



# W.I.N.D.O.W

*(Women Initiating Development Opportunities for Women)*



## Evaluation Report

April 2014

### **Acknowledgements from the researcher:**

This report was researched and compiled for RWN by Orla Leyden (BA, M.Litt) with the assistance of Maria Harris who compiled the quantitative data in Section 3. The researcher would like to thank the RWN Co-ordinator, Nora Fahy and W.I.N.D.O.W. Development worker Maria Harris for their co-operation throughout the evaluation. The participation of the development worker in informing the research from the outset was critical in understanding the nature of the project and its operation on a practical level. The researcher would like to thank Dr. Anne Byrne for her guidance around the empirical research and for generously agreeing to write a forward to this report. The researcher would also like to acknowledge the input of Sarah Grogan, former intern with RWN and Lorraine Campbell, RWN board member. In particular the researcher would like to thank the W.I.N.D.O.W participants that engaged in the focus group discussions, made presentations at the W.I.N.D.O.W Celebration night and the Castlerea Women's Group for their creative work on a visual representation of their experience of the project. Finally the researcher would like to thank the steering group members, agencies, organisations and counsellors for participating in the evaluation and giving freely of their time to complete the research questionnaire.

### **Acknowledgements from the Board of Roscommon Women's Network**

The Board of Roscommon Women's Network would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to researcher Orla Leyden for agreeing to voluntarily conduct this evaluation and compile what we believe is an excellent analysis of the W.I.N.D.O.W. project. We would also like to extend sincere thanks to the Project Development Worker, Maria Harris who worked closely with Orla to this end and whose dedication and attention to detail on the quantitative material was invaluable to this process. This research would not have been possible without their hard work and commitment. The report provides a detailed insight into the implementation of the W.I.N.D.O.W. project and presents a thorough analysis of the experiences of participants as well as providing timely statistical analyses.

We would also like to extend our thanks to all who participated in making this project possible – The Equality for Women Measure (managed and supported by Pobal), Dr. Anne Byrne (NUI Galway), RWN Board members and staff, participants and all associated agencies.

Tara Farrell  
Chairperson  
Roscommon Women's Network

## **Terminology**

RWN: Roscommon Women's Network

EWM: Equality for Women Measure

LCDP: The Local and Community Development Programme

VEC: Vocational Education Committee

BTEI: Back to Education Initiative

VTOS: Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

FÁS: Irish National Training and Employment Authority

## **Report Outline**

Section 1 begins with an introduction to the evaluation report, it then details the research methodology applied. An overview of the EWM funded W.I.N.D.O.W project is presented with a background to the work of RWN.

Section 2 looks at the EWM funded W.I.N.D.O.W project in the context of the overall work and objective of RWN towards gender equality. It shows how the W.I.N.D.O.W project is "a perfect fit" for RWN. An overview of the RWN W.I.N.D.O.W project "in action" is presented. Consideration is given to how the W.I.N.D.O.W project engaged women that were outside the labour market and managed the varying needs of participants. The strength of the W.I.N.D.O.W project in enabling and supporting marginalised and disadvantaged women is then detailed before the need for another EWM funded W.I.N.D.O.W project is outlined.

Section 3 presents a quantitative analysis of the outcomes and results of the RWN EWM funded W.I.N.D.O.W project based on an analysis of the project participant database. It shows the number of women that completed non accredited and accredited training and the number of women that accessed third level education. It also shows the number of women that entered employment and the type of employment (full time, part time, self employment, internship (Job-bridge) and employment schemes).

Section 4 presents qualitative research on the experience of participants on the W.I.N.D.O.W project. First an extract from Sarah Grogan's 2011 case study of the work of RWN is presented with particular reference to the W.I.N.D.O.W project. The findings of a focus group with the Castlerea Women's Group on their experience of the W.I.N.D.O.W project and a visual representation of this experience, "Tree of life – blossoming" is then presented. This is followed by four individual W.I.N.D.O.W participant case studies, education, third level education, employment and enterprise.

Section 5 details the report conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation for future EWM funded W.I.N.D.O.W projects.

## FOREWORD by Dr Anne Byrne NUI Galway

The word 'equality' may invoke thoughts of well-being and social justice, based on ideals of political and civic freedom, mutual respect for and recognition of persons, identifying the conditions for a democratic society in which to live, love, work, rest and play. Or we may understand 'equality' as the outcome of a legal instrument designed for equal treatment, equal rights, equal status and equal opportunities of all peoples, regardless of gender, race, class, health or disability, sexual orientation, age, civil or family status, membership of the Travelling community and religion. The persistence of stigma, prejudice and discrimination indicates that equality of opportunity and treatment remains in some aspects aspirational. State bodies promote an equality ethos in the public sphere through the provision of information and legal instruments to actively contest discrimination and unequal treatment. Nonetheless the everyday consequences of inequality in people's experiences of early educational failure or restricted employment opportunities or lack of choice in career progression, point to the pervasiveness and invasiveness of inequality, particularly evident in women's lives.

The employment target for 2020 is for three quarters of women to be in paid work. With more than half of women in employment, the profile of women in Ireland is similar to women in employment in Europe but the Irish gender pay gap across all sectors is significant. Three times as many women as men are in part-time employment in Ireland; the risk of poverty is greater for women, partly as a result of shorter working lives, part-time and seasonal employment, less well paid work and limited access to pension benefits in older age. Women continue to be the main family carers of children, of the elderly and those with disabilities. The revaluing of nurturance, care work and dependency relations is crucial for the advancement of equality in public and private life. Women are underrepresented in regional and national politics, in decision-making structures and in current affairs media for example. The ratio of women to men in politics have largely remained the same since the foundation of the Irish state; improving women's representation through quotas legislation is an important support mechanism for including women in the political life of the country. Working for equality involves a commitment to recognizing and challenging inequality in our social, political, cultural, economic institutions, values and practices.

An extraordinary effort is required to bring about a value and behavioural change in thinking and in our practices. Transformation requires a time and resource commitment from European and national state institutions in partnership with civil society organisations. Targeted equality policies such as those recommended by the *National Women's Strategy* (2007-2016) and specific European measures such as the *Equality for Women Measure* (2008-2013) are important mechanisms for advancing change. An awareness for those spaces in which equality initiatives are possible, despite financial constraints, combined with a shift towards and respect for egalitarian, democratic, solidary power relations is also required for change. Invigorated by a belief in optimistic, emancipatory collective action, while recognizing diverse criteria for 'success' is another element in the social and political force for transformation. But at the heart of this process is a recognition that locally based support systems, responsive to needs, informed by community development values and

principles (social inclusion, collaboration, collective action) are mediating entities in the translation of equality policy into equality actions for women.

Since the 1980s and earlier, participation in locally based, adult education and training courses, combined with the 1990 EC *New Opportunities for Women* programme, enabled women to progress from unaccredited to accredited education, attain much needed training and qualifications and expand job opportunities. Personal development, assertiveness and technical skills training with local access to education courses were signatures of these programmes. These elements are continued in the current projects funded by the *Equality for Women Measure* (2008-2013). Projects in *Equality for Women Measure Strand 1* (Access to Employment) are women-centered and founded on positive action support for sometimes 'vulnerable' women, to facilitate access to education, training and employment. Housed in the premises of the *Roscommon Women's Network*, the W.I.N.D.O.W project (women initiating development opportunities for women) is an outstanding example of an equality action that has transformed women's lives. Of the 159 women participants in the W.I.N.D.O.W project, 128 women became involved in education and 31 women successfully gained paid employment. This report presents empirical and narrative evidence, not only of the impressive achievements and accomplishments of project workers and participants, but also allows us to reflect on the working ethos, relations and actions that support women's empowerment. A combination of personal, communal and social factors enable us to change the conditions of our lives; to some extent we have to free ourselves of inner restraints, impediments, 'hindrances' or fear of change and develop the trust and confidence to work in solidarity with others to overcome external, structural constraints. The capacity to act, the power to make choices, despite restrictions, comes close to an understanding of empowerment that is clearly evident in the working ethos of the W.I.N.D.O.W project. The project was designed in partnership with women who were isolated, unemployed, who lacked confidence, skills and training but who on their own initiative or following the recommendation of a doctor, social worker, counselor or friend, took the first step, and contacted the *Roscommon Women's Network*. The importance of creating an inclusive, 'non-judgmental safe space' where women can work at their own pace in a friendly environment allowed a sense of belonging and friendships to emerge. Care and nurture are not often explicitly associated with equality actions in the public sphere of paid work; this project is a testament to the importance of actively nurturing women participants, giving space to women's voices, facilitating peer encouragement, one-to-one mentoring, matching ambitions to opportunities, providing sustained group support from those with the skills and resources to encourage others in the process of change, while instilling high levels of motivation 'to keep going', despite set backs. Care work is implicated in the successful delivery of equality actions, as outlined in this report.

The W.I.N.D.O.W project gains from the excellent reputation of *Roscommon Women's Network* as a highly proficient and competent community development organization, with extensive network relations with other NGOs and state agencies. This enabled a sustained and stepped approach to informing, directing and orienting participants to relevant courses and opportunities, firstly provided from within the drop-in center and gradually extended to the local and wider geographical area. The systematic and informed approach of the project coordinator and out reach worker acted to affirm women's talents and ambitions; importantly women's progression was attentively monitored and support offered at every stage of the transition into education, training and employment. The quality of working relationships in the W.I.N.D.O.W project is impressive, as is how women speak about the effect of the project on their lives and the lives of others. Threaded through the

conversations about the project is a note of joy, a sense of achievement, of affirmation and pleasure. The impact of the project can be understood through women's words as they relay stories of dignity, courage, respect, a new sense of self-worth, confidence, initiative and hope. This report gathers together the many strands of what is needed in order for change to happen; I encourage you to read it. In documenting the processes, practices and actions of the W.I.N.D.O.W project, the history of what has been done is carefully recounted. Convincing evidence for a practice model for future work in which inclusion, care and a nurturing space are core to equality actions, are also outlined in this report. It is clear that much more can be achieved with the appointment of a fulltime development worker post for this gender specific initiative and by giving your support for the continuation of the W.I.N.D.O.W project via further *Equality for Women* or similar measures. This project demonstrates unequivocally what is possible; the continuation of this project with expanded resources is essential to achieve the EU measures for *Equality for Women*.

Dr Anne Byrne, *Global Women's Studies Research Cluster*, School of Political Science and Sociology, NUI, Galway.

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## Section 1 - Introduction

The objective of this report is to evaluate the RWN EWM funded W.I.N.D.O.W project.

It examines the origins of the W.I.N.D.O.W project in the context of the overall work of RWN which aims to address gender inequality.

It details how the W.I.N.D.O.W project operated on a practical level applying community development principles and practice. And it shows that the enabling and supportive ethos of the project impacted positively on gender equality, social inclusion and women experiencing multiple disadvantages.

The gap the project filled in connecting with women on the margins is recognised in the empirical research. It shows that the W.I.N.D.O.W project which worked in a more informal manner than statutory agencies succeeded in empowering and advocating for some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged women through its work at grass roots level. It succeeded in attracting participants that would not access mainstream statutory education and training supports due to a lack of confidence and a fear and apprehension around entering official offices and associated paper work. It attracted women that would not respond to an advertisement in a newspaper or seek information around education and employment for themselves.

The methods applied in engaging participants through the W.I.N.D.O.W project were woman centred, the holistic approach was tailor made to each individual women's need with one to one support and mentoring. A key factor in the success of the project was the trust that participants had in the RWN W.I.N.D.O.W project. Trust takes time to develop, the process is slow. The safe and non judgemental space of RWN was shown to foster a sense of security among participants. The space was important participants described feeling "held", "supported". This supportive environment facilitated women's engagement with the W.I.N.D.O.W project starting with personal development and general capacity building. This is a slow process. Confidence building played a pivotal role in the W.I.N.D.O.W project with many marginalised and disadvantaged women experiencing low self esteem as a result of leaving school early, mental health issues, the challenges of parenting alone, addiction problems etc. Without funding for this aspect of the W.I.N.D.O.W project the most marginalised and disadvantaged women would not have benefitted from the initiative.

This report highlights the importance of the community support work of the RWN W.I.N.D.O.W project in terms of the social and economic development of participants, their families and their community. The RWN W.I.N.D.O.W project does not duplicate the work of other agencies but rather it is shown to be a mediating community entity between agencies of the state and the individual.

RWN has become a socio-political and economic hub in the community to effect change in rural women's lives. The socio-political force of this grass roots project in addressing gender inequality and empowering the most marginalised and disadvantaged needs to be recognised as an important force for societal change.

### 1.1 Methodology

The research methods used to evaluate the W.I.N.D.O.W project was methodological triangulation which employs a variety of methods to study a single issue. A number of qualitative methods were used to inform the research including focus group discussions, survey questionnaires, visual representation and documentation of the W.I.N.D.O.W celebration night. The quantitative analysis of the W.I.N.D.O.W participant database also informed the research. Both primary and secondary sources were consulted. Secondary sources included W.I.N.D.O.W reports submitted to Pobal, RWN Case study Report 2011 by Sarah Grogan, and a report commissioned by Pobal entitled "Addressing Gender Barriers to the Labour Market – Overcoming lack of confidence, low self-esteem and fear of failure as barriers to participation in Equality for Women Measure (EWM) projects".



At the outset two informal interviews/ meetings were held with the W.I.N.D.O.W development worker to understand how the project worked and to explore what research methods would work best. One of the meetings was also attended by Sarah Grogan, who carried out the RWN Case Study Report in 2011 while working as an intern with RWN. These meetings then informed the survey questionnaires circulated to the steering group members, agencies, organisations, counsellors and to the RWN co-ordinator and W.I.N.D.O.W development worker.

The research methods used with W.I.N.D.O.W. participants was gender specific and woman centred. A focus group discussion with the Castlerea Women's Group was held in the RWN centre, Castlerea during the month of November 2012. A follow up discussion to review focus group notes was held in January 2014 and the creation of a visual representation facilitated the women participant's "own voice" and telling of their unique experience of the project. The hand prints used in the visual representation, "Tree of life – blossoming" revealed the impact the project had on each individual.

