Chapter 8

Case Study 3:
South Kerry Development Partnership

Introduction

The South Kerry Development Partnership was originally constituted as CRESP, (Community Response for Economic and Social Progress) the South-West Kerry Partnership. The latter organisation was established in 1991 to administer the government ABR initiative and the EU Leader I programme in the Iveragh peninsula of County Kerry. Since then, the Partnership has undergone considerable expansion, both in terms of the number of programmes administered, and in terms of the population and area served. This increase in scale has also entailed some restructuring and refocusing of the Partnership as it entered a new phase of operation between 1995 and 1999. This case study, which concentrates on the Partnership during its initial phase of operation, highlights the particular challenges faced by partnerships in remote rural areas, and illustrates the difficulty of focusing on social exclusion in an area which is itself disadvantaged.

Description of the South Kerry Development Partnership

Context and Origins

The area administered by the South Kerry Partnership (Figure 8.1) currently covers some 2,444 square kilometres and contained a population in 1991 of 41,305 persons. The area includes the Iveragh
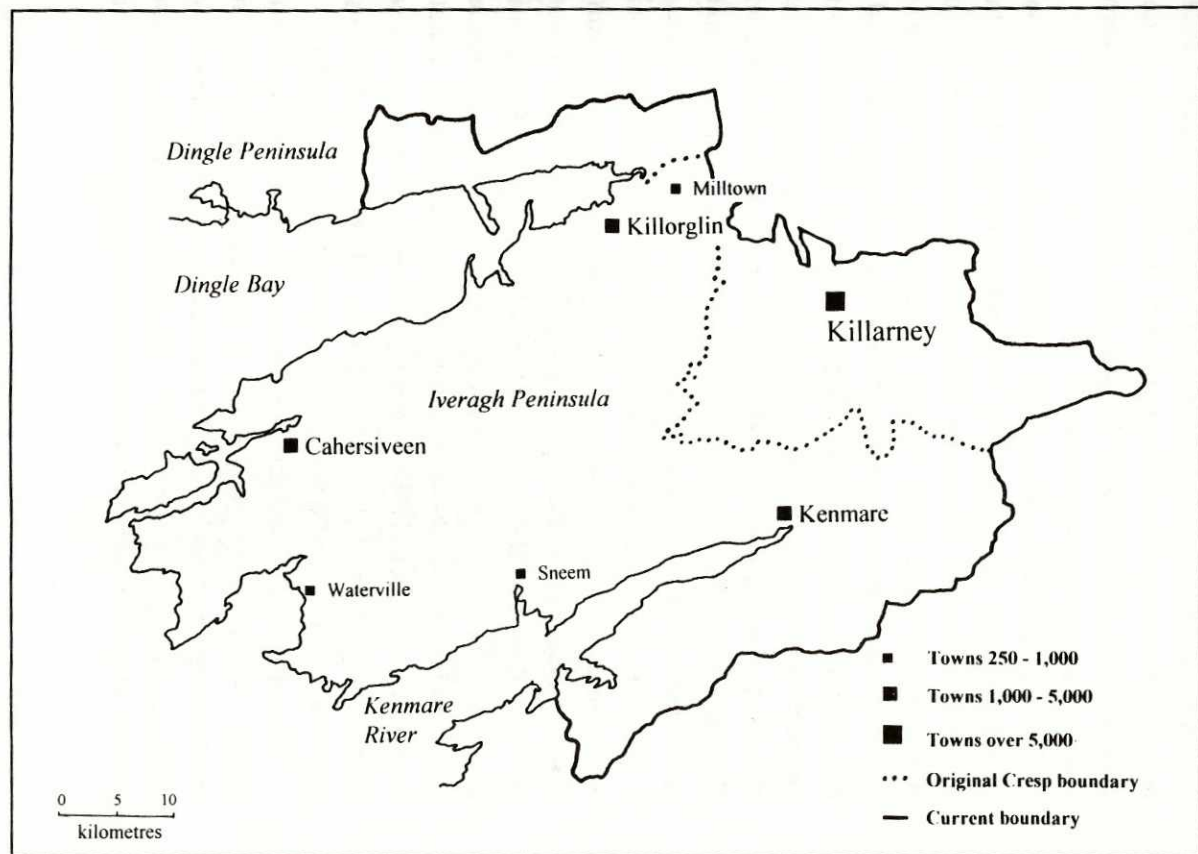
Gaeltacht,[1] which contained a 1991 population of 2,050, but for the purpose of Leader the Gaeltacht part of the region (approximately 300 square kilometres) is administered by Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta, the designated Gaeltacht Leader group. The population density of 16.9 persons per square kilometre is just 65 per cent of the average population density for County Kerry as a whole and 33 per cent of the national figure, reflecting the fact that much of the land is sparsely populated hill and mountain terrain.

Agriculture and tourism constitute the economic base. Agriculture is the single most important industry in terms of employment, accounting for almost one quarter of the labour force in 1991, but it is characterised by a high level of under-employment, with many small unproductive farms which are incapable of generating adequate family incomes. The result has been an on-going decline in the farming population with an estimated 100 farmers per annum leaving agriculture. Among those who remain in farming there is a high degree of dependence on off-farm part-time employment and/or social welfare payments. The tourism industry too suffers from structural problems. It is highly seasonal, based on an eight weeks mid-summer peak, and both employment and revenue generated are very unevenly spread geographically, with a particular concentration in Killarney, and, to a lesser extent, Kenmare.

The lack of full-time jobs outside agriculture has resulted in a long tradition of out-migration from the area, particularly of the younger and more highly educated sectors of the population. As a result, the age structure of the population is weighted towards the older age groups, with those aged 65 years and over accounting for 15.5 per cent of the area's population as compared to 11.4 per cent nationally. In fact only 7 out of 66 district electoral divisions (census districts) recorded percentages of older persons below the national average. The immediate demographic implication of the

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[1] The Gaeltacht is the officially designated area in which Irish (Gaeilge) is the dominant everyday language.

