



DONEGAL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CLG.  
FORBAIRT ÁITIÚIL DHÚN NA nGALL

## SICAP Case Study 2020 Lot 33-2 Donegal Gaeltacht

### Tacú Le Gaoth Dobhair A Community Response to COVID 19



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The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development and co-funded by the European Social Fund under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020.

## **SICAP Case Study 2020: Lot 33-2 Tacú Le Gaoth Dobhair – A Community Response to COVID 19**

### *Engagement Strategies with SICAP target groups / communities.*

**Goal & Thematic Alignment**-This Case Study documents a project progressed under Goal 1

- **Thematic areas G1:1 – Promote community engagement and stronger communities &**
- **G1:2 - Build Capacity of Local Community Groups.**

The LCG partners supported have a clear social inclusion and equality focus and the objective is primarily to support the needs of people living in disadvantaged communities, disadvantaged children and families, low income households & people with disabilities, all of whom are target groups of the SICAP Programme.

**Partners:**     **Ionad Naomh Pádraig**  
                  **Coiste Forbartha Chnoc Fola**  
                  **Coiste Forbartha Dhún Lúiche**  
                  **Comharchumann Forbartha Ghaoth Dobhair**  
                  **SICAP - Donegal Local Development CLG**

**SICAP Target Groups:** People living in disadvantaged communities, disadvantaged children and families, low income households & people with disabilities.

## **Tacú Le Gaoth Dobhair**

### **Back ground information**

Gaoth Dobhair is a parish situated in the Gaeltacht in the north west of Donegal and is renowned as being the most densely populated rural area in Europe and one of the largest Gaelic-speaking parishes in Ireland.

Gaoth Dobhair Industrial Estate (est 1966) once had a thriving Industrial estate with up to 1,500 people employed from across the three parishes of Gaoth Dobhair, Cloich Cheann Fhaola and the Rosses. Tourism once thrived in the area also and industries such as fishing, farming and supplying peat to the ‘turf burning station’ were other means of sustaining employment in the area. However, in the aftermath of the crash of 2008 Gaoth Dobhair was left with huge unemployment figures. Factories, hotels and family businesses which once thrived now struggling to keep their doors open. However what has never faltered is the strong sense of community, the spirit of social solidarity, the culture of volunteering and the ‘can do’ attitude.

Gaoth Dobhair is an excellent example of a resilient parish, whose sense of community is apparent in its four thriving community facilities. This sense of community came very much to the fore when on the 11th of March the World Health Organisation declared COVID 19 a pandemic. The volunteers, employees and committee members from these four community facilities mobilised immediately to put supports and services in place to protect the most vulnerable members of their community, particularly those cocooning and self-isolating. This collaboration of community organisations became ‘Tacú le Gaoth Dobhair’ – Gaoth Dobhair’s community response to COVID 19

**Supports provided by Tacú le Gaoth Dobhair** included the following:

- Shop & drop – including groceries, fuel, prescription collection, pensions.
- Meal-on-wheels Service
- Provision of food parcels.

**Approximately 40% of the area population are aged over 65 years and were, as a result, self-isolating or cocooning.**

**This initiative was delivered with the support of 34 volunteers in addition to the Managers and committees of the for community facilities.**

The DLDC SICAP team worked very closely with ‘Tacú le Gaoth Dobhair’ and provided a suite of supports to ensure that the most vulnerable members of the community continued to stay safe and supported.

### **Need for SICAP Supports**

A coordinated approach was required to enable Tacú le Gaoth Dobhair’ to deliver supports and services to the local community throughout the Pandemic. Prior to COVID, DLDC’s SICAP staff at DLDC worked closely with these community & voluntary organisations and had developed a long standing supportive working relationship where the volunteers and staff knew and trusted the SICAP team. The volunteers were already familiar with SICAP and the supports available through it so immediately called on SICAP Project officers to assist their efforts.

The need for SICAP supports were as follows:

- On first engaging with the ‘Tacú le Gaoth Dobhair’ committee the need for a mapping exercise became apparent to identify what supports were already in place and what supports were needed to ensure all members of the community were supported. By carrying out this mapping exercise gaps in services and in geographical areas serviced would also become apparent.
- Ensuring that volunteers involved in this COVID response were fully informed on correct protocol to ensure they protected themselves and stayed safe during the pandemic as they carried out their volunteering work.
- Support with Garda vetting of volunteers
- Support with sourcing food supplies to meet the increased demand for food parcels to support families in this disadvantaged area.
- The demand on the existing meals-on-wheels services in the area increased significantly due to the closure of the day care centres and with older people and vulnerable members of the community cocooning and isolating. This is a large and scattered geographical area with many homes and families far removed from local shops and services. ‘Tacú le Gaoth Dobhair’ needed support with the purchase of food and equipment to meet this increase in demand.
- Supply / purchase of PPE for the organisations and for volunteers
- The four community organisations involved in ‘Tacú le Gaoth Dobhair’ were closed to the public and were unable to generate any income to cover their running costs with the result that support was necessary to assist these SE’s to maintain or generate an income during COVID 19

- The community facilities sought support with re-opening in the wake of COVID 19 – This included the preparation of Risk and Response plans, cleaning protocols and putting processes in place to ensure the safety of visitors and service users when re-opening in the wake of COVID.