## Focus Group discussions

A second focus group discussion was held with women who were in employment or self employment. This was held in Gleeson's Townhouse and Restaurant.

Both focus group discussions held in November 2012 were facilitated by Dr. Anne Byrne and Orla Leyden acted as rapporteur. Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W development worker was also present.

## Visual representation

As part of the evaluation of the W.I.N.D.O.W project a survey questionnaire was circulated to members of the project steering group and to agencies and organisations that link with RWN. Separate survey questionnaires were completed by the RWN co-ordinator and the W.I.N.D.O.W development Worker. The development worker had a unique insight into the W.I.N.D.O.W project.

## Informal Interviews/ Meetings

Celebration night: A summary of the presentations and participant comments at the RWN W.I.N.D.O.W celebration night held on the 29th November 2012 at the end of the W.I.N.D.O.W project was prepared and extracts are included in this report.

## Survey Questionnaire

### 1.2 EWM W.I.N.D.O.W Project Background

#### Equality for Women Measure 2008-2013

Under the National Development Plan 2007-2013, provision was made for a specific positive action measure to promote gender equality. The Equality for Women Measure 2008-2013 was designed to build on the achievements of its predecessor, the Equality for Women Measure 2000-2007. Its aim and objectives link closely with those of the National Women's Strategy which envisions "an Ireland where all women enjoy equality with men and can achieve their full potential, while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life".

The Department of Justice and Equality has overall responsibility for the measure, the implementation of which is administered by Pobal, in collaboration with the Department. The measure is supported by the European Social Fund under the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCIOP) 2007-2013.

The purpose of the Equality for Women Measure is to make funding available to foster the engagement and advancement of women and gender equality in a number of economic sectors by focusing on four main Strands which targets a broad range of women within Irish society including: unemployed women; women in employment; women in the home; women in business; early school leavers; women in trade unions; lone parents; women experiencing multiple levels of disadvantage.

## Using the downturn to get ready for the upturn!

Roscommon Women's Network applied for EWM funding under Strand 1 Access to Employment. Target Group: Women, largely experiencing disadvantage and outside the labour market. The aim of Strand 1 access to employment was to provide women who were outside the labour market with the social skills, and/or education, and/or training to enable them to enter or return to the labour market. The core objectives were to support women who were outside the labour market access employment, increase the number of women in sectors of employment where they were under-represented; support the development and delivery of education, training and/or wider support programmes to assist women in accessing employment and promote the understanding, development and/or delivery of actions which seek to remove barriers to women accessing employment. The EWM funding was to make a positive impact on gender equality, social inclusion and women experience multiple disadvantage.

*Following an open call for applications a total of forty two projects were awarded funding of up to €50,000 in October 2010. Funding was initially committed to projects up until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011. In May 2011 all EWM funded groups were invited to apply for additional funding under Year 2 of the Measure (up to the amount originally awarded in Year 1 of the project), to cover the period from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012. A total of 40 groups received funding to cover the Year 2 period. Further funding beyond this was subject to the availability of funds and projects meeting the agreed targets.*

Irwin, A & McArdle, O: 2012:3

This evaluation report considers the RWN W.I.N.D.O.W project from 13<sup>th</sup> December 2010 to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012. In August 2013, RWN received EWM funding to initiate the next phase of the W.I.N.D.O.W project from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014. This work is on-going.

### 1.3 Roscommon Women's Network - Background



RWN Drop In & Resource Centre



Staff at RWN

Roscommon Women's Network Community Development Project supports all women in County Roscommon especially those who are marginalised or disadvantaged. RWN works in partnership with women and with organisations to meet needs identified by women living in the county and surrounding areas. It aims to do this through empowerment, education, overcoming isolation and being a catalyst for change.

*What makes the Roscommon Women's Network CDP unique is that we connect with women on an individual basis. The women's needs directly determine our work. Our work supports and empowers them and this is the means by which they develop, network and change their lives.*

Grogan, S: 2011:27

RWN provides services, training and supports to women and their families. It is committed to equality, empowerment and community development.

RWN is part of the National Collective of Community based Women's Network (NCCWN) and is managed by a voluntary board of eleven directors that meet every six weeks. RWN formerly known as the Roscommon Women's Coalition was founded in 1997 by a voluntary group of women. It grew steadily and in 2007 it sought and received funding to expand its scope and hire a part-time coordinator. RWN has flourished in the intervening years.

RWN receive funding from the Department of Justice and Equality - Equality for Women Measure, Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government - Pobal, FAS, HSE and supplement this with fundraising initiatives including the RWN Charity shop.

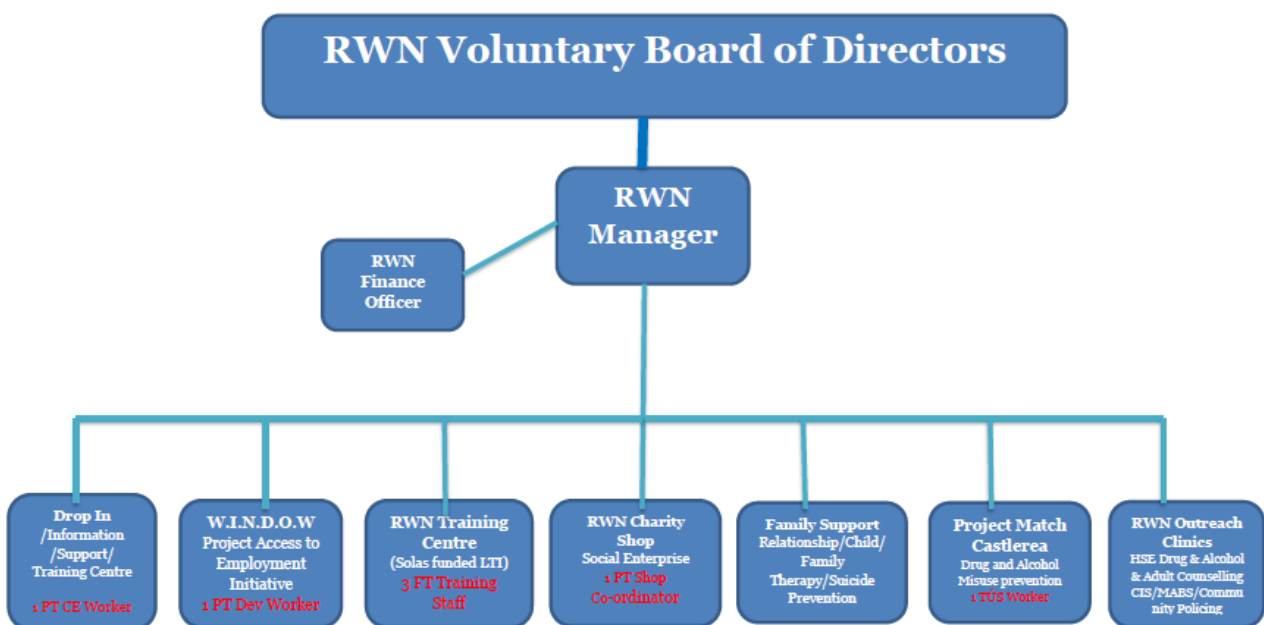
RWN has a County wide remit. It opened its facility in Castlerea, Co. Roscommon in May 2008 and continues to do outreach work and network throughout the County. Fifteen women's groups in County Roscommon are affiliated to RWN.

Roscommon Women's Network provides a "drop in" and information support and training centre in the Old Mill Castlerea which is effectively a one stop shop for women in the county including HSE Drug and Alcohol Adult Counselling, Citizen Information Services, MABS, Community Police and Domestic Violence Support. In addition a number of other projects, services and initiatives are delivered from this centre. The W.I.N.D.O.W project is co-ordinated from the centre with outreach work throughout the county. RWN also provides family support services at its centre. Family support agency funding supports the delivery of relationship, child counselling and family therapy at RWN. There is one part time family therapist engaged in this project. RWN also leads Project Match Castlerea, a project developed to highlight Drug and Alcohol misuse in Castlerea while also building community spirit in the area. It is funded with ad hoc funding and supported by a TUS worker, local volunteers and LCDP staff. It is based at RWN. A Local Training Initiative has also been developed by RWN in response to the unmet training needs of eighteen to twenty-four year olds identified during the W.I.N.D.O.W project. The RWN Training Centre was established in November 2011 and it is delivered in the RWN complex in a premises beside the main RWN Centre. This LTI is funded by FAS and three full-time tutors deliver the training.

At present RWN employs one full time project co-ordinator, three full time tutors, one part-time finance administrator, one part time EWM development worker and one part-time Charity Shop Co-ordinator. It also

has one community employment participant and one TÚS Worker. It has also had an internship position filled.

In summer 2013 RWN opened a charity shop in the same general complex as the RWN one stop shop and the RWN Training Centre. The benefits of the charity shop are three fold, it provides much needed funding to support the work of RWN; it provides another opportunity for participants on the LTI to gain work experience in Castlerea and it provides opportunities for volunteers to build confidence in a work environment. In 2014 RWN employed a part-time volunteer manager in the charity shop. RWN will develop the RWN charity shop using the social enterprise model.



## Roscommon Women's Network Organisational Chart

## Section 2

### RWN W.I.N.D.O.W Project

This section starts by looking at how the W.I.N.D.O.W Project fits in with the overall work of RWN. The experience of how W.I.N.D.O.W operated on a practical level is detailed. An overview of the engagement of the W.I.N.D.O.W project with women who were outside the labour market and its management of the varying needs of participants is presented. The impact of the project on gender equality, social inclusion and women experiencing multiple disadvantages is considered. It is then shown how the W.I.N.D.O.W project enabled and supported women's participation in the project. Finally the need for another EWM funded W.I.N.D.O.W project and recommendations on how it could be enhanced are then presented.

#### 2.1 W.I.N.D.O.W Project – A perfect fit for RWN

*“The RWN W.I.N.D.O.W project is an innovative means of supporting women to access education, training and employment, it is an activation to employment initiative that provides a one-to-one mentoring service for women of County Roscommon to avail of the opportunity to progress into education and ultimately into employment. The project is aimed primarily at women who are disadvantaged through one or more of the following areas: Lone parents, Women overcoming addiction, Survivors of Domestic Violence, Migrant Women, Members of the Travelling Community, Early School Leavers, Women made redundant, Partners made redundant, Rural isolated women. Without the W.I.N.D.O.W project these women might not have had the chance to progress their employability status”*

Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development worker

The Equality for Women Measure funded W.I.N.D.O.W Project fits in with the overall work and objectives of the Roscommon Women's Network. The strategic aim of the EWM programme is in line with RWN's strategic aim i.e. to advance the role of women in the Irish economy and in decision making at all levels in accordance with the National Women's Strategy 2007 - 2016. RWN applied for EWM funding to deliver the W.I.N.D.O.W project out of an understanding that in order to achieve gender equality women need to be supported in accessing education and training, employment and enterprise.

Prior to the EWM W.I.N.D.O.W project, RWN were supporting women who were marginalised and disadvantaged to access supports and services including education and employment as part of its day-to-day work. Nora Fahy, RWN Co-ordinator explained:

*Women who initially requested supports for addiction, domestic abuse, parenting alone etc, remained connected to RWN. These women accessed many supports in the safe non-judgemental environment of RWN. Their self esteem grew, many also became actively involved and some initiated small projects e.g. book of poetry, intercultural project, Social inclusion performance in the Roscommon Arts Centre. Some joined the weekly supports groups, many volunteered on the family fun day, Project Match, 10km run etc. We saw many of these women grow in confidence. Women, for whom education or employment could not have been further from their minds when they first presented to RWN, now requested support to access training and employment.*

RWN had identified the need to support women to access education and training and employment prior to the EWN funding call, and had experienced success in providing women who were outside the labour market with the social skills, education and or training to enable them to enter or return to the labour market. This experience was compatible with the aim of the Strand 1 of the EWM funding i.e. Access to employment.



*In 2009 the Department of Community Environment and Local Government who provided core funding for RWN stipulated four goals under the new Local Community Development Programme (LCDP). Two of these four goals were to support access to education and employment. The LCDP programme also stipulated that 80% of core funding should be spent on achieving these two goals.*

Nora Fahy, RWN, Co-ordinator.

RWN could see that the need for this support was growing as women were progressing with the help of RWN. However due to limited resources RWN could not respond to the demand.

*These women were ready and waiting for the support W.I.N.D.O.W provided. Actually, these women developed the concept of W.I.N.D.O.W and supported RWN in scoping the project.*

Nora Fahy, RWN Co-ordinator

When the call came for the EWM funded W.I.N.D.O.W project, RWN realised the opportunity it presented to address and support the needs of women throughout the county to access education and training, employment and enterprise.

RWN was well placed to deliver the Equality for Women Measure funded W.I.N.D.O.W Project in County Roscommon due to its objective of gender equality and its prior experience of working with the most disadvantaged and marginalised women in the County. RWN had built trust over time and gained the reputation as a non judgemental, safe space.

During the evaluation process agencies and participants acknowledged this relationship, Bernie Morris, FÁS referred to the “rapport” that RWN had developed over time with women stating that “progression to this programme is ideal” and a participant from the Castlerea women’s group summed it up as “the union we have going together – the women and RWN”.

Bernie Morris, FÁS also attributed the success of the project to the “location” of RWN (Castlerea), the “reputation” that RWN had developed and “collaboration with agencies”. There was an effective synergy between the work of the W.I.N.D.O.W project and the general work of RWN.

*As the initiative developed, RWN W.I.N.D.O.W directed more and more disadvantaged women from further reaches of the county to RWN resource centre supports and services.*

*The opportunity for women who engaged with the W.I.N.D.O.W project to access services and supports available at the RWN resource centre was of benefit to the women who were made aware of a service that they had not known of; it also served to support women who may not have yet been W.I.N.D.O.W ready to progress personally at a pace and with the appropriate services they required at that time (counselling, addiction etc.).*

Nora Fahy, RWN, Co-ordinator

Commenting on the success of the W.I.N.D.O.W project in attracting participants, Ann McNamara, Community Education Co-ordinator County Roscommon VEC referred to a number of factors including the “outreach approach, the reliance on previous positive relationships RWN had with individuals, one to one work, networking of RWN with target group and with agencies”. She also pinpointed the significance of the “positive profile of RWN in the county in general” adding that “agencies have confidence in RWN so they are willing to be involved”.