FIGURE 8.1: SOUTH KERRY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP ADMINISTRATIVE AREA

Dingle Peninsula

■ Milltown

■ **Killorglin**

Dingle Bay

■ **Killarney**

Iveragh Peninsula

■ Cahersiveen

■ Kenmare

■ Waterville

■ Sneem

Kenmare River

■	Towns 250 - 1,000
■	Towns 1,000 - 5,000
■	Towns over 5,000
···	Original Cresp boundary
—	Current boundary

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0    5    10
kilometres
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older age structure is that natural decrease prevails over much of the area,[2] and this combined with out-migration resulted in a population decline of 1.6 per cent between 1986 and 1991. Decline was widespread throughout the area, with over 70 per cent of census districts experiencing population loss. The rate of decline across these districts was 6.3 per cent, and 9 districts recorded losses in excess of 10 per cent.
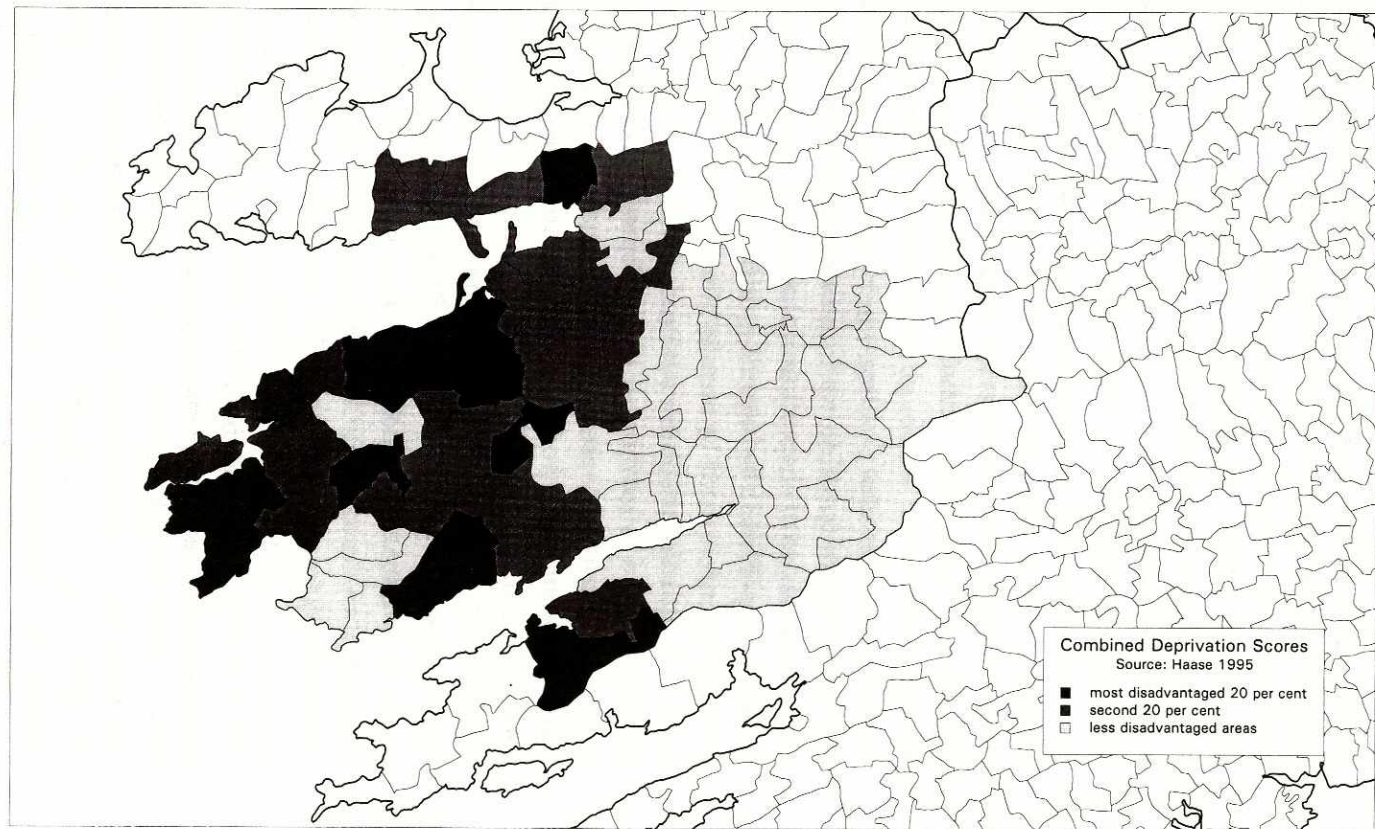
Unemployment is not a major problem in the area as a whole, partly because of the role of out-migration in relieving labour market pressures. Hence, in 1991, both the male rate of unemployment (16.1 per cent) and the female rate (12.9 per cent) were below the corresponding national averages (18.4 per cent and 14.1 per cent respectively). Much higher levels of unemployment are encountered locally, but the districts affected tend to be among the least populous, so that their problems remain hidden within the aggregate data. This trend carries over into the pattern exhibited by the more general concept of relative deprivation, with a tendency for the highest levels of deprivation to be associated with the more remote and sparsely populated districts, mainly in the western part of the area (Figure 8.2).[3] Thus, while almost 23 per cent of census districts fall into the most disadvantaged quintile in national terms (i.e. those with decile scores of 9 or 10), these districts contain under 20 per cent of the area's population. What this suggests is that deprivation in the south Kerry area is, in a sense, more a problem of areas than of people. This, in turn, has implications for the nature of developmental activity in the locality.

The urban infrastructure of the area is weak. Other than Killarney, which has a population of just under 10,000 and is the second largest town in the county, there were only three centres with a population of over 1,000 — Kenmare, Killorglin and Cahersiveen. Population decline threatens the viability of a wide range

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[2] In 1990 the birth rate was estimated at 11.8 per 1000 population compared to a death rate of 13.5 per 1000.

[3] See footnote 2 in the PAUL Partnership Limerick case study for an explanation of the measure of relative deprivation.

FIGURE 8.2: OVERALL DEPRIVATION SCORES, SOUTH KERRY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP
ADMINISTRATIVE AREA

Combined Deprivation Scores
Source: Haase 1995

■ most disadvantaged 20 per cent
■ second 20 per cent
☐ less disadvantaged areas

of both private and public services in these centres, especially as the latter are increasingly required to operate on the basis of a commercial mandate. As a result, access to essential services, such as basic health care, is severely restricted for those living in the western part of the peninsula. The problems of trying to sustain commercial services in the area are compounded by the extremely poor state of the local road network. This has the effect of imposing high travel costs, thereby increasing the delivered prices of goods and services, and further dampening demand in the rural hinterlands of service centres. Car ownership is somewhat below the national average, and those districts which show the highest levels of households without a car tend also to be located in the most remote part of the area. Even in car-owning families, isolation is a problem when the main breadwinner uses the family car to travel to work, leaving spouses (usually women) without access to transportation throughout the day. A vestigial public transportation service does little to overcome the problem of isolation experienced by remote households.

Faced with the problems outlined above, the south Kerry area has generated a large number of developmental organisations and initiatives. Many of these have overlapped and intertwined, especially in terms of the personnel involved, but it is possible to discern two distinct traditions which eventually coalesced in the establishment of CRESP. With both traditions there is a clear line of progression over time from small scale community based activity to larger scale partnership based activity. The first of these antecedents — essentially a community development tradition — can be dated from the 1940s and the establishment in south Kerry of a number of parish councils affiliated to Muintir na Tíre (cf. national overview). Much of the activity of these councils was focused on the improvement of local infrastructure. In the 1970s this tradition found expression on a larger scale with the establishment of the South-West Kerry Development Organisation (SWKDO) which campaigned on infrastructural issues and against the rationalisation and closure of local public services throughout the region. In the early 1980s SWKDO put together

an integrated development plan for the area, based on the then novel idea of partnership between state agencies and local communities. Partly through the lobbying of SWKDO, south-west Kerry was included in the Pilot Programme for Integrated Rural Development administered by the Department of Agriculture and Food between 1988 and 1990 (cf. national overview). In the two years when the programme ran, a wide range of projects was undertaken, many of them involving the development or upgrading of community social and cultural resources.

