



Vindicating Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and Applying in Policy and Practice

Canal Court Hotel, Newry

16th May 2014



“To enable the powerless, the invisible, to be part of making change....that changes how they see themselves. And that changes everything”

Inez McCormack, Founder of PPR

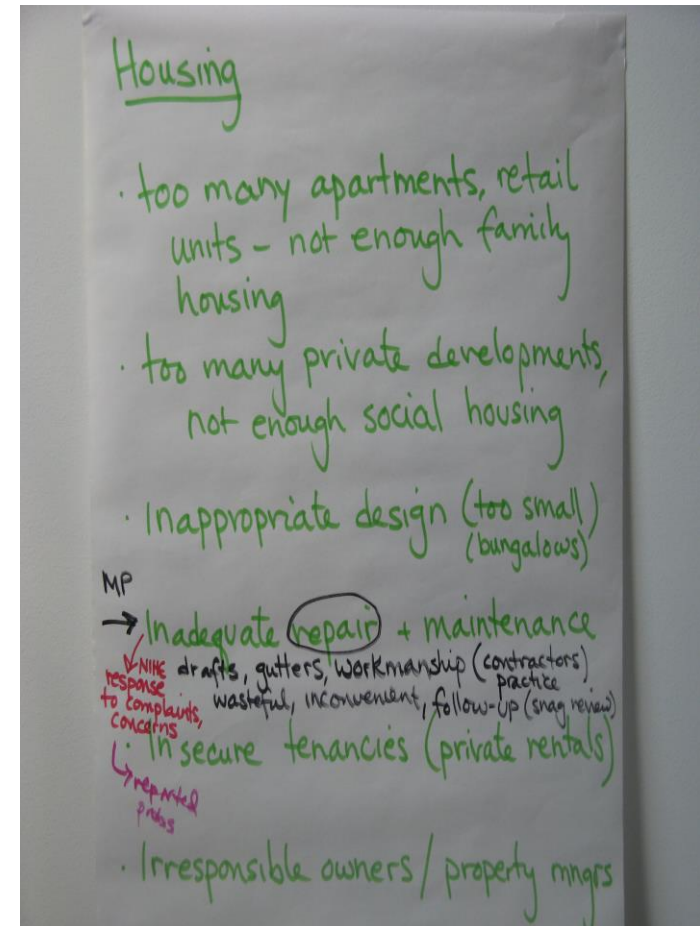


Campaigns Past and Present

- Seven Towers Residents Housing Campaign
- Mental Health Rights Group
- Right to Work: Right to Welfare
- Simon Community Homeless Project
- Footprints Domestic Violence
- Lower Shankill Regeneration Board (Play and regen.)
- Rialto Rights in Action (Housing)
- Girdwood Residents Jury (regeneration)



Organising





Building Knowledge

HR Standards on HEALTH :

- * The right to health is not only about not being ill; it's about being healthy -- mentally, physical and socially.
- * The Government's obligations about health don't stop at health care. Good health is linked to other things, like food and nutrition, housing, access to safe water and healthy working conditions.
- * Everyone should have an equal opportunity to have the highest standard of health.





Gathering evidence – what is the extent of the problem?



Seven Towers Survey					
Address:					
1. Name (optional): _____					
Gender:	Male	Female			
Age (optional):	16-26	27-39	40-49	50-60 60+	
Number of people living in your home:					
	Adults (16+)	0	1	2 3 4	
	Children (-16)	0	1	2 3 4	
2. Pigeon Waste					
Have you noticed the pigeon waste on the landings being cleaned over the last six months?				Yes	No
Are you happy with the results?				Yes	No
If 'No', could you tell me why?					

3. Sewage and Drainage					
In the last six months have you had sewage, backflow or flooding problems?				Yes	No Go to #4
What were the effects of the flooding?		a) Ruined Wallpapers/Tiles	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		b) Flooded into downstairs flat	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		c) Bad Smell	<input type="checkbox"/>		



Why measure change?

Under human rights law, governments are under an obligation to ensure that things improve.

Baseline = where we're at now

Indicators = issues we want to see addressed

Benchmarks = targets

MAINTENANCE

www.pprproject.org

Drainage & Sewage

International Human Rights Standards

“An adequate house must contain certain facilities essential for health including...sanitation, site drainage.”

CESCR General Comment 4, Paragraph 8 (b)

Northern Ireland Housing Executive Responsibility

According to the Northern Ireland Housing Rights Service booklet *‘Repairs in Social Housing’* **sewage ingress** is classed as an **‘emergency repair’**, which should be carried out **within 24 hours**.

Blocked drains are classed as **‘urgent repairs’**, which should be carried out within **4 working days**.

Baseline

In April 2007 61% of residents reported problems with blocked drains and sewage.