The “welcome” that the W.I.N.D.O.W project had for participants was referred to by steering group members, “no matter who was involved or trying to be involved, they were always made feel welcome” (Margaret Bourke, Roscommon Disability Support Group) “women were made very welcome and taken where they were at and supported to where they wanted to go regarding training and employment” (Noel Connolly, Roscommon Leader Partnership). Anne Galvin, RAPID, Athlone summarised the strength of W.I.N.D.O.W “as needs led, supportive and welcoming to every woman”. This welcome and encouragement was described as “unique and transferred into developing the project to the extent it did”. The “compassion and understanding” of the project team was also highlighted. The pro activity of the RWN W.I.N.D.O.W. project in “seeking out opportunities for participation” was emphasised by one steering group member.

Stephanie O'Connor Shaw, BTEI identified the “drop in”, “open door” approach of RWN as key to participation. She said she had tried “unsuccessfully through other means (advertising, open days, information sessions etc) to recruit participants who are experiencing disadvantage”. She added:

*Participants who experience disadvantage find it hard to: “make the first move”, they lack confidence, are intimidated by a group setting and afraid of the “unfamiliar”. The W.I.N.D.O.W project went a long way in overcoming this barrier for the women who were involved; this in turn benefitted the BTEI project which was used as progression from W.I.N.D.O.W*

Stephanie O'Connor Shaw, BTEI

The W.I.N.D.O.W project is “a perfect fit” for RWN. There is excellent synergy between the EWM funded W.I.N.D.O.W project and the general work of RWN...with some women that are engaging or have previously engaged with RWN progressing onto W.I.N.D.O.W and other women that are interested in W.I.N.D.O.W but are not yet ready to participate in this programme availing instead of the supports and services available at RWN to progress them on their personal journey until they are activation ready.

## Synergy

### 2.2 W.I.N.D.O.W Project in Action



*Some of the Steering group pictured with Mary J Cuddy of Country Kids who employs a W.I.N.D.O.W participant*

The first step in developing and delivering the W.I.N.D.O.W project was the setting up of a strong steering group. The W.I.N.D.O.W Development worker and RWN Co-ordinator drew up a list of potential members. They felt that they would get a better “buy in” to the project if they selected agencies and organisations that would benefit from the project too

The Steering Group Members were: Nora Fahy (Roscommon Women’s Network), Ann McNamara (Roscommon VEC), Anne Holt (Department of Social Protection, Activation and Family Support Programme), Noel Connolly (Roscommon Leader Partnership), Deirdre Ó Murchadha (RosWin), Margaret Bourke (Roscommon Disability Support Group), Bernie Downes (READ Centre), Siobhan Gallagher (Learning Links Boyle), Bernie Morris (FAS) and Anne Galvin (RAPID, Athlone). Maria Harris W.I.N.D.O.W Development worker attended all steering group meetings.

Other agencies invited to participate on the Steering group included Roscommon Business Network, Roscommon County Enterprise Board who declined due to lack of resources but were however a great support to the project and Third Level Institutions namely Sligo Institute of Technology, Athlone Institute of Technology and Galway Mayo Institute of Technology, Castlebar. Employers who recruited participants from

the W.I.N.D.O.W project were invited to attend meetings at various stages of the project to inform the work of the steering group.

Six of the nine external steering group members participated in the evaluation of the project. The READ Centre closed before the study was undertaken and therefore could not participate, one member was not contactable at the given time and the other member was no longer involved with the organisation.

The W.I.N.D.O.W project plan was drafted by Nora Fahy, RWN Co-ordinator and Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development worker. It was then considered and agreed by the W.I.N.D.O.W steering group.

## Project Plan Agreed

Steering group members described the W.I.N.D.O.W project as “positive”, “very positive”, “well organised and timely”, “effective and efficient”, “good collaborative effort”. Anne Holt, DSP Activation and Family Support Programme commented:

*I feel we developed a very co operative relationship which was to the mutual benefit of the most marginalised in the area.*

Steering group meetings were “well attended” and the members were described as “very committed” the comment was made, “there was good inter agency buy in and useful exchanges of information”. Steering group meetings were also described as informative and helpful in assisting members contribute to the work of the W.I.N.D.O.W project by five of the six steering group members. One steering group member responded “Don’t Know”.

Ann McNamara, Community Education Co-ordinator, County Roscommon VEC made the point that “the initial steering group meetings led to the VEC becoming more involved through the provision of BTEI”. As a result of Anne Holt’s participation on the steering group the DSP Activation and Family support programme funded a personal development programme which supplemented the other personal development courses provided under W.I.N.D.O.W thus increasing the capacity of the project to deliver to all of the participants who needed this initial support. In all ninety percent of participants engaged in personal development courses as part of the W.I.N.D.O.W project.

All of the steering group members said that the W.I.N.D.O.W project benefitted the work of their agency or organisation. The opportunity to network with organisations and the referrals from the W.I.N.D.O.W project to other services were highlighted. Anne Galvin, Athlone RAPID project said that it brought training to women in the only RAPID area in Roscommon (Monksland, Athlone):

*It was very important as this tends to get left out as it is not in the Westmeath area but very far from the hub of activity that takes places in Roscommon.*

Anne Galvin emphasised that had she not been involved in the steering group “this W.I.N.D.O.W project would not have naturally worked in this area as it is so far from the RWN base in Castlerea”. Anne Holt said that the W.I.N.D.O.W project benefitted the DSP Activation and Family Support Programme by “providing an opportunity to link with people through a community agency that the clients felt secure with and our services were able to compliment the support resources that is required to help people develop and re engage or engage more fully in society”. Similarly Noel Connolly said that Roscommon Leader Partnership benefitted with some “clients referred from W.I.N.D.O.W going on the Back to Work Enterprise Scheme”.

As part of the evaluation process agencies and individuals who the W.I.N.D.O.W project linked with during the course of the project were also consulted. The agencies included Karen Gavin HSE Drug and Substance misuse Counsellor; Stephanie O’ Connor Shaw, BTEI, Roscommon VEC; Annette Curley, Monksland Community Centre and other Counsellors. Their views are weaved into the fabric of this report. These responses were similarly positive. Karen Gavin HSE Drug and Substance Misuse Counsellor described the W.I.N.D.O.W project as an excellent example of “working with people where they are at, rather than expecting them to fit into an existing service”. While Stephanie O’ Connor Shaw BTEI, Roscommon VEC referred to how “it worked as a recruitment tool” where participants progressed from W.I.N.D.O.W to BTEI:



*The partnership BTEI formed with the W.I.N.D.O.W project worked very well, where participants on this project would progress to formal education under BTEI, i.e. the W.I.N.D.O.W project was well placed to recruit and BTEI used as a progression route for participants.*

Stephanie O'Connor Shaw, BTEI, Roscommon VEC

This evaluation report concluded that a strong steering group which facilitated effective interagency work was key to the success of the W.I.N.D.O.W project in Roscommon. The investment of time in developing a strong steering group reaped benefits for the project. RWN's good reputation in the county made it possible to engage agencies with the project.

## **Effective Interagency Work**

### **2.3 W.I.N.D.O.W Engaging Women**

This section explores how the W.I.N.D.O.W project identified women outside the labour market and asks if the project developed and initiated any innovative methods of targeting women. It considers how the women who engaged with W.I.N.D.O.W came to know about the project and asks how the W.I.N.D.O.W project identified and managed the varying needs of participants. It also considers the number of women that participated in the W.I.N.D.O.W project who were already connected with RWN and what was the nature of this involvement.

*The project was aimed primarily at women who were disadvantaged: Lone parents, Women overcoming addiction, Survivors of Domestic Violence, Migrant Women, Members of the Travelling Community, Early School Leavers, Women made redundant, Partners made redundant, Rural isolated women. Without the W.I.N.D.O.W project these women might not have had the chance to progress their employability status.*

Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development Worker

The W.I.N.D.O.W project was borne from an understanding of the needs of women in Castlerea who were engaging with RWN. The women identified were primarily disadvantaged, were in need of education and training supports to progress personally and into employment. This need was the catalyst for the application to the EWM fund.

In total 159 women participated in the W.I.N.D.O.W project from 13<sup>th</sup> December 2010 to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012. In order to generate awareness and interest in the W.I.N.D.O.W project which was a new initiative in County Roscommon public information sessions were held in five different geographical locations spread throughout County Roscommon (Monksland, Roscommon town, Castlerea, Boyle and Ballaghaderreen).



Importantly the W.I.N.D.O.W development worker also linked with local community development organisations in these areas to generate further interest in the project. For example in the case of Monksland, the Monksland Community Development Centre (Annette Curley) was extremely helpful in spreading word of this new initiative to the women that attended the centre. The outreach information sessions were an important vehicle to create awareness of the project throughout the county. Also the continuation of outreach to participants throughout the project was vital to the continued engagement of women:

## OUTREACH

*I was able to travel throughout the County to these women rather than them come to me which enabled the most marginalised women to take part.*

Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development worker

## ONE-TO-ONE MENTORING

Ann McNamara Community Education Co-ordinator, County Roscommon VEC commented that the "large numbers involved in the W.I.N.D.O.W project showed how effective RWN were at the outreach and recruitment stage".

## TAILOR MADE

The W.I.N.D.O.W project supported each woman individually through one-to-one mentoring sessions and a progression plan was mapped for each participant.

## SKILL'S IDENTIFICATION

Once confidence was built then a progression plan was mapped for each individual. Listening to the individuals needs was of key importance. The W.I.N.D.O.W project was not prescriptive instead it was directed by the needs of the individual women. It was tailor made to each woman's needs facilitating personal development, confidence building, non accredited education, accredited education, part time courses, full time courses, career progression, job opportunities and enterprise development.

After the initial process of identifying participants through public information sessions in and then identifying the skills of these individuals the project organically broke into four strands from which it was managed: Education, Third level education, Employment and Enterprise.

## ON-GOING SUPPORT

As well as supporting women into education and training, employment and enterprise the W.I.N.D.O.W project uniquely supported women through their new experience in education and employment. The participants needed this support to build their confidence.

One example given by Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W development worker in the area of employment involved a woman who gained employment as part of the project but then came close to leaving her new job due to an incident at work involving FACEBOOK... the woman did not know how to cope and with the support of W.I.N.D.O.W she was able to work through the problem and move forward continuing in her role.

Similarly W.I.N.D.O.W supported women who had accessed education and training courses to cope with the challenges they faced, imparting “know how” and support to participants for example by organising an organisational and time management skills training day on a Saturday. The development worker explained that one of the challenges women needed support with was learning to balance their new found learning experience around family life.

*The Development Worker with W.I.N.D.O.W continued to be involved with the BTEI participants, thereby giving them familiarity and confidence to fully participate (there is comfort in the familiar).*

Stephanie O'Connor Shaw, BTEI, Roscommon VEC

Maria Harris, the Development worker said that she had “numerous phone calls from women talking about dropping out of courses”. The reasons included:

- *Not having the time; not able to fit it in with kids/partners/home life;*
- *Struggling to keep up;*
- *Continuously being late;*
- *Struggling to organise files/folders;*
- *Literacy problems;*
- *Numeracy problems.*

Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development worker

The on-going support of the W.I.N.D.O.W project was thus crucial.

The impact of the W.I.N.D.O.W project on the women involved was huge as well as providing education and training, employment and enterprise opportunities it impacted on women's everyday lives. It effectively supported women in breaking the cycle of a family's life trapped in social welfare.

*I believe the women who participated on the W.I.N.D.O.W project benefitted through a progression within their own lives. The women benefitted at all different levels. Some will say it has changed their lives, their new-found confidence helping them lead their lives in a more productive manner, while others would say it is helping them in ways such as being able to help their children with homework.*

Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development worker

Maria Harris W.I.N.D.O.W development worker listed a number of the comments made by W.I.N.D.O.W participants to her on the benefit of the project:

*“Being able to help my children with homework”*

*“Having the confidence to speak up for myself”;*

*One participant volunteered herself to do a reading at her little boy's communion she was delighted with herself by just volunteering never mind actually doing the reading;*

*One woman never had a bank account in her own name and because she gained employment and was to be paid directly into her bank account she required a bank account in her own right!;*

*Knowing the importance of education so they can now encourage their own children to make the most out of school and develop their own careers instead of having a life dependant on social welfare;*

*“Being considered of importance within my own family”;*

*“Having dignity – “Being able to hold my head up” – when being asked by other people what they did*

## 2.4 W.I.N.D.O.W Project – Enabling and Supporting women’s participation

The W.I.N.D.O.W project enabled and supported women’s participation by applying RWN’s core equality principle and community development empowerment practice to its work. This is non-judgemental. This approach supported all of the women that engaged with the W.I.N.D.O.W project and was core to the success of the project in working with the most marginalised and disadvantaged women.

### Non-Judgemental

*One of the core principles of the RWN is its equality principle. This translates practically into the fact that the drop-in centre, the first point of contact for the majority of these women, aims to be a non-judgemental space. The majority of women interviewed expressed the opinion that one of the things they liked about the RWN was that they were not judged or labelled according to their problems when they first came in the door of the drop-in centre.*

*...they have never judged me. They have never labelled me; it’s a great place to come to. (E)*

Grogan, S.: 2011: 26

A W.I.N.D.O.W participant, who accessed employment and had engaged with RWN following the suggestion of her local G.P., spoke in a similar way of her experience during a group discussion in November 2012 with Dr. Anne Byrne in Roscommon town.

*At RWN I was not being judged...it didn’t matter what my story was, I was being taken as me...it is a non judgemental space. I was waiting for all the questions...when I went to RWN, I didn’t have to go through that process...eventually they know the story anyway...there are a lot of good people out there.*

Focus Group 2 (D)

This is her story...it clearly demonstrates the impact of the W.I.N.D.O.W project on her life.