The second tradition in local development initiatives is a more business and enterprise focused approach. This is represented for example by the co-operative movement which was strong in the Gaeltacht area, and by the establishment in the 1980s of a number of resource development groups (cf. national overview). In 1990, two umbrella organisations representing between them 15 such local development groups were formed: Integrated Resource Development South-West Kerry Limited (IRDSWK), and Killorglin and District Resource Development Group. Both organisations employed a full-time manager, raising the necessary funding locally with, in the case of IRDSWK, additional support coming through the Department of Social Welfare-funded Community Development Programme. In late 1990 the latter organisation became actively involved in the preparation of a bid for Leader funding, but it was recognised that the small population base served by the organisation (17,600) would militate against a successful application. As a result, the Federation of South Kerry Communities was formed early in 1991 as an alliance between IRDSWK and Killorglin and District Resource Development Group for the purpose of facilitating a south Kerry Leader submission. In addition to the full-time management of the two constituent bodies, the Federation drew on the expertise of the Kerry County Development Team and the co-ordinator of the local IRD core group in preparing its Leader submission. Following the designation of south Kerry under the pilot ABR programme in May 1991, the Federation was renamed as CRESP and restructured as a local partnership between community, statutory and

social partner interests. Meanwhile, the Partnership had assumed responsibility for the south Kerry Leader application and was confirmed as a Leader group in November 1991.

Since its establishment the Partnership has taken on a number of new programmes in areas related to its role as a local development organisation. This programme expansion has entailed designation as a Rural *Carrefour* or Centre for European Information (1994–), administration of a model project within the EU Iris II network which promotes and supports vocational training for women (1994–) , and delivery of the EU Youthstart programme (1995–97) which provides vocational training for early school leavers. In 1995 the Partnership entered a new phase in its development when it was designated under the Irish Government's Local Development Programme (sub-programme 2). This programme, which is part of the EU Community Support Framework 1994–99, represents an extension and elaboration of the ABR initiative. Also, in 1995, the Partnership was confirmed as a Leader II group.

The number of community groups affiliated to the Partnership increased from 15 to 21 in 1993 and to 29 in 1995, paralleling the expansion of its functional remit. The latter expansion was as a result of a central government decision in February 1994, under which the area administered by the Partnership was extended northwards to include part of the Dingle peninsula, and eastwards to include the area around Killarney (see Figure 8.1). To accommodate this expansion the company was restructured in 1995 and renamed the South Kerry Development Partnership.

Structure and Operation

The South Kerry Development Partnership is legally constituted as a company limited by guarantee and without share capital. Following the standard model for partnership companies established under the ABR, the board of the company has a tri-partite structure consisting of representatives of community organisations, social partners and statutory organisations (Table 8.1). The community directors are elected to the board by affiliated commu-

nity organisations which are grouped into four area-based constituencies, with each constituency nominating either two or three directors. The social partner and statutory sector directors are nominated by designated partner organisations which have one or two representatives each. Initially each of the three sectors had six representatives in total, but following the area extension of 1995 the community representation was increased to 10. Three co-opted directors were also added to the Board at this time, two representing state agencies and one a private sector company (see Table 8.1 for profile of organisations).

TABLE 8.1: PARTNER AGENCIES IN THE SOUTH KERRY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

	Community	*Social*	*Statutory*
Local	Cahirciveen community groups; Kenmare community groups; Killarney community groups; Mid-Kerry community groups		Kerry County Council; Kerry County Vocational Education Committee
Regional		Kerry Group plc*	Udarás na Gaeltachta*
National		Irish Congress of Trade Unions; Irish Business and Employers Confederation; Irish Farmers Association; Macra na Feirme	Bord Fáilte; Forbairt; FÁS; Teagasc; Bord Iascaigh Mhara*

* Denotes co-opted organisation

The day-to-day work of the Partnership is undertaken by the general manager and staff. The professional staff consists of an assistant manager, a global grant administrator, a Leader programme manager and assistant manager, and a number of officers who for the most part are sectorally deployed with responsibilities in

areas such as horticulture, mariculture and tourism (Table 8.2). Staff are supported through programme funding and through secondment from partner organisations. The staffing level as of May 1995 (including the general manager but excluding clerical staff) stood at sixteen, fourteen of whom were full-time. The two part-time staff members, and two of the full-time staff were secondees.

TABLE 8.2: STAFF STRUCTURE OF THE SOUTH KERRY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

	General Manager	
Leader Administrator	Assistant Manager	Global Grant Administrator
	Project Staff	
	Clerical Staff	

Staff and directors come together in a working relationship through the Partnership's system of sub-committees. Since 1993 a two-tier committee system has been in existence (Table 8.3). First tier committees have been established for each of the main operational areas of the Partnership, namely: employment services, education and training, and community services. In addition, there is a Leader administration committee and a "ways and means" committee that deals with funding and operational matters. The primary function of first tier committees is to consider matters of policy and the development of new projects, and to report to the board on same. Membership is drawn mainly from the board but there is some staff input also. Second tier or management committees have been established for most of the areas to which a sectoral officer has been appointed. These committees are responsible for the agreement, implementation and financial control of the work plans of the officers. In addition to the sectoral officer concerned they include one or more board members. Both types of committees include individuals from organisations that are not represented at Board level. In this way the committees are

used to increase the expertise available to the Partnership and to extend involvement in the work of the Partnership.

TABLE 8.3: MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF THE SOUTH KERRY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Board of Management				
First-tier Operational Committees:				
Ways and Means	Employment Services	Education and Training	Community Services	Leader
Second-tier Sectoral Committees:				
Mariculture	Horticulture	Tourism	Culture	Enterprise Education

Objectives and Activities

CRESP had a dual mandate from the outset as a Leader group and an ABR partnership company. While the ABR initiative placed the focus on the problem of long-term unemployment, Leader gave to the company a broader concern for rural development. The Partnership has attempted to integrate these twin concerns by analysing the problem of long-term unemployment as arising primarily from the underdevelopment of the local economy. The chairman's inaugural statement of June 1991 (before the Leader I programme) set out seven objectives for the company, the first of which was "to stimulate the level of economic activity in South Kerry". This remains the Partnership's primary objective, and it views itself as essentially an integrator of initiatives geared towards the goal of rural development. The Partnership recognises that sustainable local development requires a multi-sectoral, multi-dimensional approach and that many of the core resources that are required have to come from state or EU programmes. However, to maximise the synergy and hence the impact of these programmes, a high degree of complementarity is required and the Partnership aims to provide this, not just

through the integration of measures at the implementation stage but also by influencing programme design.

