Riailtas na hÉireann Government of Ireland pobal government supporting communities

CWI work is supported by the Scheme to Support National Organisations, funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Rural and Community Development. This seminar is supported by Galway County Council and Galway Rural Development.

Session One Roundtable Questions

- 1. What are the two main challenges preventing communities or community workers engaging with Climate Justice issues?**
- 2. What are the two main supports Community Workers need to support engagement in climate justice.**

Session Two Roundtable Questions

1. What can we learn from the experience elsewhere?

2. What are the next steps?