*Through W.I.N.D.O.W I started working in my present job, initially on reception and then progressed. I went on Job Bridge there... (from earning €70,000 a year in the past to just over €180 a week) ...but found not eligible for job bridge for another three months...so I volunteered to work there for nothing and then they offered me a full-time job...not on job bridge, a full time job. There isn’t enough time in the day anymore. Going back to work...sense of pride...from a personal point of view and with family. My family see me...as out there and capable...they have ME back. I feel like I can contribute to my son’s education in college. When I’m tired now it is because I am tired not because of depression.*

*I want to give back to someone else now...I understand how people feel when they say the world would be better without them...a burden. You lose sense of self and you need someone to get you back.*

Focus Group 2 (D)

### Holistic Approach

The W.I.N.D.O.W project was guided by RWN’s overarching holistic approach to each individual woman’s unique needs. This is a woman centred approach tailored to the individual, one to one mentoring is a key part of this. The women on the W.I.N.D.O.W project had the benefit of the wrap around supports from RWN where they could access other supports and services.

*What is meant by having a holistic approach is that the RWN caters for all aspects of the development of the individual; it doesn’t focus on problems. These aspects include: services such as information, supports such as counselling, group activities, creativity, project work, education and community involvement.*

Grogan, S.: 2011: 26

Many participants on the W.I.N.D.O.W. project were early school leavers and were from other marginalised groups and had little or no experience of the work place and lacked confidence.

Anne Galvin, RAPID, Athlone summarised this experience:

*Some of these women had borne heavy burdens in their lives and this group helped build back up their self esteem and self worth so that they could see a future for themselves which led them back into education, training and reignite their passions for hobbies that they had long given up.*

Thus, the first step for many of the women on the W.I.N.D.O.W. Project was confidence building:

*One of the common themes when meeting with the women was their lack of confidence and self-esteem so a personal development course was an ideal first step to building that confidence and get the women on the road to progression.*

Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W. Development worker

Noel Connolly, Roscommon Leader Partnership also referred to the need to:

*Build up the confidence and personal development levels of those women who were out of work for long periods and getting them either job ready or enterprise ready.*

## Confidence Building

## Personal Development Courses

Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development worker explained that “a number of personal development courses were ran, seven STEPS courses, two Moment of Change and one Mapping the Journey”. The W.I.N.D.O.W project catered for more women than was initially intended and the personal development needs of participants was higher than available resources.

STEPS ([www.pacificinstitute.co.uk](http://www.pacificinstitute.co.uk)) was favoured by Maria Harris, the W.I.N.D.O.W development worker as “clearly the most beneficial” personal development course as “it gives tools to the participant” to enable them to progress and refer to the tools learned when they are needed. She also found that while the other courses were also successful there were more participants coming back again for the same course. Mapping the journey was tailored and aimed at 18 – 24 year olds yet only a small number continued to engage”. However some moved to the RWN Training centre funded by FÁS which offers FETAC Level 3 “Working with Computer Applications”, FETAC Level 4 “Employment Skills” and FETAC Level 5 “Information Processing”. The RWN Training centre was developed by RWN in 2011 as a response to the unmet needs of eighteen to twenty-four year olds in the Castlerea area as identified during the W.I.N.D.O.W project.

Stephanie O’ Connor Shaw BTEI, County Roscommon VEC commented during the evaluation process that “through encouragement and mentoring by the W.I.N.D.O.W staff it gave them the confidence to participate and progress onto BTEI”. She said that it helped participants “gain confidence and overcome insecurities and barriers that existed”. She added, “Many of the women who participated on both projects have now secured work and have gone onto further education”.

*I believe that without the W.I.N.D.O.W project many of the women would not have made the initial “first step” to education. For some of the women to just participate on W.I.N.D.O.W was a huge step, to participate on BTEI would have been beyond their belief.*

Stephanie O’ Connor Shaw BTEI, Roscommon VEC

Karen Gavin HSE Drug and Substance misuse Counsellor also referred to the W.I.N.D.O.W “supportive process” which was “welcoming” and helped participants “to get involved and stay involved”. She said that the W.I.N.D.O.W project “worked” and that it was effective as it was “local, accessible, needs lead and with

appropriate group sizes” and that it involved “one to one mentoring” with the development worker meeting participants “before going into group if required”. She also said that a positive feature of the project was that “no referral forms were required” and added that “lots of clients are put off by filling out forms or having to divulge personal information especially when sensitive of being judged”.

The women who participated benefitted in a range of ways:

*It helped break the stigma of addiction by being accepted...treated the same as everyone else, encouraged by staff. They gained a structure to their daily life, personal development. They gained a sense of involvement and achievement. Received education and qualifications and opened the possibility of getting back into the workforce.*

Karen Gavin HSE Drug and Substance Misuse Counsellor

During the focus group discussion the importance of access to personal development and education and training in one's own community and in the safe environment of the RWN office was referred to by the Castlerea women's group.

The RWN W.I.N.D.O.W project was aware of the importance of this safe space to participants. For example while working with the Castlerea women's group, Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W development worker explained that “four weeks prior to them finishing one module” which they started at RWN (in their safe place) having a history of coming in and out of for support services, she purposefully started the next course in a hotel in the town, a neutral venue:

*...so they were slowly weaned off RWN. They now have their classes in the mainstream local Adult Education centre where two years ago, they would not have considered going to at all.*

Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development worker

In the case of the Castlerea women's group, Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development worker explained how she helped progress the participants with education and training. The participants were reluctant to study maths but were enthusiastic to pursue art, thus a maths/art module was devised:

*I worked with the VEC to tailor make a course specifically designed around the women on the W.I.N.D.O.W project. Twelve women were able to avail of a maths/art module that gave them credits of both modules but the learning was integrated e.g. making cardboard items and measuring them to size.*

Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development worker

## **Education in own community - key**

A Counsellor/Psychotherapist at RWN commented on the impact of the W.I.N.D.O.W project as it enabled and supported women's participation:

*I began to recognise the tremendous opportunities that the W.I.N.D.O.W project was offering women and how these opportunities were making a difference to the lives of the women. It was giving them more confidence and increasing their self esteem. They had stability and structure in their lives - some for the first time - and were beginning to lay down foundations of commitment and responsibility, which would have been missing to an extent, heretofore.*

Counsellor/Psychotherapist

Another example of the W.I.N.D.O.W project's effective interagency work was its linkage with the READ<sup>1</sup> centre in Roscommon Town. The READ centre was also represented on the W.I.N.D.O.W steering group.

*It was apparent that the READ centre was closing down but what the women were going to do after its closure was unsure. I met with these women individually and found a lot lacked confidence and had a fear of mainstreaming as they were used to being in the security of those from the same culture.*

Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development worker

Twelve women from the READ centre were participants on the W.I.N.D.O.W project. The W.I.N.D.O.W project delivered a STEPS (personal development course) at the READ centre and opened it up to all participants on W.I.N.D.O.W. Fourteen women participated in this course which was held in the READ centre. In total nine women from the Travelling community attended. Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W

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<sup>1</sup> The Roscommon Education and Development (READ) Centre, Roscommon Town closed at the end of



Development worker explained that after the READ centre closed she suggested progression paths to participants. These included:

*VTOS Roscommon, Primary Care Health programme run by Local Development Company and Hairdressing courses: Two women took up VTOS, others took up the Primary Care Programme and I gave a list of those interested in Hairdressing to the VEC.*

Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development worker

## **2.5 Gender equality, social inclusion and women experiencing multiple disadvantage.**

As part of the evaluation agencies and steering group members were asked about the impact of the W.I.N.D.O.W project on gender equality, social inclusion and women experiencing multiple disadvantage.

The positive impact of the W.I.N.D.O.W project was referred to by all. The media coverage of the W.I.N.D.O.W project was referred to by Ann McNamara, Roscommon VEC who felt that it “helped to raise an awareness that could help challenge or clarify views that promote inequality”. The experience of multiple disadvantage of many of the women participants was recognised and it was said that they “joined the W.I.N.D.O.W project as equals and were part of an all inclusive environment”, Stephanie O’ Connor Shaw, BTEI, Roscommon VEC. Similarly Karen Gavin, HSE Drug and Substance misuse Counsellor acknowledging the issue of social inclusion and women experiencing multiple disadvantage said:

*There is a lot of marginalisation and stigma with addiction especially if you are a mother. The clients we work with often experience multiple disadvantage, poor education levels, limited work experience or opportunity...many are lone parents, low socio economic status, financial difficulties and isolation.*

In-house Counsellor at RWN highlighted the value of the “basic pre-development courses” which “ensure that the project is socially inclusive and give those who would not have had in the past, the opportunity to build their confidence and begin to feel a valuable part of society”. Commenting on the experience of multiple disadvantage, she added:

The support and encouragement which these women received through the W.I.N.D.O.W project allowed them to begin to manage their lives and begin to both hope and cope again. The Counsellor also commended W.I.N.D.O.W for its one-to-one mentoring individually tailored to each woman’s needs. She stated:

*It was essential for those women who wished to return to employment...having opted out for various reasons – the inequality in our society which disenfranchises women who have and rear children – adding to the difficulties which the women encountered.*

The women focused approach of W.I.N.D.O.W was commented on by agencies and steering group members. Ann McNamara, Roscommon VEC felt that women focused approach with only women participants engaged in the project “presented a less threatening environment to potential participants”. Similarly Stephanie BTEI stated that in her opinion “many of the women would not have been as open to participation if the project had been open to both male and female...many of them were lacking confidence and I feel that if it had not been women focused it would have been a barrier to their “openness” and full participation. Karen Gavin, HSE Drug and Substance Misuse Counsellor agreed that personal development and confidence building is “easier to work on in same sex groups. They developed friendships received understanding and shared experiences”. She added:

*Many of the women have experienced conflict within past/current relationships with men. They may experience a power imbalance in mixed group.*

Similarly Annette Curley, Monksland Community Centre stated:

*I feel at times women may not have a voice in their homes or feel that they can’t have owing to the fact they may not be the breadwinner therefore the interaction helps women to have the vocabulary to express without causing conflict – learning from each other how to cope and bring about change.*

Margaret Bourke, Roscommon Disability Support Group referred to the comfort found “on common ground”. And Noel Connolly, Roscommon Leader Partnership commented that “women do require particular attention when it comes to making a return to the workforce”.

Gender inequality exists therefore in order to address this imbalance and promote social inclusion there is a need for targeted programmes such as the EWM funded W.I.N.D.O.W project. Without this intervention, women experiencing multiple disadvantage will remain on the margins.

## 2.6 The need for another EWM funded W.I.N.D.O.W project

As part of the evaluation of W.I.N.D.O.W agencies that the project linked with and steering group members were asked if there was a need in County Roscommon for another EWM funded W.I.N.D.O.W project. Comments included “there are more people out there needing such support” (Margaret Bourke, Roscommon Disability Support Group), another project of this kind would be “beneficial”:

Annette Curley, Monksland Community Centre said:

*We have a large community in Monksland and District and I would expect that there are plenty of ladies who would benefit from this project. There are many other smaller groups that feed into our Centre and we would like to be able to offer programmes further afield.*

Anne Holt described W.I.N.D.O.W as “a very valuable and unique support project for the marginalised in the area” that she would like to see continued:

*Local targeted supports are highly effective to respond directly to the needs in a locality. This is especially so in a rural community where there are little existing services. The W.I.N.D.O.W project is a great resource for the county. It has been successful in connecting with the community and delivering appropriate supports.*

Anne Holt, DSP, Activation and Family Support Programme.

This point made by Anne Holt is revealing and points to the reasons that the W.I.N.D.O.W project was successful in that it connected with the community and delivered appropriate supports. Stephanie O'Connor Shaw, BTEI Roscommon VEC echoes this sentiment in her comments that “absolutely” another W.I.N.D.O.W project was needed stating “this is the only way to reach the most marginalised”:

*They need mentoring and support and a “homely” “supported” environment, this was provided by the W.I.N.D.O.W project.*

Stephanie O'Connor Shaw, BTEI, Roscommon VEC

She also made an interesting comment in relation to the W.I.N.D.O.W projects success in engaging with the most marginalised women. She said,

*It cannot be done through advertising; people who fall into this category do not usually or as a norm engage in groups/education.*

Stephanie O'Connor Shaw, BTEI, Roscommon VEC

A Counsellor at RWN concurred that there was a need for another EWM W.I.N.D.O.W project. She said that she “has seen the difference that this project has made to the lives of women” and added:

*In certain cases, the lives of women have been totally transformed with some women applying for and remaining in 3rd level education for the first time – holding down a job for the first time and beginning to take control over their own lives both professionally and personally.*

Counsellor/Psychotherapist

It was felt by agency and steering group members who participated in the evaluation of W.I.N.D.O.W that the strengths of the project as “needs lead, supportive and welcoming to every woman” (Anne Galvin, RAPID, Athlone) should be replicated in future projects and that it was “beneficial throughout the county”.

*From an educational point of view... it worked very well in co-operation with BTEI. The Development Worker was always available for discussion and mentoring and support for the women/students.*

Stephanie O'Connor Shaw, BTEI, Roscommon VEC



The continuation of one to one mentoring with one key worker who is “familiar and open” and “personal development type courses that build on self esteem” were identified as was the value and continued need for an “open, non judgemental and inclusive” space such as RWN. Stephanie O’Connor Shaw, BTEI, Roscommon VEC, stressed the importance of “familiarity and consistency” in this (type of) project:

*Participants need the security provided by these points, this is key to participation and retention, participation and retention is key to progression and overcoming the multiple barriers faced by participants.*

Stephanie O’Connor Shaw, BTEI, Roscommon VEC

A Counsellor/Psychotherapist at RWN highlighted the challenges of retaining participants and commented that it was of paramount importance for the success of the project to support women taking part in this and any future W.I.N.D.O.W project through “counselling and predevelopment courses:

*Entering and remaining in a project such as this, brings along its own difficulties, where women may have to face certain issues and fundamentally themselves for the first time ever. While this is happening, it is fundamental to the success of the project and to the well being of the women on the project that such supports as I have outlined are in place.*

Counsellor/Psychotherapist

In evaluating the W.I.N.D.O.W project it was important to explore what the greatest needs for supports are going forward to make recommendations for future EWM W.I.N.D.O.W projects. Recommendations also included the need for supports around childcare costs and transport. The “low level of education standard” of many marginalised women and the “isolation” facing women at home were also highlighted as factors to be considered for future projects.