The activities of the Partnership have been wide ranging, reflecting again the nature and scope of the programmes that have been implemented. Leader I was essentially a grant aid mechanism whereby individuals and groups in the locality could be financially assisted with eligible projects that would contribute to local development. Activities could be assisted up to a limit of 50 per cent of total investment under six headings. These, and examples of projects funded under each heading, are as follows:

- **Technical support for rural development.** Feasibility studies on the establishment of a health spa in Sneem and of a sports and leisure centre in Cahersiveen; employment of a consultant to develop a waste management programme for a pig co-operative at Kilgarvan.

- **Vocational training and assistance for recruitment.** Provision of tour guide training programme for 24 participants. Successful participants were awarded Bord Fáilte certification.

- **Rural tourism.** Grants for the establishment and upgrading of bed and breakfast accommodation, self-catering accommodation, restaurants and other tourist facilities.

- **Assistance to small firms, crafts and local services.** Conversion of old vocational school in Killorglin into an enterprise centre for the support of start-up businesses; assistance to a blade and knife manufacturing firm to develop and market a new product range and to meet quality standards.

- **Development and marketing of farm, fishery and forest products.** Employment of mariculture development officer to work with local fishermen's co-operatives to develop mariculture potential of the area; assistance to a local co-operative for the development of bogs and of turf harvesting equipment.

- **Other measures.** Grants towards the refurbishment of passenger boats for tourist day trips; hosting of international seminar on rural development.

Unlike Leader, the ABR programme was not designed as a grant aid mechanism. Instead, the emphasis was on the co-ordination, integration and targeting of activities undertaken by existing agencies. However the introduction of a global grant for local development in 1992 allowed the Partnership to directly fund activities related to its ABR strategy.[4] The global grant was allocated to four main themes: education and training; community capacity building; minor infrastructural works; and cultural development, with the greatest shares of funding going to projects in the first two categories. The following are some examples of projects supported through the global grant:

- **Community resource centre assistance programme.** Grants were provided for the development of office facilities at the community centres in Killorglin, Cahersiveen, Waterville and Kenmare which form the main hubs and service points in the Partnership's network.

- **Community leadership training programme.** Eight part-time community animators were trained and employed for twenty weeks to work with the affiliated community groups in order to facilitate the preparation of resource audits and the production of local development strategies within the overall planning framework of the Partnership.

- **Schools enterprise programme.** A teacher was employed to run an extra-curricular course in enterprise education in local second level schools. Through the mechanism of schools-based mini-companies, students acquired practical skills in product design, market research, marketing and production.

- **Cultural development programme.** A cultural development officer was employed to support existing cultural activity and to initiate new events, in particular those involving the performing arts, throughout the area. In addition to preparing

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[4] The global grant for local development was established by the European Commission in 1992 to support the development of indigenous potential at local level. The grant was allocated to the Partnerships established under the ABR and to local community organisations.

a comprehensive audit of cultural resources, the officer facilitates training in the arts.

Resources and Expenditure

The most significant source of funding for the Partnership during the first phase of its operation, 1991-94, was the Leader I Programme, under which a total of £1.9 million of EU and government assistance was received, including funding for set-up and administration costs. Altogether some £2.3 million of matching private funding was raised locally, bringing total expenditure under the programme to £4.2 million. Leader had a strong business and enterprise orientation: over half of all grant assistance went to rural tourism projects, and a further one-third of project funding was roughly equally divided between measures to support the development of local produce and support for small firms (Table 8.4). Within the rural tourism category the most common type of project funded was the development of tourist accommodation by private individuals. The comparatively low level of funding for education and training measures and for community projects was due mainly to difficulty in raising the required 50 per cent matching funding in the case of such projects, a problem which was compounded by the short time span — effectively two years — over which monies had to be allocated by the Partnership.[5]

Core funding for administration costs in relation to the ABR programme was provided by the Department of the Taoiseach. The global grant for local development provided £350,000, and this was followed by two tranches of interim exchequer funding amounting to £189,000 to April 1995. The latter resourcing was designed to allow the Partnership to continue its activities until the local development programme came on stream. The projects supported by the interim global grant funding tended to be social

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[5] In the course of the programme's implementation the matching expenditure requirement was reduced to 25 per cent, which in the case of community projects could include voluntary labour.

in nature, complementing the more business and enterprise focused Leader activities.

TABLE 8.4: DISTRIBUTION OF LEADER GRANT AID BY SOUTH KERRY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP TO DECEMBER 1994

Category	Number of Projects	Total Assistance (£)	Per cent of Total	Average per Project (£)
Technical Support	47	72,169	4.30%	1,535.51
Vocational Training	30	76,172	4.54%	2,539.07
Rural Tourism	61	891,389	53.16%	14,612.93
SMEs	32	277,587	16.55%	8,674.59
Primary Produce	18	284,077	16.94%	15,782.06
Other Measures	25	75,518	4.50%	3,020.72
Total	213	1,676,912	100.00%	7,872.83

Source: CRESP Progress Report 1994

Currently, the main external funding instruments available to the Partnership are the local development programme, and the Leader II programme. Under the Local Development Programme, the Partnership has been allocated £2.6 million for the period 1995-99, while Leader II has committed £1.67 million. The resources provided by the other programmes are more modest. The Youthstart programme has a budget of £250,000, while the Rural *Carrefour* initiative provides part of the salary of the Partnership's European Information Officer. Iris II does not provide finance for the Partnership's training programme for women, aside from assistance with publicity, funding for attendance of trainers at a summer school, and assistance for international exchanges.

After a period of some uncertainty following the expiry of the Leader I programme, the Partnership's financial resource base has now been secured until the end of the decade. It is also evident that the resource base has undergone some restructuring,

with a substantial reduction in per capita funding from Leader II, and hence a decline in the relative importance of this source. Partly because of the relatively high level of resourcing which it provided, Leader I had a major influence on the priorities and work programme of the Partnership during its first phase of operation. It seems likely that, with the restructuring of the funding base, there may now be some refocusing of activities towards more socially-based projects.

Equal Opportunities

The gender composition of the board has been imbalanced from the outset, with just three women directors out of 18 initially, and two out of 25 currently. Both of the current women directors represent organisations in the social partners sector. The prevailing view in the Partnership is that the gender imbalance, while undesirable, will be difficult to rectify in the short term since it is not directly within the control of the Partnership itself. The tendency of the state agencies to nominate representatives on an *ex-officio* basis, and at as senior a level as possible, is part of the difficulty here because of the under-representation of women at senior management levels in these organisations. The absence of any women from the community sector is more surprising, as this is the sector which tends to provide most women directors across partnership companies in general. Part of the explanation may lie in the fact that the South Kerry Partnership grew out of a tradition of local *economic* development, a sphere of voluntary activity which has traditionally been male dominated. Interestingly, one of the women directors felt that her nomination to the Board, at the time of inception of the ABR programme, derived from a perception within her nominating organisation that the social focus of the latter programme placed it within the domain of women's issues. In addition to this factor, a number of directors felt that the lack of female community representatives reflected the huge commitment required of community directors in general, and the fact that women found it more difficult to make this commitment

largely because of the burden of home duties such as child-care and elder-care which is disproportionately borne by them.