**Under SICAP we committed to work very closely with the volunteers to:**

- 1. Carry out an early mapping exercise to identify services and gaps in service in the Donegal Gaeltacht.**
- 2. Work collaboratively with an existing food bank to submit an application to FoodCloud to secure a supply of non-perishable food into the county of Donegal on a weekly basis.**
- 3. Secure funding for the purchase of PPE, food parcels, care packages and equipment for the meals and wheels services to include insulated food delivery boxes and thermometers.**
- 4. Provide practical information and guidance to all volunteers and to work with Donegal Volunteer Centre to ensure all volunteers were Garda vetted.**
- 5. Assist the groups to carry out risk assessments and response plans, to put policies and processes in place to ensure their facilities were ready to open safely and in compliance with all HSA guidance, when restrictions eased and they were**

### **Project Description & SICAP Involvement**

Since the start of the COVID 19 emergency and with the fear and uncertainty that ensued it very quickly became apparent that the community & voluntary sector were to play a huge part in protecting the more vulnerable members of their communities. ‘Tacú le Gaoth Dobhair’ mobilised immediately but in doing so met with a number of challenges, many of which SICAP could support and assist with.

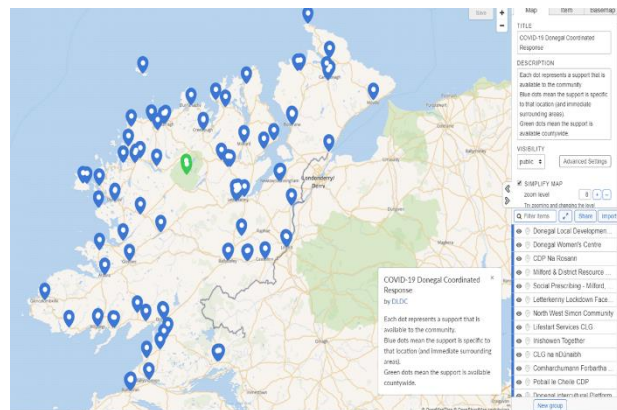
On first meeting with ‘Tacú le Gaoth Dobhair’ via zoom, it became very apparent that they needed immediate support with funding, volunteer recruitment and training and provision of PPE among others. Working closely with the groups and in line with their needs the SICAP team developed a work / support plan.

The supports provided through the SICAP programme were as follows:

## 1. Early Mapping Exercise - COVID 19 Response Mapping

The SICAP team worked to develop a map of Donegal with Parish boundaries clearly identified. A Community Audit Template was developed to help uniformly identify what services were available in each townland, who the contact person is, gap areas where services were not available and also what additional supports SICAP could offer the local volunteers in carrying out their initiatives. Local knowledge and the close working relationships with volunteers allowed the SICAP team to carry out this audit quickly and efficiently. Information collated by the SICAP team as part of the community audit was then utilised to:

- Share information on the services on offer locally to those who needed support.
- Identify the geographical areas not serviced and also gaps in services in local areas. Action was and continues to be taken by the SICAP team & ‘Tacú le Gaoth Dobhair’ to develop services for the vulnerable people in these communities and to allow those isolating or cocooning to do so safely.
- The SICAP team responded, and continue to respond, to the issues identified when, as part of the audit, volunteers were asked ‘what additional supports can DLDC give’.



## 2. FoodCloud – Food Parcels & Meals-on-Wheels

Through the COVID 19 response mapping exercise carried out at the onset of lockdown the SICAP team very quickly identified a need for additional food supplies in different community areas.

In an attempt to address this need in some way, DLDC partnered with ‘**We Care Foodbank Letterkenny**’ to deliver an initiative to increase the supply of food into Donegal County.

An application was prepared and submitted to **FoodCloud**, which was successful. SICAP Goal 1 then coordinating the collection of food supplies from the FoodCloud hub in Galway on a weekly basis and distributed this food to Community Organisations in Donegal. Through this SICAP initiative ‘Tacú le Gaoth Dobhair’ received a delivery of food fortnightly through May, June & July 2020.