The continuation of an “open”, “accessible” “needs led” W.I.N.D.O.W project that could be open and accessible to any woman without referral was highlighted by Karen Gavin HSE Drug and Substance misuse Counsellor. The need for personal development, back to work support and courses such as “a parenting programme more on practical skills – home management course e.g. budgeting, cooking etc. not just focusing on parenting...help with back to work support...personal development course” (Karen Gavin HSE Drug and Substance misuse Counsellor) and “courses on budgeting and education – in particular understanding the education system and supports within e.g. grants” Annette Curley, Monksland Community Centre were highlighted.

It was recommended by Annette Curley, Monksland Community Centre that in the future participants should receive certificates in their own community to heighten the participant’s own sense of achievement by being commended in their own locality among family and friends and to increase awareness of the project throughout the county.

*I would like to see participants receiving certificates/recognition on home ground – as in our case at the Community Centre – thus giving a sense of achievement in front of family and encouraging further participation from residents in other projects and education.*

Annette Curley, Monksland Community Centre

Anne Galvin, RAPID Athlone also suggested that the W.I.N.D.O.W. project could be enhanced if it had a greater presence in Monksland stating:

*It could be enhanced by having a full time project worker and possibly a base in South Roscommon.*

Anne Galvin, RAPID Athlone

## Section 3

### W.I.N.D.O.W – Quantitative Analysis

In this section a quantitative analysis of the EWM W.I.N.D.O.W project is presented. A profile of participants is detailed including age, participant background, education and labour market status prior to entering the W.I.N.D.O.W project. The target group was women outside the labour market.

In total one hundred and fifty nine participants took part in the W.I.N.D.O.W project between December 2010 and November 2012. Progression ranged from personal development, education (non accredited and accredited), employment (part time and full time, internship, CE or TÚS schemes) and enterprise. One hundred and twenty eight progressed into education (non accredited and accredited). Thirty one progressed into employment.

The results were in line with the objectives set out in the W.I.N.D.O.W project plan but the demand for the project meant that far more participants were recruited than was initially planned. This meant that the development worker worked over and beyond the 17.5 hour working week allocated to the project.

#### 3.1 W.I.N.D.O.W Database

Database

Documented

Accountable

A participant data base was used to manage the W.I.N.D.O.W project. A screen print from the data base report is shown to illustrate how participants were guided through the project by the development worker. It clearly demonstrates how the W.I.N.D.O.W project was tailor made to each participant's individual needs. The rate of progression differed for each individual.

When participants signed up to the W.I.N.D.O.W project they completed a registration form (See Appendix 1). This showed their current labour market status and their aspirations into education and employment. It also included their age, participant background, education and other basic information including address, contact details etc. This information was compiled on a W.I.N.D.O.W participant data base using Access software. This facilitated the management of the varying needs of participants. It was used as a tool to manage and document the steps taken in the participant's journey to becoming more employable. The database ultimately showed a progression path for each individual on the project and could also highlight their status one year on. The database grew in depth as individual participants progressed and

their needs changed. The extract below shows how the changing needs of participants varied. Many participants started with low self confidence and thus participated in personal development and non accredited courses such as STEPS.

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evaluation 11 March 2014 22:31:22

| Social Welfare Status | Highest Education Level | Leaver                              | Need 1                 | Action 1               | Need 2                   | Action 2                                    | Need 3  |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|---|---------|
| Disability            | Less Junior Cert        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Motivation             | Computers Course       | Further Education        | FETAC Level 3 Award                         | Help v  |
| Jobseeker             | Degree                  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Chance Work experience | WE position at RWN     | Apply Jobs               | full time Position secured local business - | After 1 |
| Disability            | Leaving Cert            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Confidence Building    | STEPS                  | CV prep/interview skills | CV prep/Interview techniques                | Job     |
| Disability            | GCSE                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Motivation             | Computers              | Further Education        | FETAC Level 3                               | Facilit |
| None                  | Leaving Cert            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Cv preparation         | CV preparation         | Job                      | Apply to positions advertised               | Job     |
| CE scheme             | GCSE                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Structure at work      | CE worker at RWN       | Support around addiction | Counselling                                 |         |
| Jobseeker             | Junior Cert             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Qualifications         | Healthcare Level 4     | Further qualifications   | Healthcare L5                               | Motiv   |
| Jobseeker             | Leaving Cert            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Confidence Building    | Mapping the Journey    | Motivation               | Speaker at RWN events                       | Encou   |
| Lone Parents          | GCSE's                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Organisational skill   | Organisational seminar | Motivation               | Inspirational Night                         | Work    |
| Disability            | Masters                 | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Confidence building    | STEPS                  |                          |   |         |
| Jobseekers            | Leaving Cert            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Confidence Building    | STEPS                  | Computers                | Level 3 Computers                           | Furthe  |
|                       |                         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Confidence building    | STEPS                  | Education                | NLN   | Couns   |
| Jobseekers            | Degree                  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Confidence Building    | STEPS                  | Further education        | Application specific Colleges               | Work    |
| CE scheme             |                         | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Confidence Building    | STEPS                  | Motivation               | speak at RWN event                          |         |
| Disability Allowance  | Junior Certificate      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Confidence             | STEPS                  | Dyslexia                 | VEC one to one                              | Disca   |
| Jobseeker             | Junior Certificate      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Confidence             | STEPS                  | Further education        | FETAC Level 3 computers                     |         |
| Jobseeker             | junior Cert             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Confidence Building    | STEPS                  | Further education        | FETAC Level 3 General Learning              | Furthe  |

Page 1 of

Data Base Report – Screen Print

### 3.2 W.I.N.D.O.W Profile of participants

#### 3.2.1 Age Profile:

| Age   | No. of Women |
|---|--------------|
| 15 - 24 years of age                        | 33           |
| 25 - 54 years of age                        | 91           |
| 55 - 64 years of age                        | 33           |
| Over 64 years of age                        | 2            |
| <b>Total Number of Project Participants</b> | <b>159</b>   |

### 3.2.2 Labour market status

The table below details the labour market status of EWM W.I.N.D.O.W participants before they joined the project.

| Labour Market Status                                   | No. of Women |
|--|--------------|
| Employed   | 0            |
| Self-Employed  | 0            |
| Unemployed (short term - under 1 year)                 | 35           |
| Unemployed (long term - over 1 year)                   | 85           |
| "Inactive Person" (in education or training)           | 28           |
| "Inactive Person" (retired or gave up business)        |              |
| "Inactive Person" (fulfilling domestic tasks or other) | 9            |
| <b>Total Number of Project Participants</b>            | <b>159</b>   |

### 3.2.3. Participant Background

|                                     | No. of Women |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Traveller Women                     | 25           |
| Migrant Women                       | 24           |
| Women with a Disability             | 41           |
| Other disadvantaged groups          | 69           |
| <b>Total Number of Participants</b> | <b>159</b>   |

Seventy-one participants were early school leavers (ESL) i.e. they left school with less than a Leaving Certificate qualification.

Fifty-four participants were Lone Parents.

No participant was asked for any of the information below, however the following was disclosed as part of the one-to-one mentoring:

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Recovering from Addiction or family member | <b>32</b> |
| Survivor of Domestic Violence              | <b>18</b> |
| Previous Conviction                        | <b>3</b>  |

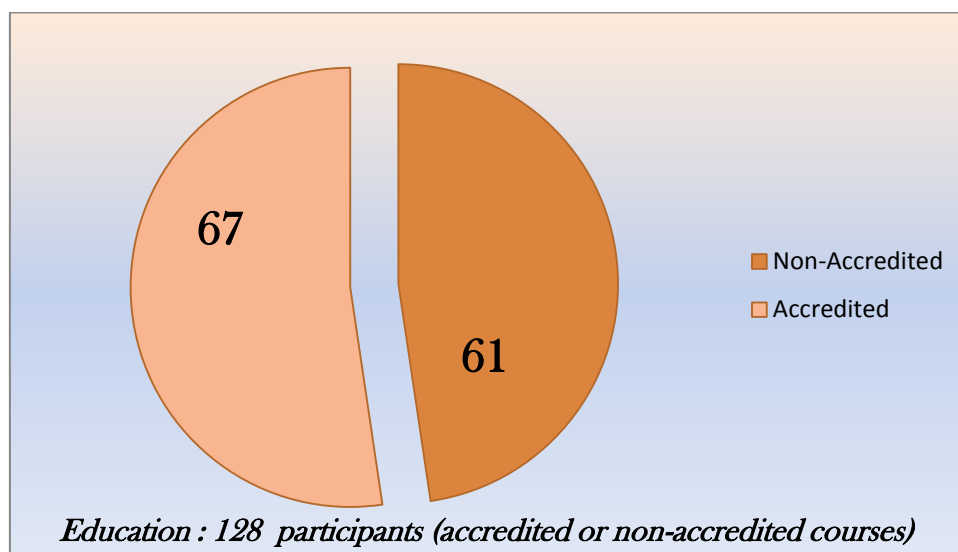
### Cross Referencing:

We are aware of 8 women who have overcome addiction, are an ESL, a survivor of Domestic Violence and have mental health issues.

## 3.3 Outcomes and results

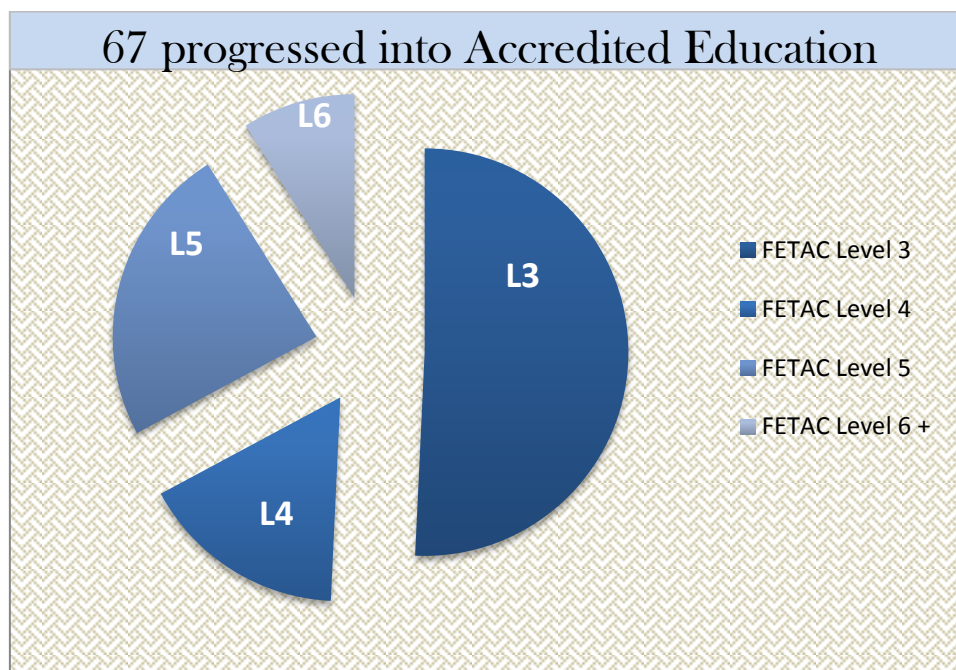
### 3.3.1 W.I.N.D.O.W Education

Sixty-one women have completed non-accredited part-time courses and sixty-seven women completed accredited part-time courses during the 2010 – 2012 W.I.N.D.O.W project. However ninety percent of those that undertook accredited training also availed of non-accredited training in the form of personal development courses.



Of the sixty-seven participants that completed accredited part-time courses thirty four attained FETAC level 3 accreditation; eleven attained FETAC level 4 accreditation; sixteen attained FETAC level 5 accreditation and six attained FETAC level 6+.

## W.I.N.D.O.W - Accredited Education



Sixty-seven participants moved into accredited education. In some cases this was their first qualification, in others it was a progression from prior qualifications.

|                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| FETAC Level 3   | 34 |
| FETAC Level 4   | 11 |
| FETAC Level 5   | 16 |
| FETAC Level 6 + | 6  |

The women that participated on FETAC Level 3 courses had limited prior formal learning and were all early school leavers. Some would have completed individual modules with eighteen successfully completing full FETAC Level 3 awards.

Participants were accepted onto courses at:

- BTEI, Roscommon VEC – Originally run at RWN Resource Centre then Castlerea area.
- RWN Training Centre (Local Training Initiative funded through FÁS)
- National Learning Network, Castlerea

Participants that moved onto FETAC Level 4 progressed from FETAC Level 3 or alternatively progressed straight into FETAC Level 4 depending on their prior learning. Participants were accepted onto courses at:

- RWN Training Centre (Local Training Initiative funded through FÁS)
- VTOS Castlerea
- VTOS Roscommon
- BTEI, Roscommon VEC (Roscommon area)

Most of the FETAC Level 5 participants progressed from FETAC level 4. Participants were accepted onto courses at:

- BTEI, Roscommon VEC (Part Time) Roscommon areas (Day & Evening courses)
- Castlerea Community School (PLC Full Time)
- RWN Training Centre (Local Training Initiative funded through FÁS) (Full Time)

Higher levels of accreditation are presented in Section 3.3.2.

All one hundred and fifty nine participants availed of one-to-one mentoring tailored to their individual needs. Most participants also availed of skills identification, outreach, information, curriculum vitae preparation and interview skills. Workshops were also put on for participants in organisation skills, coping with family life whilst in education, curriculum vitae and interview skills.