The under-representation of women at board level is compensated for, to some extent, by their greater representation among the staff, which is predominantly female both at managerial and officer level. As of May 1995, 11 of the 16 staff were women. More significantly, the activities of the Partnership have been strongly geared towards meeting the needs of rural women, especially in areas such as education and personal development, and most of the beneficiaries of the Partnership have been women. This is true even of the Leader programme, where women constituted the majority of project promoters. The development of women's groups through capacity building and training provision has been one of the successes of the Partnership, and the hope is that, in the longer term, a better gender balance at board level will ensue from the efforts to affiliate a wider range of organisations, including women's groups, to the Partnership (see below).

There is no member of the Travelling community on either the Board or the staff, and none of the activities of the Partnership during its initial phase of operation were specifically geared towards meeting the needs of this group. This was a reflection of the fact that Travellers were not prevalent in the local area. However, with the area extension in 1995 and the incorporation of Killarney, this is no longer true, and there is now a recognition among the directors that greater consideration will have to be given by the Partnership to Travellers' issues. There is an active Travellers support group in Killarney, with whom one of the community directors is closely involved, while another director serves on the Board of the Kerry Travellers Development Group based in Tralee.

The Partnership in Action

Representation and Power

Even though CRESP evolved from pre-existing local organisations, there was nevertheless a strong degree of central government input into the construction of the Partnership. In particular,

the Department of the Taoiseach, which initially administered the ABR programme, decided on the statutory and social partner organisations to be represented at Board level. Within the Partnership there is a feeling that, while the balance of the Board as between the three sectors is about right, the selection of statutory organisations in particular could have been better attuned to the needs of the area. For example, there was initially no place allocated to Bord Iascaigh Mhara (the state agency with responsibility for the fishing industry), despite the considerable developmental and job creation potential of the fishing industry in the area. This omission had to be rectified by the Partnership itself through the mechanism of co-option.

Representatives were nominated by the state agencies and social partners to the Partnership board largely on the basis of the individual's function within the organisation and of a central recommendation that representation should be at the most senior level possible within the region/locality. However the application of this principle has meant that few of the statutory sector representatives reside within the Partnership's area, a fact which is considered by some to have been detrimental to the Partnership's efforts to engage this sector fully. Because of the large area served by the Partnership, the expansion of this area over time, and the fact that levels of community development vary considerably throughout the area, community representation has been a difficult and sensitive issue for the Partnership. Since the first agm in 1993, the community directors have been elected by the affiliated community groups. For electoral purposes these are grouped into geographically defined constituencies, in which each organisation has one vote. All the affiliated organisations are locally-based, and most of them have an enterprise/economic development focus rather than a social focus. However, the area expansion has meant that a wider and more complex range of social problems is now encountered, and there has been a growing awareness of the need to involve issue-based voluntary organisations and self-help groups within the Partnership. As a result, the basis of community representation is currently being reviewed, and the possibil-

ity of developing a community forum for this purpose, consisting of a wide range of both area- and issue-based groups, is being examined. The development of some such structure(s) would also facilitate reporting back by community representatives which at present is hampered by the lack of coherent structures within the constituencies.

Another issue in relation to community representation has been the allocation of seats at board level to different sub-areas, and in particular the question of whether community representation should be on the basis of sub-area populations or not. At present, community representation is not on a per capita basis, and the adoption of such a system would entail a relative increase in the number of seats allocated to the eastern part of the area. However such a change would be difficult to implement for a number of reasons. First there is the historical legacy, and the fact that the Partnership had its origins in the western part of the area. This in turn arose out of the high level of community activity in that sub-area, which continues to bestow on it an entitlement to strong representation on the grounds of capacity. Second there is the argument that problems such as peripherality and inadequate infrastructure are more severe in the western area. Finally, it has been argued that the greater number of statutory and social partner directors based in the eastern part of the area goes some way to rebalancing any perceived imbalance on the community side. In part it was the difficulties surrounding this issue of area representation which led to the decision to increase the number of community directors significantly at the time of expansion, rather than attempting to reallocate the existing seats. However, in the opinion of some, this has now created an unwieldy board.

No one dominant partner organisation can be readily identified, in part because the range of activities undertaken has been so wide that partner organisations have tended to become involved mainly in relation to areas that impinge on their own interests/remit. However the community sector as a whole played a very strong role in the first years of the Partnership's operation. This was due in part to the high calibre of the community repre-

sentatives who had strong backgrounds in community activism, and the fact that the impetus which brought both Leader and the ABR programme to the area came initially from the community sector. In part too, it was due to the fact that the Leader programme, because of its larger budget, tended to dominate other Partnership activities. This was significant in two ways. First it meant that the state agencies were not called upon to perform as central a role as they might have been if the ABR programme — with its greater emphasis on directing the activities of the state sector — had occupied a more prominent place on the agenda. Second, because Leader introduced an unprecedented element into local development activity — the ability of a locally-based group to determine the allocation of significant project funding — it created a very high degree of interest among the community at large, and expectations on the part of the community of their directors. Significantly all of the community representatives were on the Leader committee which was responsible for agreeing funding for projects.[6]

Strategy and Decision-making

From the outset, there has been a strong degree of agreement among the partner representatives that the key issue for the communities of south Kerry is that of on-going population decline, fuelled by the out-migration of the younger age groups. This out-migration is a result of a lack of local employment opportunities arising from the weak economic base of the area. The solution therefore is seen as the economic development of the area, and, as noted above, this has been the primary aim of the Partnership since its inception. The Partnership's analysis of the problem of unemployment similarly emphasises demand deficiencies in the local labour market, rather than supply-side factors such as lack of education or skills. This analysis underpins the Partnership's

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[6] Financial assistance up to a level of £10,000 could be approved by the Leader committee. All expenditure above this level had to be approved by the board.

basic strategy as an integrator of initiatives, in that supply-side measures such as education and training are seen as necessary but insufficient on their own to solve the area's unemployment problem. Training, for jobs that do not exist locally, is only likely to lead to further out-migration, thereby compounding the social and economic problems caused by depopulation. Instead the need is for complementary enterprise and training measures which the Partnership seeks to delivery through its various local development funding. This also explains the Partnership's strong commitment to enterprise education.

This analysis is widely subscribed to among the directors, including the community representatives. The result has been a high level of agreement about the aims and activities of the Partnership, and no significant inter-sectoral divisions. Where tensions have arisen within the Partnership these have tended to be on an intra-sectoral basis. Within the statutory sector for example there have been some tensions arising out of the "territoriality" of particular agencies with regard to their functional remits. Among the community representatives also there was a degree of mutual distrust at the outset, in particular between those from different sub-areas. This was due in large part to the size of the area covered by the Partnership and the diverse backgrounds and level of development of the various community organisations affiliated to the Partnership. Also significant in this respect was the fact that, as noted earlier, working together at inter-community level in the way required by Leader, i.e. to decide on the distribution of significant project finance, was an entirely new experience for community representatives.

