

WOMEN AND SELF EMPLOYMENT

Background Briefing

1. LEDU STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

- \* LEDU will develop within each of our corporate objectives, strategies which aims to raise women's awareness of the opportunities offered by self-employment as a career option and increase the number of new business starts owned by women.
- \* The aim of the strategy is to establish and implement within LEDU an equality of commitment to women to overcome the barriers to 'participation' in the pre-start and start-up sectors and to identify the specific needs of women already in business. Within this overall aim LEDU will seek to 'make the difference' by:
  - \* Making clear the commitment of LEDU to positive action to encourage and support women in business not only to women in general but to our partners in economic development.
  - \* Develop an appropriate support network for women including the option to choose a female business counsellor and the provision of training for LEDU business counsellors in understanding the needs of women entrepreneurs.
  - \* Promoting and publicising successful role models and the support available to women in LEDU publications and in the media including a promotional campaign targeting women.
  - \* Focusing business development activity including gender specific target programmes aimed at segments of the market (women 'returners', women in employment, women's groups in the community).



In addition LEDU will carry out research on the additional barriers facing women in business, initiate dialogue with organisations such as Equal Opportunities Commission and Women's Training Group and ensure that all LEDU enquiry and client records are gender specific in order that bench marks can be set for future monitoring and evaluation.

## **2. MBW WOMEN INTO BUSINESS PROGRAMME**

This programme was sub-contracted to a consortium of Local Enterprise Agencies in Belfast, and has been running for over a year now and has produced the following statistics:

- \* A total of 337 women have participated in the Network Club, training seminars and monitoring schemes.
- \* A major conference on Women's Enterprise was held with attendance of 100 women, a substantial number of women were key influencers.
- \* A purpose design booklet aimed at promoting self-employment to Women has been produced and disseminated.
- \* A review carried out by LEDU with the LEAs suggests that more intensive hand-holding at the early, introductory stages may be needed to encourage greater participation. A Development Officer has now been recruited with specific counselling skills to work more intensively with women at the pre enterprise stages.

## **3. WOMEN'S TARGET PROGRAMME (DELIVERED NORTHERN IRELAND WIDE)**

Women's Target Programmes are aimed in the most part at awareness training - exploring self employment, recognising strengths in which a business could be built, ideas generation/clarification, understanding the process of getting started, clarifying personal goals, building confidence and motivation.



A recent review/evaluation of the Women's Target Programme reflected the following:-

Whilst women do face particular barriers to self employment (most noticeably, access to funding), single sex awareness training is successful, but single sex start up training less so. Other key points within the evaluation are:-

- awareness training needs to focus on the particular difficulties of raising finance.
- personal development training in confidence in the context of finance and marketing is important in awareness training (not general confidence building).
- training timetables need to be flexible to accommodate childcare and family commitments.
- acknowledgement and valuing of prior life experience is important in awareness training.
- networking as part of awareness is particularly valued.
- trainers need broad based skills.
- programmes that set out to recruit women who already have a business idea tend to be the most successful in terms of business start ups. Programmes focused on childcare have a poor record in business start up, but are highly successful in helping women back to work.



ANNEX G

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

1. The Rural Development Programme is based on a self-help and partnership approach which encourages rural communities in Northern Ireland's most disadvantaged areas to bring forward viable plans for regenerating their areas.
2. Financial assistance is provided by the Department and the EC via SPARD, LEADER and INTERREG programmes.

SPARD - the objective of this measure is to tackle social and economic deprivation and encourage revitalisation of the wider rural community.

LEADER - is designed to assist rural development through the stimulation of innovative approaches to addressing problems at local levels.

INTERREG - concentrating on developing border regions and encouraging cross border projects.

3. The Rural Development Council has recently revised its strategy with the emphasis on providing business and management training and targeting disadvantaged groups particularly women, small farmers and the long term unemployed. There has been some adverse reaction to the new Strategy particularly from Women's Groups who see the emphasis on economic development as somehow reducing the impact on issues which are important to women. Responses to such letters have sought to allay concerns and to encourage women to play a more active



role in rural development. More detailed information including line to take is attached.

4. Country Markets provides a market for local produced foods to promote social and community interaction and the presentation of traditional skills. The group has a membership of over 150 women. DANI actively supports the group's development and expansion.
5. The Minister might also wish to note two groups particularly active in Rural Development in Counties Armagh and Down:

- **Women on Rural Development (WORD)**

This is a co-operative grouping of approximately twenty five women from the South Armagh area. Its objective is to cater for the educational, training, employment and development needs of local women. The group manage the local Branch of the Worker's Education Association where the main emphasis has been on pre-vocational programmes. Training in new technology has recently started with the aim of increasing employment in rural areas.

Philomena Agnew of WORD invited

Chairperson Patricia Buckley

- **Slieve Gullion Courtyard Development Group**

A number of women who were influential members of WORD and lived in the Mullaghbawn area formed this group. They are implementing a community led regeneration project located in Slieve Gullion Forest Park in South Armagh. The project comprises an environmental education and tourism centre which aims to promote the protection and understanding of the natural environment through the education of school children on a cross community basis. Centre to officially open in September 1995.



**RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

Minister will be aware that there has been an organised campaign protesting at the perceived reduction in commitment to community development in the Rural Development Council's revised strategy which will result in women being excluded from economic development activities.

The aim of the Rural Development Programme has always been, and will remain to be, to stimulate the economic and social revitalisation of the most disadvantaged rural areas of Northern Ireland for the benefit of all who live in them.

The Rural Development Council's revised strategy is entirely consistent with both Government's Rural Development Programme and the Government's Strategy for the support of the Voluntary sector and Community Development in Northern Ireland.

The Rural Development Council is an integral part of the Rural Development Programme and in both cases social inclusion remains an important priority. One of the objectives which the Council sets out in its revised strategy is the targeting of disadvantaged groups in rural areas - rural women have been identified as one such group.

The Department of Agriculture is maintaining the level of core funding to the Council to allow it to continue its work in rural community development. Furthermore, the Council's grant regime, which allows for seeding, training and education, and technical assistance grants, will continue to be available and its budget has not been decreased.

**Line to take**

Emphasis that the Rural Development Council will continue to target disadvantaged groups such as rural women and the Department of Agriculture will be maintaining the level of funding to the RDC for rural community development.



## ANNEX H

### **SPECIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION - OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN'S GROUPS**

There are opportunities for Women's Groups to be involved throughout the sub-programmes of this special programme, for example in areas such as urban and rural regeneration and cross-border development. In addition, under those funds which will be organised by Partnerships throughout Northern Ireland, projects from all priorities, including social inclusion, can be assisted. These Partnerships are to involve a wide range of bodies, including the voluntary sector, and this provides a significant source of funding for Women's Groups.

However, there are a number of sub-programmes which have a very direct relevance to Women's Groups. This is particularly so in the case of Social Inclusion including:-

#### **Measure 1 "Developing Grass Roots Capacities and Promoting the Inclusion of Women"**

Under this Measure, with 75% levels of assistance from the Social Fund, a wide range of social projects can be assisted. Women's Groups get a special mention in this area, and the types of actions that can be supported include support for community development projects and self-help activities specifically focused on Women's issues and the employment of local co-ordinators for Women's Groups in the most disadvantaged areas. This will be mainly delivered through grants to be administered by the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust.

#### **Measure 2 "Preventing Exclusion"**

In this programme, a wide range of projects can be assisted, including pre-school care and education projects and out-of-school play projects. This provides an important mechanism for the support of early years childcare and out-of-school childcare, with the delivery mechanism being a block allocation to the four Area Early Year Committees which are partnerships including representations of the main statutory and voluntary service providers.



In addition, under the **Employment** priority there is specific reference to the need to improve the access of women to employment opportunities. Thus under **Measure 3** of this Sub-programme, "**Improving the Accessibility and Quality of Training, Education and Employment Services**" the provision of childcare can also be assisted. ERDF assistance will also be available for example for the development of the Capital side of childcare facilities under Measure 4 of the Employment Sub-programme.

It is known that Commissioner Wulf Mathies is keen to see the involvement of Women's Groups in the organisation and monitoring of these funds. There is no clear example of a women's umbrella organisation that would easily fit into the role of an intermediary body, which as the Minister will be aware cannot itself apply for funds, but this is still under consideration. However officials fully accept the importance of involving Women's Groups in the process in a co-ordinated way, and also to ensure that in the Monitoring Committee there is an effective representation of women.



**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE****Background**

In 1993 Lord Arran, then Minister for Health and Social Services, launched the Research Report "Bringing it Out in the Open" by Monica McWilliams and Joan McKiernan, which explored the experiences of victims of domestic violence and the views of statutory and voluntary agencies. Lord Arran gave the commitment that Government would bring forward proposals for a co-ordinated regional policy against domestic violence.

In June 1995 the 'Tackling Domestic Violence' Policy Paper was launched. It is supported by all Government Departments in Northern Ireland. It sets out the policy aims and principles to underpin action against domestic violence including raising awareness, improving support and treatment services for victims and building a clearer picture of the nature and extent of the problem.

The paper established a Forum on Domestic Violence to help develop future policy which will include representatives of Departments, public bodies and voluntary agencies who respond to domestic violence. It will be chaired by Miss Stephanie Irwin, formerly Director of Social Services in the Northern Health and Social Services Board.

In addition, recent Government initiatives in partnership with Women's Aid include:

- The recent "Help is at Hand" advertising campaign intended to strengthen public awareness and make clear that domestic violence is socially and legally unacceptable.

The campaign was funded jointly by NIO, DHSS and Women's Aid.



- The Women's Aid 24 hour helpline, through which specially trained volunteers offer advice, support and practical information.
- A training program in childcare and protection for refuge workers and volunteers.

#### **Line to Take**

Domestic Violence damages everything it touches. Already public bodies and voluntary agencies combat domestic violence in many different ways. The 'Tackling Domestic Violence' policy paper launched in June and the establishment of a Forum on Domestic Violence will provide the framework and the means to allow us to build upon the work already being done. Government is also examining the law in relation to domestic violence. The Office of Law Reform recently carried out a consultation on proposals to reform the law on domestic violence and occupation of the family home.