In general the rate of progression for early school leavers was slower than for participants that had completed their Leaving Certificate. However there were exceptions such as the case of Participant D (3.3.2 Table). Participant D left school at age fifteen and worked her way up from sales assistant in a department store to Area Manager. She availed of management training in-house but never had any formal training. Unfortunately during the recession she was made redundant. She had plenty of experience but no qualifications and she was a lone parent. The W.I.N.D.O.W project linked with Athlone Institute of Technology and RPL (Recognised Prior Learning) and she was accepted into 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the AIT Business Studies degree course.

In general early school leavers demonstrated a slower progression rate. The following barriers were highlighted during the W.I.N.D.O.W project by early school leavers:

- Lack of organisational skills;
- Lack of confidence;
- Bad experience of school or a teacher as a child;
- Undiagnosed learning difficulties.

The W.I.N.D.O.W project supported participants in overcoming these barriers. This was the first step on the path to education and employment.

### 3.3.2 W.I.N.D.O.W Third Level Education

Six women in total accessed third level education during the 2010 – 2012 W.I.N.D.O.W project. It is anticipated that five of the six women will graduate with a primary degree within the next three years. Participant E has deferred entry to third level due to family commitments. She is a lone parent and lives sixty miles from the nearest third level institution.

Prior to W.I.N.D.O.W two of these participants had a leaving certificate applied qualification, three had no qualification and one had a recognised HETAC Level 7 from Pakistan.

#### 3.3.2 (Table) Third Level Education - Progression

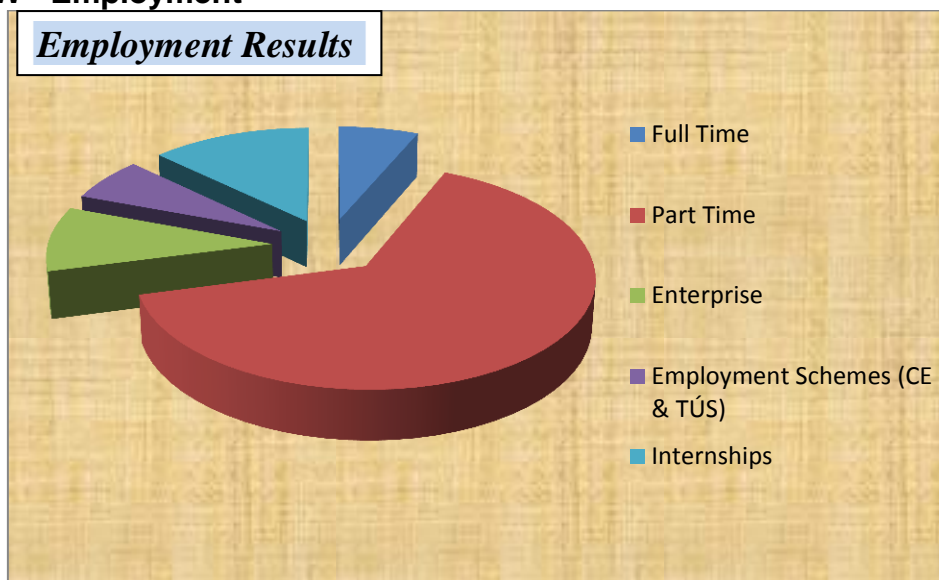
| Name          | Faculty              | Expected Outcome in 3 years   |
|---------------|----------------------|---|
| Participant A | Sports Management    | Degree in Sports Management   |
| Participant B | Access Course        | Degree Social Studies   |
| Participant C | Software Development | Honours Degree & Teaching Qualification   |
| Participant D | Business             | Degree in Business Studies  |
| Participant E | Social Studies       | Deferred entry to 3 <sup>rd</sup> level until child gets older, she is a lone parent and 60 miles from nearest 3 <sup>rd</sup> level. |
| Participant F | Business             | Degree in Business Studies  |

### 3.3.3 W.I.N.D.O.W Employment

Thirty one women entered employment during the two year period. This included full time, part time, self-employed, job bridge internship scheme and other employment schemes (community employment (CE) and TÚS).

Connecting with employers was part of the objectives set out in the project plan. Initially the W.I.N.D.O.W development work wrote to approximately forty employers in County Roscommon however this did not yield much success. The development Worker then changed her approach and sought out seminars/events that could enhance the project. She attended an event run by the Roscommon County Enterprise Board which made her aware of the Roscommon Business Network Meetings (facilitated by the Roscommon County Enterprise Board). This presented an excellent networking opportunity for the W.I.N.D.O.W project and yielded positive results. The development worker made a presentation to the Roscommon Business Network on the W.I.N.D.O.W project. Two jobs were directly created as a result of these meetings and many more connections were made between employers and participants.

#### W.I.N.D.O.W - Employment



**Full Time = 2; Part Time = 20; Enterprise = 3;  
Employment schemes = 2; Internships = 4.**

| 2012               |        | 1 year On.....     |  |
|--------------------|--------|--------------------|--|
| Type Employment    | Number | Type Employment    | Number   |
| Full Time          | 2      | Full Time          | 2  |
| Part Time          | 20     | Part Time          | 13   |
| Enterprise         | 3      | Enterprise         | 3  |
| Employment Schemes | 2      | Employment Schemes | 1 unsure<br>1 Unemployed                                   |
| Internships        | 4      | Internships        | 2 in FT Employment<br>1 unemployed<br>1 employed in U.S.A. |





Dee and Natalie (left and right above) secured Internship positions with Halcyon group pictured with Company Director Linda

Lorraine Campbell W.I.N.D.O.W. participant at Country Kids Crèche with her Employer Mary Cuddy where she took up an Administration position. Lorraine is still in this position 3 years on. Also in picture Maria Harris and Nora Fahy (RWN).



### 3.3.4 W.I.N.D.O.W Enterprise

During the initial one-to-one mentoring sessions three W.I.N.D.O.W participants revealed that they would like to set up their own business.

See 4.4.1 (Enterprise case study).

As well as building these participants self confidence, W.I.N.D.O.W acted as a sign post to other agencies that work in this area including Roscommon Leader Partnership, RosWin and Roscommon Business Network facilitated by Roscommon County Enterprise Board. Participants continued to avail of one-to-one mentoring sessions with the W.I.N.D.O.W development worker throughout the process of setting up their own business.



Maria Harris W.I.N.D.O.W. Development Worker celebrates with Lucy Carty and Fiona Crean both W.I.N.D.O.W. participants on the opening night of Lucy's new business Eden Skin Care. Lucy has set up Laser Skin Care Centre and Fiona will offer massage from one of the rooms within the clinic.

### 3.4 Progression

This report evaluated the W.I.N.D.O.W project from 13<sup>th</sup> December 2010 – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012. In total one hundred and fifty nine participants took part in the project. One hundred and twenty eight participants progressed into education with sixty seven completing accredited education and training and sixty one non accredited education and training. Fifteen participants from the first RWN W.I.N.D.O.W project progressed onto the next phase of the W.I.N.D.O.W project. These participants are mostly from the Castlereagh area. They are also regular users of the RWN centre and many are involved with the Castlereagh Women's Group and /or the RWN Charity shop.

Twelve of these participants are achieving further progression in terms of their education and self development with the next phase of the W.I.N.D.O.W Project (1<sup>st</sup> June 2013 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014). The other three women have secured employment, two on community employment schemes and one in part-time employment.



The W.I.N.D.O.W project effectively increases the participant's work readiness by supporting the women through part time education courses and one-to-one mentoring. In some cases it is working within a background of trans-generational welfare dependency. While the rate of progression for this cohort may be slow, it is steady. Without the W.I.N.D.O.W project these women would have remained on the margins indefinitely. It is hoped that nine of the twelve early school leavers that progressed from the initial phase of the W.I.N.D.O.W project to the present W.I.N.D.O.W project will achieve FETAC level 5 or above within the next two years. The impact of the project on their self confidence and self esteem has been immense. This was most notable on the W.I.N.D.O.W celebration night held in the Abbey Hotel on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2012 (at the end of the project) when women who at the start of the project were withdrawn and silent were instead vociferous, engaged and full of life as they described their positive experience of the W.I.N.D.O.W project.



Speakers at the W.I.N.D.O.W celebration night held in the Abbey Hotel on 29<sup>th</sup> Nov 2012

## Section 4

### W.I.N.D.O.W – Qualitative Analysis

Documenting...

Real Lives

Case Studies

Progression

Education

Employability

In this section qualitative data from research carried out as part of the evaluation process is presented. Extracts from Sarah Grogan's 2011 case study of RWN which includes the experience of five W.I.N.D.O.W participants who had come to the project through their prior experience of RWN is presented.

A focus group discussion with the Castlerea Women's Group who were all early school leavers is then detailed. The group were asked about themselves and what the W.I.N.D.O.W project meant to them and the impact it has had on their lives. Four of the five women in the 2011 case study also participated in the focus group discussion as part of the evaluation process. A visual representation created by the group on their experience of the W.I.N.D.O.W project is also considered. The findings of a focus group discussion with women in employment also informs the study. In this section W.I.N.D.O.W education and training, employment and enterprise case studies are also presented. The employment case is transcribed as it was delivered by Sarah Grogan W.I.N.D.O.W participant at the W.I.N.D.O.W Celebration night in November 2012. The enterprise case is presented as a combination of insights given by the W.I.N.D.O.W participant, Maeve Kelly during the Celebration night and during the Roscommon town employment Focus group 2.

#### 4.1 Roscommon Women's Network - Case Studies Report

In 2011, Sarah Grogan, an intern with RWN carried out a case study into the work of RWN. Part of this study focused on the W.I.N.D.O.W project. It provides an interesting overview of the involvement of five case study participants with RWN prior to their engagement with the W.I.N.D.O.W project and their progression through it.



Continued  
Progression

### **Extract: RWN – Case Studies Report**

*“Through her involvement in the Project, A is back in full time education and doing voluntary work once a week. B is in full time education and now also has a part-time job. C is just finished a course and will start another one in Communications, Personal Development and Computers. D is back in full time education and is studying towards getting her Leaving Certificate and E has just finished Fetac Level 4 and will go on to do Level 5 shortly. (Grogan, S.: 2011: 24).*

#### **Education and Personal Development**

*...education is a very important part of these women's lives and seems to be one of the main achievements of their own personal development through the RWN. Their progress into further education seems to be dependent on the above W.I.N.D.O.W project; which they were all involved in; the personal development courses they participated in and the support and encouragement of the staff at the RWN.*

*During the course of her involvement with RWN, A has done a course in Art and Design, she has done a course in Computers and she has done a course in Parenting Skills to name but a few. As she says herself she has done “everything”. She also did the personal development course, Steps, which she says has been “brilliant” in helping boost her confidence. She is now studying for a Diploma in Social Studies and hopes to do a course in Addiction Studies shortly after. She then hopes to get a job working with young people in the community.*

*B through her involvement with RWN has also completed a personal development course which she describes as “very good”. This was the first step that she took to enable her to go back to college. She is now doing an ACCESS course in an Institute of Technology. She has also just started a part-time job where she will learn new skills and do training as part of the job. She is unsure of what career path she will take but her career and her education is very important to her.*

*Since coming to the RWN, C has achieved Fetac Level 3. She however admits to already having Fetac Level 5 done previously to her coming to the RWN but she admits that she loves doing the courses when they come up and she was due to start another course shortly after our interview. She is very proud also of the fact that she has taught herself to type and use a computer and she hopes to go to college to study Art in the near future.*

*D is studying to get her Leaving Certificate at the moment and hopes to then apply to college. She eventually wants to be qualified to teach Art. It is through her involvement with the RWN and the W.I.N.D.O.W. Project that this came about and she really appreciates the help and support of the staff of the RWN.*

*E has also done the Steps course at RWN and has gone back to education at the National Learning Network. She has obtained the equivalent to her Junior and Leaving Certificates which she is very proud of. She has also completed a Fetac Level 4 and will go on to do Fetac Level 5 when her personal life settles down. She hopes that this will enable her to get into the caring sector where she hopes to get a job. She is also considering working for mental health organisations.*

(ibid:25)

#### **4.2 Castlerea women's group experience of W.I.N.D.O.W project**

Five W.I.N.D.O.W participants from the Castlerea women's group engaged in a focus group discussion with Dr. Anne Byrne NUI, Galway in November 2012. Also present Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W development worker and Orla Leyden (rapporteur).

The Castlerea women's group was set up in 2008 however it was not very active. In 2009 Jackie Dempsey with the support of RWN successfully revitalised the group. Jackie Dempsey who is featured in a case study later in this report continues in her role as chairperson of this active and growing women's group.

Prior to Dr. Anne Byrnes arrival on the day of the focus group discussion the women reminisced about significant events for the Castlerea women's group.

The women spoke fondly of the “Kildare trip”, “Christmas at Hestors” and the “Black coal bucket!”. Focus Group 1 (D) commented, “We've had some fun times and when things went wrong, we learnt from them”.

Dr. Anne Byrne started the focus discussion by asking the women about themselves and what the project meant to them...she asked the women what impact the project had on their lives.

Focus Group 1A started the discussion by saying that she had left school at fifteen and that she had moved from London to Castlereagh five years previous. She described “stumbling across” RWN:

*I just saw “women” somewhere written down...just called in...didn’t call in for anything specific ...started with creative writing, fact being with other women, felt “belonging”  
...then I went onto “Steps”... (W.I.N.D.O.W) I wouldn’t be sitting here today without it.”*

Focus Group 1 (A)

The sense of “belonging”, described and the importance of the safe space of RWN is borne out by other participants. The place is important.

Focus Group 1 (A) added “I managed to escape computers...I felt inferior...left school with nothing...full of shame”. With RWN “you can be yourself...you don’t have to be ashamed – the relief”. She said that before she “was so limited without it (computers)...it will affect my next twenty years”. She explained what a positive impact the project had on her life saying “all it takes is someone to believe in you...to find your strengths”. She added “If you’re brought up in a family with chaos ...it is hard to know how to manage things”. She described the project as apart from the birth of her son, as her “most life changing experience”.

