

## Neighbourhood Renewal Programme: Baselining 'Community Renewal' outcomes

This case study shows how *Measuring Change* was used to define and test an indicator framework for the 'Community Renewal' pillar of the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme. The framework can be applied to help baseline communities within Neighbourhood Renewal areas, inform appropriate interventions and support the measurement of resulting changes.

The Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Renewal Programme (NRP) is the major statutory programme with an exclusive focus on developing communities. It focuses on four development pillars designed to tackle long-term multiple deprivation. Three of these four pillars have long-established output and outcome indicators (economic, social and physical renewal). The mid-term review of the Programme (2010) identified that reviewing progress in relation to the fourth Community Renewal pillar '... has been difficult not least because of the lack of any clear definition or quantifiable baseline position'.

### How was *Measuring Change* used?

#### 1 Defining change

The Community Renewal pillar of the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme is based on the assumption that developing the resilience of communities may be an important component in tackling long-term multiple deprivation. Research by CENI and CFNI in 2008<sup>ii</sup> showed that community resilience may be determined by the possession of particular social assets that make a community stronger. This research developed and tested an innovative methodology to measure these kinds of social assets in local communities. (This also laid the foundations for the methodology that underpins *Measuring Change*).

The mid-term review of Neighbourhood Renewal acknowledged the potential of CENI's social assets model to inform the future evaluation of the Community Renewal pillar of the programme. The proposition was that if this model was applied to Community Renewal it would help to:

- Define and describe those assets which contribute to resilience
- Develop specific indicators for each of these assets
- Baseline the levels of such 'social assets' in Neighbourhood Renewal areas.

Generating this information would enable the programme to:

- Design and target interventions to develop these assets in Neighbourhood Renewal areas
- Measure change in those assets over time produced by programme interventions.

As a pilot exercise CENI worked with the programme's three regional offices in late 2011, focusing on:

1. Defining Community Renewal in terms of social assets and drafting a framework of indicators
2. Generating social asset baselines for a sample of Neighbourhood Renewal areas.

Following a series of consultations with key representatives from the Neighbourhood Renewal programme, the voluntary sector and the social policy field, CENI revised its original 2008 social asset framework into five themes for which 11 indicators were developed.

| Themes         | Indicators  |
|----------------|---|
| Social Capital | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Bonding:</b> trust and relationships within the community</li> <li>2. <b>Bridging:</b> relationships with people/communities from different backgrounds</li> <li>3. <b>Linking:</b> relationships with those with power and resources</li> </ol> |
| Organisation   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. <b>Capacity:</b> level of civic society groups/organisations</li> <li>5. <b>Capability:</b> effectiveness of civic society groups/organisations</li> </ol>  |
| Human Capital  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. <b>Volunteers:</b> level of volunteer involvement in the area</li> <li>7. <b>Effectiveness:</b> of volunteer involvement overall</li> <li>8. <b>Paid Community Workers:</b> level available to/operating within the area</li> </ol>                 |
| Physical       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. <b>Community Facilities:</b> facilities within or accessible by the community</li> <li>10. <b>Community Safety:</b> level of crime, fear of crime</li> </ol>  |
| Financial      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. <b>Access:</b> to formal financial services by residents</li> </ol>  |

