

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

Framework III of the Programme for Prosperity & Fairness sets out three objectives which are being met directly through the RAPID Programme. These are:

- To develop a specific integrated policy focus, across the Social Inclusion Measures identified in the National Development Plan, directed at the social groups who are excluded, especially where cumulative disadvantage is pervasive.
- To tackle, in particular, the spatial concentration of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion within the 25 identified designated disadvantaged areas.
- To stem the social and economic costs of social exclusion by developing a range of integrated measures such that the physical, social and community infrastructure of designated communities is developed to allow them harness the social capital and capacity necessary for economic and community development.

In developing RAPID implementation programmes, two key types of service improvement are envisaged as being of prime importance:

- The improvement in integration and community-focus of existing services, in order to better meet service user need.
- The targeting of new and additional services and facilities into RAPID communities, to meet identified need.

Both of these types of service improvement are to take place in a manner which supports the fulfilment of RAPID's principle of community participation and ownership

PRINCIPLES WHICH UNDERPIN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RAPID

- **Community participation and local ownership**

RAPID is to operate in an inclusive and open manner, with RAPID communities participating in every element of the process. RAPID structures have been designed to allow appropriate community participation. These structures should be operated in a way which makes this participation a reality. The programme's desire to engage with and include local communities needs to be demonstrated through practical commitments in each area to open and accessible working, to developing strong communications procedures and in practical actions to minimise barriers to residents becoming involved in the process.

- **Promotion of Strategic Planning**

RAPID will provide a practical mechanism to allow agencies and communities work together to develop a thorough understanding of communities needs and ambitions and to develop integrated solutions to meet these needs. It will act as a support to individual agencies in developing strategic responses to RAPID area's needs. It will also provide the vehicle through which inter-agency and agency/community strategic planning can take place to develop a strategic area plan for service improvement to RAPID areas. It will provide a focus for input into CDB strategic planning for cities/counties.

- **Co-ordination of provision of State Services**

Within each RAPID area, effort is to be focused on examining current state service provision in order to define methods by which this provision can be improved. Experience has shown that a key component of service improvement within disadvantages communities comes through planning and delivering services in a manner which provides for their co-ordination across agency boundaries. Many residents of RAPID areas are users of a whole range of services. The needs of service users must to be recognised in the delivery of these services. Traditional service boundaries, demarcations and delivery mechanisms need to be re-thought in order to offer residents as effective and seamless a service as possible.

- **Targeting of “additional” services, investment and facilities**

The PPF has committed the Government to the front loading of NDP resources in order to target the needs of RAPID communities. This frontloading will allow the prioritisation of the needs of RAPID areas and their residents. The NDP provides funding for a wide range of Social Inclusion activities. In many RAPID areas, the community needs identified will be directly met through new services, investment and facilities provided through this route.

- **Building on existing structures**

RAPID is not being developed within a society in which no other structures or programmes operate. Important local structures (Local Area Partnerships, City/County Development Boards/ Drugs Task Forces) are already in operation on the ground within RAPID areas. RAPID intends to build on the gains made and the structures developed by these groups in order to more efficiently deliver on its specific remit to the community. To that end, RAPID is relying heavily on the specialist knowledge of some local groupings (for example Partnership Company's expertise in community participation) and on the structures developed by others (using, for example, the CDB's Social Inclusion Working Group to adopt the remit of the RAPID City/County monitoring Team).

- **Complementing existing initiatives**

RAPID will work, within each area, to quickly define the existing priorities and plans of existing initiatives. RAPID Area Plans will be developed in a manner which ensures synergy and complementarity with these existing plans and initiatives. RAPID will use its best endeavours to ensure that, in the same way as it is expecting state agency services to be fully co-ordinated, all of its own activities are properly co-ordinated with other programmes operating within its area. Work practices will also need to be co-ordinated, with, for example, the necessity to ensure that community input into RAPID is integrated with any other demands on community time and resources within the area.

- **Flexibility**

RAPID is to be responsive to local needs, existing structures, community priorities and to the needs of its various stakeholders. We must use our best endeavours to ensure that no rigidity in the programme results in us producing a service which is below the maximum we could achieve.