This comment was echoed by Lorraine Campbell (chairperson of RWN Board of Directors 2012 – 2013). Lorraine participated on W.I.N.D.O.W and said “RWN always looked at your strengths even if you felt battered”. She said that she felt inspired by Maria Harris (development worker) and Nora Fahy (RWN co-ordinator)...”they asked how can we progress this woman...through W.I.N.D.O.W...I got a job in a childcare facility in the office...and became chairperson of RWN and the RWN representative on the board of NCCWN”.

W.I.N.D.O.W supported participants by giving them the skills to learn to manage and organise their lives and their learning. The proactive “hands on” and caring W.I.N.D.O.W approach was acknowledged by Focus Group 1 (A):

*Maria (development worker) always kept us together and in touch with us to let you know what is coming up...someone else might put it up on a poster and expect you to see it – Maria phones you and tells you if something is coming up.*

Focus Group 1(A)

Focus Group 1 (B) added “they (W.I.N.D.O.W project) meet you where you are at...caring”

Similar comments were made by the other early school leavers in the group who lacked confidence and had a bad experience of school. The discussion revealed that the W.I.N.D.O.W project empowered them to take back their lives. Focus Group 1 (B) described the project as “a stepping stone” and added “I’d be still suffering alone without it...it is a life saver...without it I would be at home, depressed alone...you can’t wait for someone to come and knock on your door”. Dr. Madeline, Local G.P. had recommended RWN to her.

Focus group 1C also referred to the mental health benefits of RWN and W.I.N.D.O.W. She shared “If I hadn’t come in that Thursday, I wouldn’t be here today (pills in one hand, Samaritans number in the other)”:

*I just wanted to get out of this life...now I never think it. I thought everyone knew better than me now I know this is not true...the only person proving it to is myself...by growing self can help others, push others on too. The government doesn’t know how important this is, low cost and better than having us all drugged up... I am taking my life back.*

Focus Group 1(C)

Focus Group 1 (C) emphasised that “they made sure it (W.I.N.D.O.W) had a purpose”.



Ladder to Life

No-one judges  
you

Encouragement

More Confidence



Focus Group 1 (E) spoke of the importance of being able to access RWN and the W.I.N.D.O.W project in Castlereah. She referred to the sense of isolation she felt prior to engaging with RWN and W.I.N.D.O.W living in rural area outside Castlereah with a young family. She said "if this place wasn't here where would you go and no cars to travel ...a lot of people would be lost without it". Many of the W.I.N.D.O.W participants in Castlereah do not have their own transport and are further disadvantaged by this. Even those with transport could not afford the additional cost of travelling to another town to access training and education opportunities. Focus Group 1(E) said that as a result of participating on the W.I.N.D.O.W project she is "better able to organise" herself, she added that she "looks forward to (course) homework" and that she feels like she "can better help" her "children with their schoolwork". She spoke well of the project development worker, "she'd encourage you and do everything to work around you". She gave the example of how another W.I.N.D.O.W participant "wanted to stop doing the computer course because she didn't have a computer...Maria (development worker) said you can use this one!"She added that the development workers encouragement was important as was the fact that "no one judges you". Focus Group 1 (D) said that W.I.N.D.O.W gave her "more confidence, belief in self".

Focus Group 1 (B) described the W.I.N.D.O.W project as a "ladder to life" and told the group about her daughter's pride in her achievements. She said,

*My daughter was taken aback by how I could use the computer. She told everyone "mammy is able to type"...the whole of Rathmines knew.*

Focus Group 1(B)

The women from the Castlereah Women's Group that participated in the focus group discussion were ranging in age from their thirties to sixties. They were all early school leavers.



## Tree of life “BLOSSOMING”

### **4.3 Visual Representation – Tree of life “BLOSSOMING”**

In January 2014 women from the Castlereagh women's group met to create a piece of art work to visually represent their experience of the W.I.N.D.O.W project. They reviewed the notes from the Focus Group Discussion in November 2012 and began to talk again about the impact the project had on their lives. They arranged to meet on the following Saturday as not all of the participants were available on week days with college and courses. There was much discussion about how to visually represent their experience of the W.I.N.D.O.W project...the idea of incorporating a window frame was suggested. One of the women said that she didn't want the window to be illustrated as closed or limiting in any way, the other women agreed...they wanted the window to be open and the view from the window - their "blossoming" on the tree of life represented. It is clear that the W.I.N.D.O.W project was a freeing not a constraining experience for the women involved. The women felt that the project helped them to grow, it was freeing, liberating and empowered them to reach their potential. The idea of portraying the tree of life was suggested. The tree of life represented the W.I.N.D.O.W project as it supported each woman to reach her potential. The branches represented each woman's individual experience of the project and were created using the women's hand prints with each one decorated in a unique way using words that resonated with them.

The inscription on the tree bough related to how the W.I.N.D.O.W project supported them...the words inscribed on each individual branch/hand print represented what the project meant to them. The grass represents the RWN grass roots approach and the brown window frame the EWM funded W.I.N.D.O.W project which facilitated the women's participation.

The words that are etched on to the tree bough by the participants are RWN, safe, listening, empathy, awareness, supportive, confidence building, helping hand, development, community, non judgemental, peace, understanding, assurance, sympathetic, 1-1 mentoring, considerate, equality, accepting, time, new life, problem solving, achievement,

The participant's hand prints on the visual representation represent the tree's branches and describe the W.I.N.D.O.W project as caring, respectful, non judgemental, supportive, accepting, confidence building, listening, a safe place, giving, help, new outlook, appreciative and as giving peace, hope, joy, friendship, fun and building self esteem, sense of security, self development, assertiveness, providing a new outlook, guidance, skills, a new focus, new challenges, learning, community development. It was also described as giving "time out for you", "stepping stones" and a "ladder to life".

The Development worker included the words "strength in women", "potential", "helping hand", "education", "employment", "progression", "growth", "scope".



#### 4.4 Four W.I.N.D.O.W participant case studies

In this section four W.I.N.D.O.W participant case studies are presented

##### 4.4.1 Enterprise Case - Maeve Kelly, Numerologist

### Testimonials

"What an incredible reading. She told me things nobody else could have known. I will definitely be meeting up with her again. Thank you Maeve." C.K., Roscommon

"Fantastic Reading. I will definitely be going to meet up with her again. Thank you Maeve." M.L., Kildare

"I & my family are delighted to have Maeve at Gleeson's Townhouse. We are very happy with the Numerology readings that she has given to all of us. She is a wonderful, caring person and we are very happy to endorse her as a numerologist of the highest standard." Mary Gleeson, Gleeson's Townhouse, Roscommon

"Maeve has a warm and friendly personality and is professional – I found her easy to relate to and she answered all my questions

### Numerologist *Maeve Kelly*



Contact  
Maeve directly on  
0860515629  
or Gleeson's  
Townhouse  
090 6626954

*As a result of the W.I.N.D.O.W project I am pursuing my passion (Numerology) as a career. I got affirmation through the W.I.N.D.O.W project...of my own direction. I started with a personal development course (two mornings over six weeks) this helped me to gain the confidence to go and do it (start a business). After being a stay at home mom for twenty years. It is a big step moving forward from social welfare. Maria put me in contact with Roscommon Leader Partnership...I got support to establish my own business...putting together a business plan.*

*The W.I.N.D.O.W project taught us something new about ourselves... It supported me to leave the safe bubble of life within the home...there is a challenge in coming out of this cocoon...it is a big step...the W.I.N.D.O.W project let me know that I am equally as important as the next person...*

Maeve Kelly  
Numerologist

##### Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development worker account:

I met Maeve first at an Information session held in Monksland. Maeve presented as a women who struggled with low self confidence. I invited Maeve onto a personal development course. During one-to-one mentoring Maeve disclosed her unique talents and I encouraged Maeve to channel these into a self sufficient business. I introduced her to Noel Connolly in Roscommon Leader Partnership. After some encouragement Maeve started her new business as a numerologist.

##### Post script Maeve...

Since completing the W.I.N.D.O.W project Maeve's business has grown over the last year and she has diversified into teaching numerology throughout the country as well as providing one to one numerology sessions in County Roscommon and beyond.

#### 4.4.2 Employment Case – Sarah Grogan

Sarah Grogan presented this account of her experience of the W.I.N.D.O.W at the Celebration of RWN EWM W.I.N.D.O.W Project – November 2012



Sarah Grogan taking part in a staff drumming session at Gleesons  
Other pictures demonstrate marketing images of Gleesons

##### **Sarah Grogan, Marketing Manager, Gleesons Townhouse, Roscommon.**

*I am the Marketing Manager at Gleesons Townhouse, Roscommon. I have been working in this position for almost eight months now and I love my job. I am where I am today mainly because of the Windows Project. Back in 2005, I graduated from NUI Galway with a Law Degree. I decided then that I wanted to specialise in the Voluntary Sector so I completed a Masters in Women's Studies in 2007.*

*After this, I began volunteering with the Rape Crisis Net Ireland and the Galway Rape Crisis Centre where I was first introduced to the area Marketing. Then like many people of my age I decided to travel after my studies. Myself and my partner Paul spent a year in New Zealand where again I volunteered with a women's organisation. At the time I also worked for Nielsen in Auckland, the World's largest Market Research Company. Although I was interested in Marketing it never really crossed my mind that I should pursue a career in it. So when I came back home*

*In 2010 I tried with little success to look for a career in the voluntary sector. There were plenty of voluntary positions but none for pay. Rather than giving up I completed a course in Web design as a way of up-skilling. Coincidentally Roscommon Women's Network was looking for a volunteer to design and build a website for them. I happened to fit the bill. So what started as a Work Placement developed into a nine month Internship as a Development Worker in the RWN. Shortly after joining the RWN I became a participant on the Window Project. As part of this participation I completed a psychological study which analysed and recommended career paths based on my personality and suitability. Although a legal career and a career in the voluntary sector were mentioned what came out on top was a career in Marketing and Public Relations. This was a complete surprise to me considering how much effort I had put into finding a career in the voluntary sector.*

*Meanwhile Maria was aware that my strengths lay in Marketing and as a coordinator of the Window Project was actively networking with employers on my behalf. When Maria called me one evening and told me that Gleesons were looking for a Marketing Manager and that she had suggested me, I was unsure and hesitant.*

*I had almost given up hope of finding a job – I had been at home for over a year and a half – I had had so many interviews and so many failed applications that I couldn't actually visualise myself in the role of a marketing manager for a busy, successful organisation. However, Maria was able to reveal and highlight the Marketing Skills and experience I didn't even realise I had. She reminded me of all my achievements over the previous year and a half and she instilled a confidence in me that made me pick up the phone and call Gleesons. This is the real value of the Window Project. From there on the story had moved very quickly. Today I am a Marketing Manager for a successful Townhouse and a busy restaurant and shop. I work with a fantastic team and I look forward to going into work every day helping Gleesons to become even more of a success. Some days I can't believe how it all came to be and how one project – the Window Project could recognise a person's inner strengths and abilities and instil enough confidence and direction in them to open up a career path they were always destined for.*

### **Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development worker account:**

Sarah was an intern with RWN and what an inspiration she was. One of her tasks as an intern was to look at setting up a website for RWN. I had a very clear insight into how Sarah worked as I was working with her at RWN and when her internship with RWN finished she joined the W.I.N.D.O.W project as now she was in the market for looking for employment. At the same time I was doing everything to connect with employers so I could explain what W.I.N.D.O.W was about and tell the employers about all these women ready for the work environment. I was at a Business Network meeting doing a presentation explaining how the project works when Eamonn Gleeson, Owner of Gleesons Townhouse & Restaurant said he was looking for someone to help them with marketing. I told him about Sarah and I put them in contact with each other. Sarah was invited for an interview and although was a bit hesitant (due to so many knock backs with job applications and interviews) she went along. I spent some time encouraging her and highlighting all the great marketing work she did at RWN and she went along for interview and was offered the position of Marketing Manager.

#### **Post Script:**

**Sarah Grogan continued working at Gleesons before being laid off in January 2013 due to rationalisation. She then moved to Dublin to increase her job prospects. Sarah Grogan (still in Dublin) has secured full time employment in digital marketing.**

### **4.4.3 Education – Jackie Dempsey**

Jackie Dempsey presented this account of her experience of the project at the W.I.N.D.O.W Celebration night on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

#### **Jackie Dempsey**

*I got involved with RWN when I helped set up a women's group in Castlerea three years ago. One of the girls, Sara approached Maria Harris about a computer course. She said that if we got enough names she would get one put on. It started up and from there on Maria got us involved in any course that came her way one of which was STEPS - a very enjoyable and interesting course which I found very helpful for me. It helped me build my confidence and deal with difficult situations. As a result of doing the STEPS programme it enabled me to do things I would not have been able to do before. It helped me to believe in myself and build my confidence. From this course I have achieved things that I taught I would never have been able to do so I thank RWN and the W.I.N.D.O.W project for getting me involved in this course.*

### **Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development Workers account:**

Jackie was one of the first women to register with W.I.N.D.O.W. She was already coming into the centre at Roscommon Women's Network and lacked confidence. Jackie participated in a number of non-accredited courses and she was delighted when she graduated with a full FETAC Level 3 award.

**Post Script: Jackie Dempsey continues to engage in non accredited courses in the area of personal development and to access other supports at RWN. She is currently embarking on a FETAC Level 4 which is starting within RWN and part of BTEI. Jackie is chairperson of the Castlerea women's group and actively engages with events at RWN. She recently assisted with registration at the RWN Fun Run held in March 2014 and is a regular volunteer at the RWN charity shop. Jackie's progression is in line with her children growing up.**

#### 4.4.4 Third Level Education – Freya Saleem

Freya described her experience of the W.I.N.D.O.W project during a focus group discussion facilitated by Dr. Anne Byrne in November 2012. She attended the focus group with women in employment in Roscommon town which was convenient to her. She accessed Third Level education with the assistance of the W.I.N.D.O.W project.