## 2 Capturing change

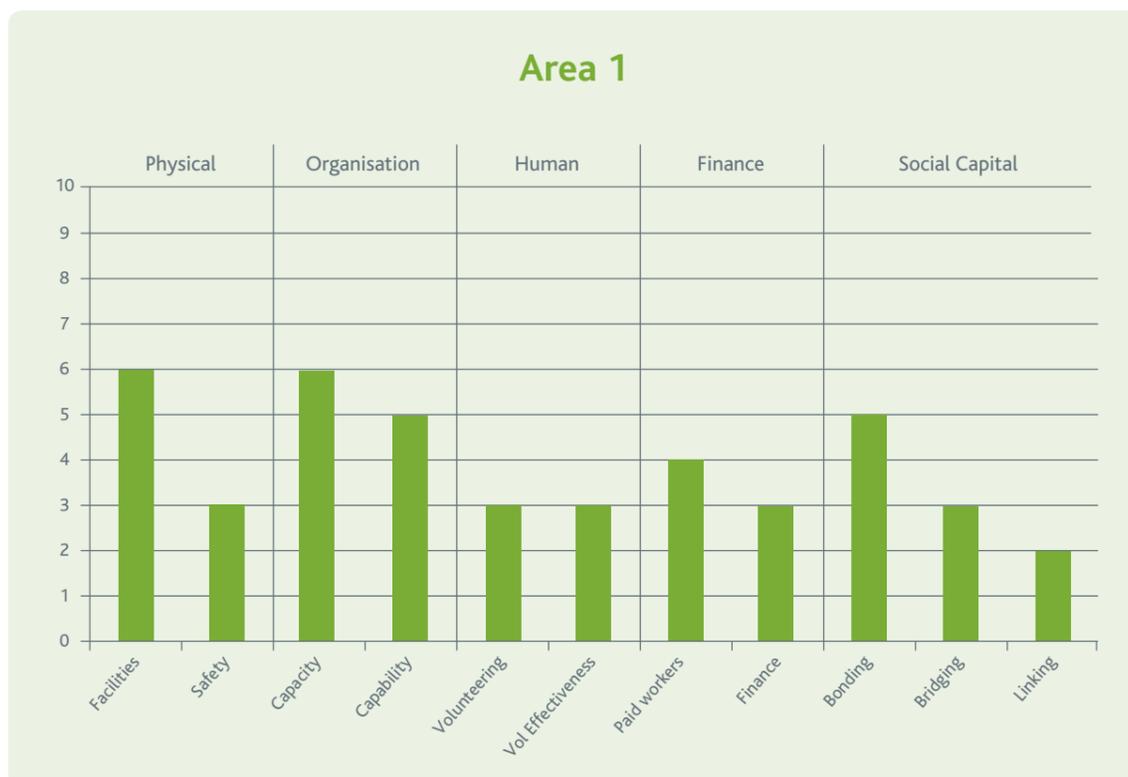
Having defined Community Renewal indicators, the next step was to establish a baseline for local areas against these indicators. CENI worked with the Neighbourhood Renewal programme's regional offices to identify a sample of local areas and to apply the 'Nominal Group Technique' to capture baselines for these areas. There are 36 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRA) across Northern Ireland, managed by three regional offices - Belfast, Regional and North West. For the pilot exercise a 'cluster' of Neighbourhood Renewal Areas was selected from each region.

- An entire Neighbourhood Renewal Area was considered to be too large and diverse to use as a single unit of measurement, so the local offices identified and mapped discrete communities within each selected NRA. This ensured that internal diversity within each NRA was captured.
- For each selected NRA, stakeholder panels were established involving the Regional Office and representatives of their statutory and voluntary sector partners.
- CENI facilitated Nominal Group Technique sessions with the panels to produce baseline estimates for each discrete community within the NRA (using the 0-10 scale). The narrative behind each estimate was also recorded.

## 3 Showing Change

Given the focus of this pilot, we were only able to collect baseline or 'Time 1' data, so we do not have change or 'Time 2' data to show progress from the baseline. However, analysis of the baseline data does allow us to profile and differentiate between communities within NRAs. The supporting narrative data explains why each area obtained the baseline estimate it did.

To illustrate this, the diagrams profile two inner city areas within the sample. **Area 1** shows a community with relatively low estimates for social assets, which may indicate the need for some basic community development interventions to help build its profile.



**Area 2**, with its higher estimates, has a much stronger profile, indicating the potential for interventions that can utilise and strengthen these assets - for example, engaging in delivery partnerships with statutory agencies or economic development initiatives.



While this pilot exercise only covered a sample of areas, applying the approach systematically and consistently across all 36 NRAs could potentially provide the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme with an evidence base to:

### ...inform the design of interventions

Mapping social assets across NRAs would allow the programme to differentiate between areas and inform investment decisions to:

- Build assets where development is weak
- Strengthen assets where development is growing
- Utilise assets where development is strong

### ...inform programme evaluation

The systematic production of baseline data could provide a basis for measuring change in each area's assets over time. If a follow-up exercise with the stakeholder panels was held towards the end of the programme, then 'Time 2' data could be produced. This could be analysed to indicate change or 'distance travelled' from the 'Time 1' baseline data.

## How did *Measuring Change* help?

- Constructed a framework of indicators for 'Community Renewal' based on the social assets model
- Supported collaboration between NRA partners to produce agreed baseline estimates for community renewal in local areas
- Produced analyses to differentiate between communities and map diversity within and across NRAs
- Provided additional information to complement needs data and give a more 'rounded assessment' of an area and its potential
- Demonstrated the viability of *Measuring Change* as a practical and cost effective approach to generating baseline data on Community Renewal in NRAs.

*"The pilot exercise proved valuable, informative and insightful and provided the Department an opportunity to measure progress around community development and renewal".*

Alison Chambers, Head of Neighbourhood Renewal Policy, Department for Social Development

i People & Place, A Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, Mid-Term Review, (2010) Department for Social Development  
 ii Morrissey M, Healy K and McDonnell B, (2008) Social Assets: A New Approach to Understanding and Working with Communities, published by CFNI and CENI