### **3. Support with funding**

A request was submitted to Donegal LCDC to re-allocate part of the SICAP Action Budget into the 'DLDC COVID 19 – Community Response Fund'. This funding opportunity was established to help community and voluntary organisations who were providing services in responses to COVID 19. A total of €8.5k from the SICAP Action budget was reallocated to support LCG's in Donegal Gaeltacht Lot 33-2.

Ionad Naomh Pádraig, as the lead applicant for 'Tacú le Gaoth Dobhair' was allocated funding under this SICAP initiative to purchase:

- PPE for their volunteers
- Food & equipment needed to meet the increased demand for their meals-on-wheels service



- Fuel to assist with part of the costs of their delivery services



**COVID19 –  
Community Response  
Fund Social Inclusion  
& Community  
Activation  
Programme (SICAP)**



#### **4. Volunteers**

The SICAP team produced a booklet for the Community & Voluntary sector offering practical advice & guidance on delivering services in response to COVID. This booklet contained all relevant HSE, HSA and Government guidelines and publications relevant to the C&V sector in one document. At the onset of COVID the C&V sector were inundated with emails and guidance from statutory bodies and agencies and the exercise of disseminating this and extracting what was relevant for the C&V sector was overwhelming and became a huge challenge in itself. The SICAP team, in developing this booklet ensured that the relevant information was collated and shared in an orderly and concise format.

Volunteers were provided with instruction on how to carry out their duties safely, protecting themselves and those availing of their service. The SICAP team also liaised with the Donegal Volunteer Centre and linked volunteers to the DVC to avail of their vetting process as necessary.

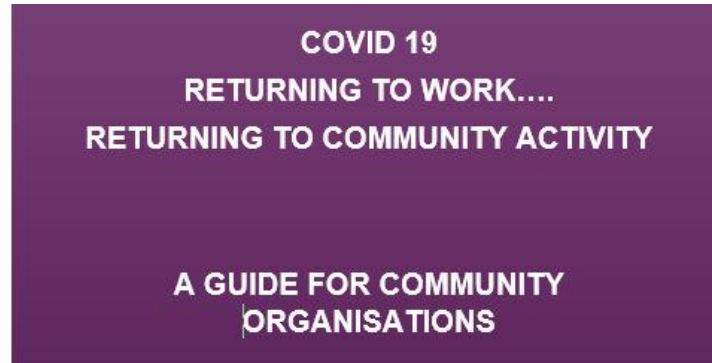


#### **5. Re-Opening in the wake of COVID 19 - Risk Assessment & Protocol**

The challenge of re-opening their community facilities in the wake of COVID 19 was a huge challenge for all 4 C&V organisations involved with ‘Tacú le Gaoth Dobhair’. In order to support them, and other C&V organisation in Donegal Gaeltacht the SICAP Goal 1 team provided a suite of supports as follows:

- The SICAP team developed a guide for community organisations to support them through the process of returning to work and returning to community activity. This

publication gives a step by step guide on the processes, policies and procedures which must be put in place prior to reopening. It directs the C&V sector to additional resources, templates and websites which can provide support, information and additional guidance.



- The SICAP team delivered a number of **‘Re-Opening in the wake of COVID’** training courses / workshops via zoom including –
  - **Post COVID 19 Risk Assessment Training & Materials** - A two session zoom training course for Community Groups as they plan for the reopening of community buildings in the wake of COVID 19 - delivered in conjunction with the Carmichael Centre
  - **Post COVID 19 Infection Prevention and Cleaning Protocol** – two session webinar - in conjunction with FM Cleaning / Bright Academy
- **1:2:1 sessions on Covid Protocol, Processes and Cleaning Advice for Community Facilities** – to review plans, processes and procedures, provide advice and addressed any concerns that community facilities / organisations had regarding opening



**Testimonials:**

<b><i>Máire Uí Chomhaill – Ionad Naomh Pádraig</i></b>	
<p><i>“DLDC had come on board, they were absolutely fantastic, giving us guidance, giving us committee and financial support. The SICAP grant helped us to buy equipment for the meals &amp; wheels, we needed more boxes and supplies. The other way that they were able to help us was with food boxes through the foodbank in Letterkenny and Food Cloud. We did need help and DLDC came along and assisted with these supports”.</i></p>	
<b><i>Treasa Ní Ghallchóir - Coiste Forbartha Chnoc Fola</i></b>	
<p><i>‘The SICAP team are providing Coiste Forbartha Chnoc Fola with many different supports. These range from capacity support for our group, in restructuring the committee to assisting with funding applications. DLDC provided webinars to support groups in response to Covid 19 that we found very useful. You can contact Máire, Margaret or anyone else on the SICAP team, anytime and they are always available to help’</i></p>	
<b><i>Angela Boyle - Meals and Wheels Service User</i></b>	
<p><i>“It meant so much to us to see someone every day, especially in the lockdown because we haven’t got anybody coming or going. I find they (volunteers) are wonderful, pleasant, always willing to do something, Jim posts my letters for me. We really don’t know how we would survive without them”</i></p>	

## Outputs & Outcomes

The Outcomes from this project are as follows:

- **Thematic area G1:1 – Promote Community Engagement and Stronger Communities**
  - G1:1:1 – The needs of this local community and the local community groups were identified, represented and integrated through local planning and service delivery in response to COVID 19
  - G1-1:4 – This local response resulted in a strengthened sense of community which will remain with the members of this local community long after COVID.