##### **FREYA SALEEM (SOFTWARE ENGINEERING) COMPUTER**

*Freya explained how she became involved with the W.I.N.D.O.W project. She said that she had a degree from what she described as her “own country” and got involved in the Windows Project to get a qualification that would be recognised here and to ultimately qualify as a secondary school teacher which is her “dream”. Her first contact with Roscommon Women’s Network was through Roscommon Women’s Network Intercultural Quilt Project. She continued to link in with RWN and Maria Harris, Development Officer made her aware of the Windows Project and encouraged her to participate. Until then Freya completed a number of what she described as “small courses” to learn to mix with people “in a new cultural setting”. She did ESOL courses, FETAC courses in maths....Freya said that on her own...:*

*“I didn’t know the system...this (W.I.N.D.O.W) gave me an opportunity with Maria arranging everything. Without Maria – there was no opportunity. A good experience for me things are there but we do not know where to go, where to start”.*

*As a result of the support of the W.I.N.D.O.W project, Freya went straight into 4<sup>th</sup> year at Sligo IT on a degree in (software engineering) computer.*

*Freya had just one exam and (a final project) to complete to qualify when the Focus Group was facilitated in November 2012. Freya explained that she had a baby at the same time. The baby was then two months old and she had two older children, ages 8 & 9. She planned to undertake her outstanding exam the following year and then link with RWN for advice on how to train as a teacher.*

*Freya shared an image that connected with her ... a friend posted it on her Facebook page...It was of a woman holding a baby at a computer, moving the computer mouse on the baby’s back.*

*Source [www.jokeroo.com](http://www.jokeroo.com)*



“Baby” pad

**The W.I.N.D.O.W project paved the way for Freya’s entry into Sligo IT.**

**Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W Development Workers account:**

Freya's situation like most women's was very unique. I rang Sligo IT and explained what W.I.N.D.O.W was about and then gave an account of Freya's situation. She had a qualification from Pakistan, recognised here in Ireland as HETAC Level 7 in software development. I arranged a meeting with Keith McManus Head of Department of Computing and Creative Practices and Catherine the Access Officer at Sligo IT for Freya and myself. This meeting went very well, Keith spoke to Freya about various computer software applications at a very high level – the outcome – Keith invited Freya to submit her application to Sligo IT at Year 4 of a Level 8 Honours Degree Software Development Course which of course she was accepted onto.

This is a very specialised area with just 9 people in the class, 7 male and 2 female.

I could tell by Freya she was very nervous going into the 3<sup>rd</sup> level College. She admitted she expected to be "different" from most students however that first visit proved otherwise. From that first visit she was amazed at the number of women wearing saris, women of similar age to herself and so many different cultures. Being accepted into this male dominated faculty was also daunting for her. The Access Officer gave great support in terms of Back to Education payments advice, Grants, College Fees and practical advice in terms of parking, Chaplaincy and other facilities of the College.

**Postscript:**

**Freya has successfully completed her final exams and has just got her final project to submit which she deferred until June 2014 as she recently had a baby. She is also pursuing her career in teaching IT having already completed Train the Trainer she is currently in the market for teaching IT.**

**Freya has immediate plans to volunteer at RWN training centre where there is a big focus on IT learning.**



## Section 5

### Conclusion & Recommendations

#### 5.1 Conclusion

This report tries to communicate the individual and collective change that the W.I.N.D.O.W project has made to women in Roscommon. W.I.N.D.O.W as a gender specific support initiative has been successful from the individual participant's perspective and in raising awareness within the county that gender matters.

RWN applied for EWM funding to develop W.I.N.D.O.W out of a political consciousness that through capacity building, education, (non accredited and accredited) and support into employment and enterprise gender inequality could be addressed, social inclusion advanced and the lives of multiply disadvantaged and marginalised women positively changed. RWN succeeded also through local media in heightening awareness of gender inequality in society. It also succeeded in leveraging additional personal development funding from the Department of Social Protection to fulfil the needs of participants on the W.I.N.D.O.W project.

This report recommends that the EWM funding is channelled as a permanent long term measure to community based organisations like RWN thus ensuring that women experiencing multiple disadvantages are given support over time to address the gender inequality and social exclusion they experience. Community Development work needs to be sustained over time, while the progress can sometimes be slow, the impact and results are long lasting and life changing for the individuals involved and society. RWN reported the uncertainty around EWM funding as a major challenge to their work as they were not able to assure women of the continuation of the initiative from one year to the other. This was described as "a huge challenge in terms of planning, managing expectations of participants and employers" (Report to Pobal, 2012).

This evaluation concludes that a number of factors made RWN the ideal organisation to deliver the W.I.N.D.O.W project in county Roscommon. In the first instance, it had its own resources including premises, equipment and staff to support the project and apply for EWM funding. RWN is well established in county Roscommon. It has a good reputation and is respected by both participants and agencies. RWN effectively networked and collaborated with the agencies involved in the past thus giving these agencies the confidence to engage in the W.I.N.D.O.W project. Most crucially though RWN had successfully reached out and connected with the multiply marginalised and disadvantaged women in the past through community development work at RWN. This work was sustained over time and the women involved trusted RWN. They felt safe, with women describing RWN as "a safe space", "a place for me". The ethos of RWN is welcoming, non judgemental, caring and respectful. It starts where each woman is at, "they don't work above or below you they work where you are at, they work alongside you" (W.I.N.D.O.W participant speaking at Celebration night, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2012).

This report concludes that the woman centred approach, ethos of equality, mobility of the development worker and the opportunities provided to participants to learn in their own communities were key strengths of the W.I.N.D.O.W project. It also shows that the success of the W.I.N.D.O.W project in targeting and connecting with the most marginalised women has been widely recognised by other support agencies and organisations.

A strong steering group that facilitated effective interagency work was shown to be extremely important in ensuring the success of the W.I.N.D.O.W project throughout the county. The continuation of support once participants engaged in education, employment or enterprise was vital to the success of the project as was the mobility of the development worker who engaged in outreach work to participants. The Development worker travelled throughout the county to meet women in groups and for one to one mentoring sessions, this further enabled the participation of marginalised women. Education and training were also delivered in local community settings, including the RWN Centre in Castlereagh, the Community centre Monksland, the

Roscommon VEC office space in Monksland (rented from Involve<sup>2</sup>), Learning Links, Boyle, the Quad Youth Centre, Roscommon town, CDP offices Ballaghaderren, the Melting pot, Roscommon (with the computers at the Melting pot used for psychometric tests), Hodson Bay Hotel, Roscommon (Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W. development worker met participants once or twice for coffee in the foyer) and Gleeson's Townhouse and Restaurant, Roscommon town. Maria Harris, W.I.N.D.O.W. development worker explained that she met many participants "over a cup of coffee" in Gleesons and that they were really accommodating and supportive of the project.

However, the experience of W.I.N.D.O.W has been that the demand from women for support was greater than anticipated with the development worker regularly working over 17.5 hours to cope with demand. This report concludes that there is sufficient demand in County Roscommon for a full-time development worker post for this gender specific initiative and recommends that it is funded under future EWM projects.

This report concurs with Pobal's "*Addressing Gender Barriers to the Labour Market*"<sup>3</sup> that it is necessary to address the issues of lack of confidence and low self esteem "as a pre-requisite to the development of specific skills" and that this was "pivotal" to the "progression that participants make to employment, enterprise, education and training. Not addressing the issue can and has led to higher rates of attrition and to less successful outcomes for participants and projects" (Irwin, A, McArdle, O: 2012:20). It also agrees that measures to address lack of confidence and low self esteem need to be funded and that they "should constitute legitimate eligible costs for the Equality for Women Measure and all EWM projects and all participating organisations should be encouraged and facilitated to consider interventions and approaches for addressing the issues as a central part of their courses/programmes" (ibid: 2012:20).

The value of non accredited education and training in developing participant's self confidence and self esteem needs to be recognised in the context of addressing gender inequality, social inclusion and positive impacts for women experiencing multiple disadvantages. The evaluation report concludes that an analysis of the W.I.N.D.O.W results needs to be cognisant that women progress at different rates. While some progress swiftly from non-accredited education and training to accredited education and training, employment and enterprise, others progress at a slower pace. Different factors influence this progress including the participants starting point and the variance of disadvantage and marginalisation experienced. This report concludes that all progress is valid and thus needs to be recognised and supported into the future. For some women this is signified by the participant's continuation in the new environment of education and training whether it is accredited or non accredited. For other women that progress represents entry into third level education, securing a place on a CE scheme, starting an internship, returning to work after twenty years caring for children at home or setting up ones one enterprise.

The achievement for each individual is a success and one that needs to be fostered through ongoing support into non accredited and accredited education and training and support through the new experience in employment and enterprise.

The value of non accredited education and training is of value and often the first step for multiply marginalised women into education and training, employment and enterprise. The figures accessing non accredited education merit recognition in reporting mechanisms of states bodies such as Pobal and a facility to catalogue this progression should also be included in future reports. At present only the numbers accessing accredited education, employment and enterprise are documented. Also the other social and community impacts and benefits of projects such as W.I.N.D.O.W need to be recognised by the state. The impact on women's everyday lives including increased capacity and improved mental health also need to be valued by the state. This development work needs to be sustained over time to ensure that it impacts on multiply marginalised and disadvantaged women.

This report concludes that gender matters and that this gender specific intervention, EWM funded RWN W.I.N.D.O.W project made a positive impact on the lives of the women participants involved. To achieve

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<sup>2</sup> Involve: In Partnership with Travellers recognises the equality of the Traveller Community by providing programmes, initiatives and services that promote the participation and inclusion of the Traveller Community in Irish Society. Involve (Originally N.A.T.C) is the main provider of Youthwork Services for young Travellers throughout the country.

<sup>3</sup> Compiled by Ann Irwin and Oonagh McArdle (2012)

equality women have to be supported. The W.I.N.D.O.W project enabled women to engage in education, non accredited and accredited and supported their continued engagement in education and training, employment and enterprise. RWN's women centred approach facilitated the successful delivery of the EWM funded W.I.N.D.O.W project. It also supported two women into non traditional educational courses for women, software engineering (computers) and sports management.

## 5.2 Recommendations

- **Stable funding stream channelled through community based projects like RWN**

It is recommended that EWM funding for projects like W.I.N.D.O.W is sustained over time and that future EWM funding (labour activation) is channelled through community based organisations like RWN that have shown that they connect with multiply marginalised and disadvantaged women.

At present sporadic rounds of funding are hard to plan around. Participants respond to a familiar development worker and stability. It is recommended that the W.I.N.D.O.W project continues to be delivered in a safe, non judgemental welcoming space such as RWN, that the approach remains woman centred, holistic, caring and non judgemental.

This report also recommends that funding is provided for a full time W.I.N.D.O.W development worker in Roscommon.

- **Deliver appropriate supports (predevelopment, personal development, non-accredited and accredited training)**

It is recommended that future EWM funding continues to support the needs of women that started with personal development and confidence building courses under W.I.N.D.O.W and that appropriate supports are provided in order that the women are supported to progress at a realistic pace.

The rate of progression varies – the process can be slow and time consuming for women that have been on the margins for decades...sufficient funding needs to be provided for personal development and confidence building measures at different stages and levels and non accredited courses provided for participants that are not ready for accredited courses. Resources need to be invested in marginalised women many of whom are early school leavers and also experience other disadvantages.

- **Provide Counselling and other support services to participants**

The W.I.N.D.O.W project was supported by RWN support services such as counselling and community development supports. This report recommends that women are supported to participate in future EWM funded labour activation projects through counselling and predevelopment courses:

*“Entering and remaining in a project such as this, brings along its own difficulties, where women may have to face certain issues and fundamentally themselves for the first time ever. While this is happening, it is fundamental to the success of the project and to the well being of the women on the project that such supports as I have outlined are in place”. Counsellor/Psychotherapist.*

This report concludes with the poignant words of one of the W.I.N.D.O.W participants at the W.I.N.D.O.W celebration night held in November 2012:

“The work has just begun...they need our support”

***The work towards gender equality has just begun...continued support and funding for multiply marginalised and disadvantaged women through W.I.N.D.O.W and other similar EWM funded projects needs to be sustained.***





# W.I.N.D.O.W EVENTS 2010 - 2012



## References:

- Grogan, S. (2011) *Roscommon Women's Network - Case Studies Report*. Castlerea, Co. Roscommon: RWN.
- Irwin, A. & McArdle, O. (2012) *Addressing Gender Barriers to the Labour Market*. Dublin: Pobal.
- National Development Plan 2007-2013
- The Equality for Women Measure 2008-2013
- Equality for Women Measure 2000-2007
- National Women's Strategy 2007 – 2016

## Appendix 1 - W.I.N.D.O.W Registration Form

# The W.I.N.D.O.W. Project

*(Women Initiating New Development Opportunities for Women)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. No.: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PPSN \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

**Indicate group(s) that best describes you:**

Made Redundant

Partner made Redundant

Early school leaver

One-Parent Family

Traveller

Homeless

LGBT

Traveller

Asylum Seeker

Migrant Worker

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**Economic/Employment Status:**

**Indicate situation(s) that best describes you:**

Employed Full Time

Employed Part Time

Self-employed

Unemployed

Working in the Home

On a Training scheme\*

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\* Training scheme includes CE/Social Economy/Jobs Initiative & similar schemes

**Indicate duration of unemployment prior to commencing programme**

| < 6 months | 6-12 months | 12-24 months | > 2 years |
|------------|-------------|--------------|-----------|
|            |             |              |           |

**Do you feel you can enter/return to employment in the future?**

Circle Yes

No

**Comments:**

**What area would you like to work in?**

Clerical/ Admin

Information Technology

Finance

Beauty/Hairdressing

Homeopathy

Media/Photography

Childcare

Health Care

Community

Other please specify

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**Do you feel you require further education to pursue your career choice?**

Circle

Yes

No

**Are you available/willing to attend ?**

Full Time Education

Part-Time Education

Either

Not at all

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**Do you feel Work Experience will enhance your career progression?**

Circle

Yes

No

**Are you willing to take part in Voluntary work experience?**

Circle

Yes

No

**Work Experience to date?**

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**What is your Ideal Job?**

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**What Qualifications do you have?**

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Thank you for taking the time to register on the W.I.N.D.O.W. Project, this project is funded by the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs under the Equality for Women Measure.

I am happy for my details to be used for research. \_\_\_\_\_