However, while such tensions may have been evident at the outset, a high degree of consensus has since been established at board level both between and within the various sectors. This consensus has been built up over time, and the role of the current chairman (elected from amongst the directors in 1993) is widely regarded as having been vital in this respect. The result is that most board decisions are now made without the need for a vote. Decision-making in general is described as relatively informal.

The general manager and staff play a crucial role in the Partnership because of their function in planning, developing new ideas and implementing the decisions of the board. The preparation of plans is undertaken by the staff in the first instance and by the general manager in particular, with all plans subject to formal ratification by the board. In order to facilitate the directors to make an input in this area, a series of policy and planning days has been organised on an on-going basis. However, the amount of business that can be transacted at board meetings is limited by a number of factors. Most importantly perhaps, the frequency and duration of board meetings is restricted by the fact that directors are widely dispersed not just within the region but also beyond it, and that travel within the area itself is difficult.[7] This problem is exacerbated by the large size of the board, which, following the restructuring of 1995, considerably exceeds the norm for partnership companies. As a result, a lot of work has to be done through the sub-committee system, and much of this falls to the staff. The management committees provide staff officers with an opportunity to work with the relevant sectoral partner representatives, and to develop proposals that are likely to gain the approval of the board. Decisions in relation to the implementation details of activities are usually left to the general manager who enjoys a high level of delegated decision-making power.

Resources and Methods

The Partnership has engaged intensively in detailed local research and planning as the basis of its various activities. All research has been undertaken in-house, mainly by the general manager, and this represents one of the major skills assets of the Partnership. Much of the formal planning has been programme related: Leader required the preparation of a business plan and the global grant was allocated on the basis of an area action plan submitted by the Partnership. However, in striving to fulfill its

[7] The board has scheduled meetings of two hours duration approximately every 5 to 6 weeks on average.

role as an integrator of initiatives the Partnership has also engaged in on-going strategic planning. This involves the identification of complementarities between programmes so that gaps in provision under one initiative can be met by resources provided by other programmes. To date there has been less consideration given to the evaluation of programmes or initiatives, partly because the rather compressed timescale for programme implementation allowed little opportunity for this. However the need for an officer with responsibility for evaluation is now acknowledged by the Partnership.

The community sector is acknowledged as having made a major contribution to the Partnership, mainly in the form of expert knowledge of the area and its needs. Given that most of the state sector representatives are based outside of the Partnership's area this input is obviously vital. In the implementation of the Leader programme, the community representatives also played an animation role in informing potential applicants about the programme and its regulations, and in encouraging the development of proposals by project promoters. The Partnership estimates that altogether the time input by the community directors in servicing the Leader committee (which met on average once per fortnight) exceeded 1,000 person hours, and that a similar amount of time was expended promoting and supporting the initiative at community level. Initially there was a tendency for the community directors to lobby on behalf of individual promoters, especially those from their own areas, but a more unified and corporate approach developed over time as inter-community fears and suspicions were allayed.

The main resources contributed to the Partnership by the state agency and social partner representatives are sectoral expertise and seconded staff. The expertise of the state agencies in particular was important to the Partnership in the vetting of Leader proposals, and this was also one of the areas where the presence of directors from different agencies on the board was of most benefit to the Partnership. One of the key roles played by statutory body representatives was in filtering out applications for Leader fund-

ing that could be supported by existing grant mechanisms (e.g. Department of Agriculture grants in the area of agri-tourism), thereby helping to ensure the additionality of the projects that were supported by Leader.

Apart from the input of their representatives on the board, the most significant resource contribution by statutory and social partner organisations has been made by way of staff secondments. Seconded staff have been provided in the areas of agricultural research and development, education and training, and services to the unemployed. In addition to the financial resource transfer involved, these secondments provide the Partnership with a level of sectoral expertise and agency knowledge that would be difficult to obtain through other recruitment mechanisms such as direct contract employment. However, there have also been a number of drawbacks associated with the use of secondment as a staffing mechanism. First, and in general, staff cohesion and morale within the Partnership have not been served by the fact that salary and conditions of employment for secondees are determined by their parent organisations and, therefore, vary considerably. Second, the implementation of secondments in some cases has reduced the net benefit to the Partnership, such as when the secondee has remained based in the office of the parent organisation. In one case all office support and travel expenses for the secondee — which because of the nature of the work involved were considerable — were paid for by the Partnership. The specific work programme undertaken was central to the concerns of the parent agency, and in the view of several directors would have been undertaken by it anyway. On completion of the project in question the secondee was withdrawn by the agency, leaving these directors with the impression that the agency had gained more from the secondment than the Partnership.

Partly because of experiences such as the above, there is a fairly widespread feeling that the Partnership has not secured sufficient funding from the state agencies operating in the area. However, it can be argued that this was never the role expected of the agencies under the ABR programme: the more significant

point is that the model of partnership operation envisaged under that programme has not been followed. This model entails the Partnership operating in a brokerage role whereby it seeks mainly to influence and redirect the delivery of services by statutory organisations and other service providers without itself becoming directly involved either in the funding or delivery of services. The Partnership has not adopted such a role but instead has tended to pursue both direct delivery and "agency" working methods. The latter entails the Partnership identifying particular service needs and providing the funding for third party agencies to deliver those services. This method of working is most evident in relation to the education and training activities of the Partnership, where typically the Partnership has provided funding through for example the ADM global grant mechanism for organisations such as the VEC and FÁS to deliver courses. The attraction of this approach for the Partnership was that it allowed it to accomplish a lot in a short time and thereby establish a profile in the area. There is also a strong view within the Partnership that the brokerage role envisaged under the ABR programme is inoperable in a profoundly rural context because of the lack of resident service providers.

Besides the geographical context, the working methods of the Partnership have also been influenced by the nature of the programmes implemented. This is evident in relation to Leader which dominated the work programme of the Partnership in the first two years of its existence. One of the major problems encountered in relation to Leader was the 50 per cent co-funding requirement, which together with the short time scale over which monies had to be committed and expended, meant that it was almost impossible to fund community development activities. Thus in implementing its business plan under Leader the Partnership was restricted to a reactive decision-making mode in the sense that it was dependent to a large extent on project promoters coming forward with the required matching finance, and, while ineligible or unsuitable projects could be turned down, there was limited scope for the Partnership to generate its own projects.

Linkages and Visibility

As the Partnership has strived to establish itself and to develop its structures and procedures, attention has been focused more on communications within the Partnership itself than on the organisation's public profile. Internal communications, for example between staff and directors, are generally described as very good, and a high level of information about programmes and activities is made available at all times to board members. However, there is general acceptance of the need to further develop and improve the Partnership's visibility in the area. The Partnership relates to its constituent organisations mainly through their representatives at the board. A number of other linkages also exist, the most important of which are via partner representatives (other than directors) on the sub-committees and contact directly between the general manager and chairperson of the Partnership and the CEOs or other relevant officers of the various organisations. The latter channels of communication are also used in the case of organisations not formally included in the Partnership. A further linkage in the case of state and social partner representatives is provided by seconded staff.