### *Thematic Area G1:1: Promote Community Engagement and Stronger Communities*

G1-1:1 Needs of local communities and groups are identified, represented and integrated through local planning and service delivery.

G1-1:2 Local social inclusion and equality issues are addressed by LCGs.

G1-1:3 There is increased participation in social, cultural and civic activities among SICAP target groups due to the support of community groups.

G1-1:4 A strengthened sense of community.

- **Thematic area G1:2.2 – Build Capacity of LCG's**
  - G1:2:2 – LCG's have a greater capacity to address the social inclusion needs of the communities they serve and represent.

### *Thematic Area G1:2: Build Capacity of Local Community Groups*

G1-2:1 LCGs progress along the community development matrix.

G1-2:2 LCGs have a greater capacity to address the social inclusion needs of the communities they serve or represent.

### **Numbers supported:**

- 250 individuals
- 64 families
- Through this collaborative initiative the needs of the C&V organisations and the needs of the people living in this disadvantaged community were identified and addressed through local planning and service delivery. The emergence of a stronger spirit of community and an increased sense of belonging is evident in the testimonials from the people and groups supported through this initiative and SICAP.

- Volunteers and groups have gained confidence, training and increased capacity. They have increased confidence with the reassurance through their learning that they can re-open safely in the wake of COVID.

### **The learning from this project is as follows:**

Ultimately the most important learning from this project is the necessity of the Community & Voluntary sector and how vital the role it plays is in all communities, particularly in very rural areas. The C&V sector is at the heart of every community and without it the COVID Response services put in place over the COVID 19 Pandemic would never have been made available.

Learning – the resilience of the Community & Voluntary sector must be recognised, supported and acknowledged as the integral part of Irish society that it is.

SICAP and the delivery method of the programme allows SICAP project officers to develop a very close and personal working relationship with the LCG committees, volunteers and employees. The 1:2:1 engagement with committees allows a trust to develop between the SICAP project officer and the groups. This close working relationship is crucial as the SICAP officer becomes an integral part of the C&V organisation, always on hand to provide supports and has a clear insight into the organisation core values and objectives.

### **What Worked Well?**

- The early mapping exercise and development of detailed work-plans with the committees and volunteers ensured that the needs on the ground were quickly identified and addressed – **Community development bottom up approach.**
- The close working relationship developed by Local Development Companies, through the delivery of community development programmes, with volunteer committees proved invaluable when W.H.O declared COVID 19 a Pandemic. The working relationships, the local knowledge along with the supports available under the SICAP programme meant that services were in place immediately to protect the most vulnerable members of the local community.
- The flexibility offered by Pobal and the LCDC to the SICAP programme implementers to allow Action Budget and Annual Plans to be adapted in response to COVID resulted in the immediate needs of the LCG's being addressed. The SICAP team could then action supports as required to meet the needs locally.
- A collaborative approach, engaging a number of programmes delivered by DLDC resulted in 'Tacú le Gaoth Dobhair' receiving a complete package of community development supports. The SICAP team worked closely with Tús, RSS and the Donegal Volunteer Centre to ensure the best possible outcomes for this collaboration.
- The suite of training / webinars and workshops delivered by the SICAP team in relation to 'Re-opening in the wake of COVID' ensured that the community facilities across Lot 33-2 were prepared and ready to reopen safely and confidently, with all policies and processes in place when government restrictions allowed.

## **What Did Not Work?**

- Generating income to finance the running costs incurred by LCG's is an ongoing challenge and this became even more difficult throughout the Pandemic. The lack of flexibility within the SICAP programme, prohibiting allocation of grants to fund these running costs as a one off support in response to COVID is frustrating for programme implementers as the need for this financial support was & is very evident. Funding through SICAP and the Community Enhancement Programme was very much needed to provide PPE, food and equipment, however there is an equally vital need for ongoing running costs.
- The C&V organisations involved in 'Tacú le Gaoth Dobhair' were closed to the public and unable to generate income, however these C&V organisations continued to work behind closed door to provide services to the vulnerable members of their communities. In doing so they continue to incur costs as they utilised their buildings to cook meals and coordinate volunteers, in addition to costs such as insurance. The struggle to fund their basic costs is creating hardship which will affect their organisations for years to come.