Notwithstanding the existence of these varied linkages, there is a feeling that the relationship between the Partnership and the partner bodies, in particular the statutory bodies, needs to be broadened further. It has been generally acknowledged that one of the weaknesses of the way in which partnership has been operationalised in the ABR partnership companies is the over-reliance on individuals, and on the relationship between the chairperson and general manager and the partner representatives. In the case of the South Kerry Development Partnership there is the added problem that most of the state agency representatives — especially the more senior (CEO level) representatives — are not based within the Partnership's area and, for some of these, attendance at board and committee meetings has been difficult. Those representatives who are based locally tend to be in less senior positions within their organisations and, hence, to have fewer delegated decision-making powers. This trade-off between seniority

and commitment/input is yet another of the many dilemmas which arises from the geographical context.

The Partnership participates in the networks established under the various programmes it delivers. In particular, it has been an active member of both the Leader national network and the network of ABR partnerships, and it was instrumental in establishing Fiontar Faoin d'Tuaith (Rural Enterprise Network) together with three other rural partnerships. These programme networks give the Partnership access on an on-going basis to both central government and EU bodies. In addition, the Partnership has bi-lateral links both with funding agencies (ADM and the Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry) and with other development organisations. A representative of ADM has observer status on the board of the Partnership, while the Department of Agriculture maintains close contact through its monitoring role in the Leader programme. The Partnership has sought to develop links with other multi-functional development organisations, and in particular has established a close working relationship with the Welsh Development Agency.

Because of the size of the area served and the poor road network, the organisation has supported the development of offices in each of the four main centres of population within the original administrative area, Kenmare, Cahersiveen, Killorglin and Waterville. The Partnership has links with its affiliated organisations through an organisational model whereby these sub-area offices act as "hubs" from which "spokes" radiate out to the local communities. This hub and spoke system is used for both the delivery of services and the dissemination of information. A monthly newsletter as well as a series of information sheets is distributed to community organisations which enhances the visibility of the Partnership among these local groups. However the profile of the Partnership among the public at large is somewhat less, with the possible exception of the Cahersiveen area where the head office is located. However, recent improvements have been made in this regard, and in particular the Partnership's function as a rural

carrefour has helped indirectly to raise its profile both within and beyond the south Kerry area.

The partnership model introduced under the ABR initiative did not allow for the inclusion of political representatives on boards of management, and the Partnership has not developed any links with the political system. In fact, the Partnership has had a difficult relationship with local politicians whose attitude appears to have changed from initial indifference to growing antagonism as the public profile of the Partnership has developed. Given the strongly clientilist political culture of the area, it is not surprising that the disbursement of public funding by the Partnership might have been resented and indeed interpreted as a threat by political representatives. Several members of both the staff and the board of the Partnership view local politicians as having failed to adequately represent the area, and they blame the party system in particular for this in so far as it has prevented the development of territorial politics. Some directors however are of the opinion that the Partnership needs to develop links with political representatives in order to increase its influence with central government.

The Impact of the Partnership

Assessment of the impact of the Partnership is difficult for a number of reasons. First, there is the fact that the Partnership has been in operation for a relatively short period of time, during which it has been continually evolving. Second, and as noted earlier, the Partnership has not engaged intensively in the kind of formal evaluative research that would provide a basis for impact assessment.

Impact on Working Methods

The Partnership has generated a number of major benefits for the south Kerry area in terms of local development activity. First, it has brought a professional approach to what previously was largely a voluntary activity, combining a high level of management skills and sectoral expertise with the enthusiasm and detailed knowledge of local people. Second, it has undoubtedly

improved relations between the organisations which are repre-
sented within the Partnership, particularly at board level, as mu-
tual knowledge and understanding have been built up over time.
For the community sector, where perhaps there were the greatest
divisions, trust has been built and parochialism has declined as a
greater awareness of the problems of the area as a whole has
emerged. There is now an appreciation of the need to work on a
larger scale and in a more professional manner if government and
EU funding is to be attracted to the area.

A third and perhaps the most significant beneficial effect of the
Partnership has been the impact on the level of community and
voluntary activity in the area. The experience of partnership
working in the implementation of major government and EU
programmes has demonstrated that there can be meaningful and
successful local involvement in decision-making about local devel-
opment. While the exercise of decision-making has not been with-
out its difficulties for local community representatives, the
general feeling is that it is infinitely preferable to the remote deci-
sion-making which has shaped the fortunes of the area in the
past. Both the confidence and sense of responsibility of the com-
munities have been boosted and this has led to a greatly increased
level of activity. A number of new community groups has been set
up, and established groups that were inactive have been revital-
ised as a result of the general stimulus that the Partnership has
provided. As a result, the capacity of the area to engage in devel-
opment activity has been enhanced.

Through its administration of both Leader and the global grant
for local development, the Partnership has injected a significant
amount of funding into the area. This external funding has been
matched by a high level of funding levered from the community
with, for example, a ratio of Leader to matching funding of 1:1.21
(excluding administration costs). For rural tourism measures the
ratio was 1:1.37. As indicated earlier, the Partnership has had
rather less success in securing extra resources from the statutory
sector. In part this is due to the fact that state agencies were pre-
cluded by government from contributing to Leader-funded proj-

ects, on the grounds that such funding already included a state contribution. More generally though, the state agencies have been inclined to plead a lack of discretionary funding within budgets.

The area expansion of 1995, arising from a decision of central government bodies administering Leader and the local development programme rather than organic growth, have posed considerable challenges for the Partnership and its working methods. In some respects the area expansion has been beneficial. From the point of view of tourism development, for example, the inclusion of Killarney, which is the main base for tourists to the Iveragh peninsula, should allow for more coherent planning. On the other hand, a new set of urban-based social problems has been introduced which may call for a different strategic approach from that which has been pursued in the western area. Also the expansion has undoubtedly created a huge burden on the administration and organisational structures of the Partnership which, at the time of writing, were still in the process of adapting.

Impact on Social Exclusion

The impact of the Partnership on social exclusion is difficult to assess owing to the fact that the Partnership has not been focused specifically on this issue, but rather on the development problems of the area as a whole. Many of the partner representatives are somewhat dubious as to the impact on excluded groups, but feel that this was more a reflection of the nature of social exclusion in the area, rather than of any shortcomings of the Partnership itself. Clearly, exclusion in a peripheral and sparsely populated rural area is qualitatively different from that encountered in urban areas. The excluded groups which have been identified by the Partnership include the long-term unemployed, the elderly living alone, and women in remote households. These and other groups are scattered at low density throughout the area, with no significant concentration in any one locality. The link between unemployment and income poverty tends to be more tenuous in rural settings because of the greater opportunities to engage in informal activities such as part-time fishing and farming. The combination

of welfare-dependency and informal black economy employment is seen as part of the culture of the area. Groups such as the elderly living alone often find it difficult to express a need for, or to avail of, assistance, due in large part to a sense of pride and spirit of self-reliance.

Notwithstanding these difficulties in focusing on social exclusion, various initiatives targeted at the long-term unemployed are regarded as successful. These include training courses which have sought to develop manual skills, and supports that have been provided to those availing of the area allowance (a social welfare incentive to long-term unemployed persons to start their own business). The latter initiative involved the use of global grant funding to establish a revolving loan fund that could be used by those availing of the area allowance in order to fund start-up capital costs. These costs, which acted as a major deterrent to those interested in availing of the allowance, had threatened the viability of the scheme. The ability of the Partnership to find a way of overcoming this obstacle is an example of successful and innovative integration of initiatives.

Against these gains, there is a view that some of the activities of the Partnership may have been counter-productive in relation to the problem of inequality. In particular, a number of directors felt that the Leader programme may have increased the disparity between haves and have nots — again owing mainly to the very short time scale for the programme and the 50 per cent matching funding requirement. Together these features of Leader resulted in a concentration of funding on existing businesses, where it was used to finance expansion, rather than on the development of new enterprise. One point of view that was expressed was that Leader mainly benefitted the established business community. While accepting that Leader was focused largely on established enterprise, the Partnership points out that by concentrating on businesses where high levels of initial investment had already been made, and where long-term viability was more certain, job creation under the programme was maximised (see Table 8.5). In this

respect the operation of Leader can be seen to have been subject to a classical trade-off between equity and efficiency gains.

TABLE 8.5: ESTIMATED JOB CREATION BY SOUTH KERRY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP UNDER LEADER

Employment Type	Number of Jobs	Full-Time Equivalent*
Full-time year round	48	48
Part-time year round	20	10
Full-time seasonal	76	38
Part-time seasonal	96	24
Total	240	120

*Part-time employment and seasonal employment were weighted as 0.5 FTE
Source: CRESP Progress Report 1994

Policy Impact

It is difficult to identify policy changes that can be attributed specifically and exclusively to the experience and activities of the Partnership. This is because of the centrally co-ordinated nature of both the ABR and the Leader programmes. Implementational problems experienced by the local groups were fed back to the relevant central agencies which were then charged with offering advice and finding solutions. While this has led to improvements in both the community employment programme (the main labour market measure targeted at the long-term unemployed) and also in the Leader programme, these improvements have resulted from the common experience of several of the local groups and cannot be attributed to any one.

Notwithstanding this observation, however, the Partnership has been particularly active in lobbying for policy changes where elements of programmes have been seen as difficult to implement in its area. The Partnership has fought for the flexibility to deliver programmes in ways that are responsive to local needs and has generally been innovative in programme delivery. Examples here

would include the schools enterprise project and the cultural development project, both of which were global grant funded.

However, while there has been improved targeting of, and responsiveness to, local needs in the activities of the Partnership itself, there has been less success in relation to the programmes administered by the state agencies. While there is general agreement that the statutory bodies are now more aware of the problems and needs of the area, and also of the local impact of their programmes, probably the biggest single criticism of the partnership process has been that these agencies have shown an inflexibility in relation to the implementation of programmes in the area, and an unwillingness or inability to adapt to local requirements. For example, the supply of education and training by the relevant state agencies has been characterised by both underprovision (lack of locally based courses) and inappropriate provision (courses mounted at unsuitable times, inappropriate course content). Part of the problem here is the insistence on minimum enrolment levels which are not feasible given the low population density of the area. One result has been the involvement of the Partnership in service delivery, as noted earlier, as it attempts to fill the gap.

With regard to the related issue of co-ordination and integration between the state agencies the general feeling is that while there has been some improvement at the operational (programme implementation) level, this has not yet carried over into improved co-operation at programme design level. There is a widespread feeling that for there to be improvement in this area there will first have to be a change in the culture of the statutory bodies, and that this can only come about as the result of central government pressure.

Conclusion

The Partnership has been mainly involved in the administration of the government's ABR initiative and the Leader I programme. While the two programmes were quite different in scope — Leader focused on the economic aspects of rural development and ABR on

the social problem of long-term unemployment — the Partnership has attempted, with some success, to implement the two in an integrated fashion. The Partnership sees itself as a rural development agency, attempting to help both the unemployed and the underemployed on low incomes by widening the local economic base and generally improving the economic vitality of the area. The Partnership's view is that the lack of job opportunities in the area as a whole supercedes the problem of unemployment within the area, in that the latter cannot be tackled in isolation from the former problem. To attempt to do so, for example by stand-alone education or training measures, would in all likelihood exacerbate the demographic problems of the area, with long term deleterious consequences in social as well as economic terms. Thus the economic agenda has tended to take precedence, as was reflected in the fact that Leader dominated the Partnership's work programme during the first three and a half years of its existence.

Given the remoteness of the region, and the difficulty of travel between it and major external employment centres, the above analysis of its problems seems to be well grounded. It is also true that the Leader programme had major beneficial effects in the area. There has been a marked improvement in the morale of those active in development in the local communities, and a feeling that locally led development based on the exploitation of local resources can be successful. Leader has enabled the Partnership to establish a profile in the area, and to fill the vacuum that existed due to the fact that there were no resident service providers. Most importantly, Leader made local decision-making a reality for the first time in south-west Kerry.

Nevertheless, there has been some concern expressed about the fact that during its initial phase of operation the Partnership had little explicit focus on the problem of social exclusion, and that the Leader project funding had little progressive impact in this regard. The latter criticism probably applies more to the programme itself than to the Partnership's operation of it, and indeed the Partnership lobbied intensively for changes to the programme. Also, there have undoubtedly been considerable difficulties

involved in developing a focus on social exclusion due to the lower visibility of the problem in the area, which is itself a consequence of the dispersed population. However, the expansion in the Partnership's administrative area to include the urban centre of Killarney has changed the context radically in this regard, and clearly poses a major challenge to the Partnership.

Finally, geography has had a major bearing also on the working methods of the Partnership. It has tended in general to adopt a delivery mode of operation, either providing services directly to the client population, or funding other agencies to do so. Clearly, there are dangers in the adoption of delivery approaches by an organisation working on the local (sub-county) scale: in particular there is the possibility of displacement effects in economic activity. Furthermore, the adoption of this role has created a tension between the Partnership and some of the main statutory bodies, as well as with local politicians. As against these considerations however, the experience of the South Kerry Development Partnership suggests that there are major problems in attempting to apply brokerage methods of partnership operation in remote rural areas. Many of the major service providers do not have a base in the area, and are difficult to engage fully in the partnership process as a result. More significantly, there is the fact that state agencies engaged in service provision are increasingly being required to work to a commercial mandate. In this context the prospects for service delivery by mainstream agencies in sparsely populated rural areas are not good, and there is a clear role for local partnerships acting in a delivery capacity.