MAINTENANCE



Drainage & Sewage

Participation and the
Practice of Rights Project

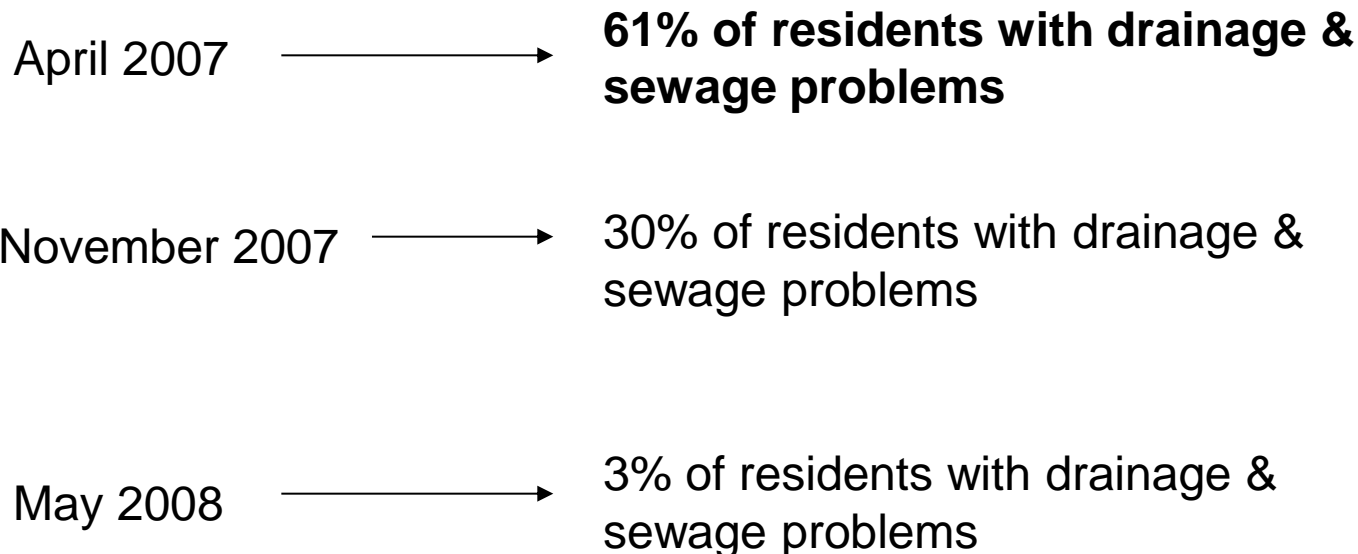
Indicator

% of residents reporting drainage and sewage problems

Baseline

In April 2007 61% of residents reported problems with blocked drains and sewage.

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Launching the Campaign



PPR
Participation
and the Practice of
Rights Project

The Participation and the Practice of Rights Project

Evidence Hearing on the Right to Housing

Venue:
Indian Community Centre
86 Clifton Street, Belfast

Date:
Wednesday 13th June 2007

Time:
10am - 3.30 pm

Residents air concerns at landmark hearing



BY EMILY MOULTON

A GROUP of north Belfast residents who have been fighting for decent living conditions will voice their concerns to an international panel of housing and human rights experts at a landmark hearing in the city today.

The groundbreaking event has been organised by residents of the Seven Towers flats in conjunction with the Participation and the Practice of Rights project to highlight substandard living conditions in the Housing Executive estate.

Many feel as though they have been treated like second-class citizens and claim the Housing Executive has ignored repeated requests for very basic amenities to be fixed.

They claim the health and safety of their children is being put at risk because of pigeon waste build-up and ongoing maintenance issues such as drainage,

sewage, dampness and mould. They also claim there is a two-tiered system for re-housing. Residents living above level four are re-housed quicker than those living below.

Mother-of-two Michelle McFarland, who has lived in the area for the past eight years, said she felt the Seven Towers flats were not a place to raise children.

"I grew up in these flats and I know they are not suitable," she explained. "Even though you might be able to make your own flat look nice, the whole area is run down. And if you need to get something fixed it can take up to a week before they will send someone out. A couple of weeks ago I had sewerage come up my bath and it took five days for them to come and fix it. It is supposed to be 24 hours for emergencies."

Mrs McFarland, who has been waiting to be re-housed for years, said she wanted the Housing Ex-

Leticia Osorio (Brazil) legal officer for Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, with Catherine McLoughlin, a mother-of-two living in the Seven Towers, Bruce Porter (Canada), Director of Social Rights Advocacy Centre and Odindo James Opiata (Kenya), Director of Hakijamii Trust, specialising in promoting land and human rights for the urban poor

ecutive to act on their concerns and hoped today's meeting would give them the extra support they needed.

Bruce Porter, a Canadian human rights consultant who is part of the panel, explained today's hearing was a chance for residents to present their case to a group of housing and human rights experts who would be able to offer guidance on their campaign.

"This is quite an innovative project," he said. "Really the essence of what we will be doing is listening to their submissions and asking questions to provide comments and advice on a human rights based approach to help them with the next stage of the campaign."

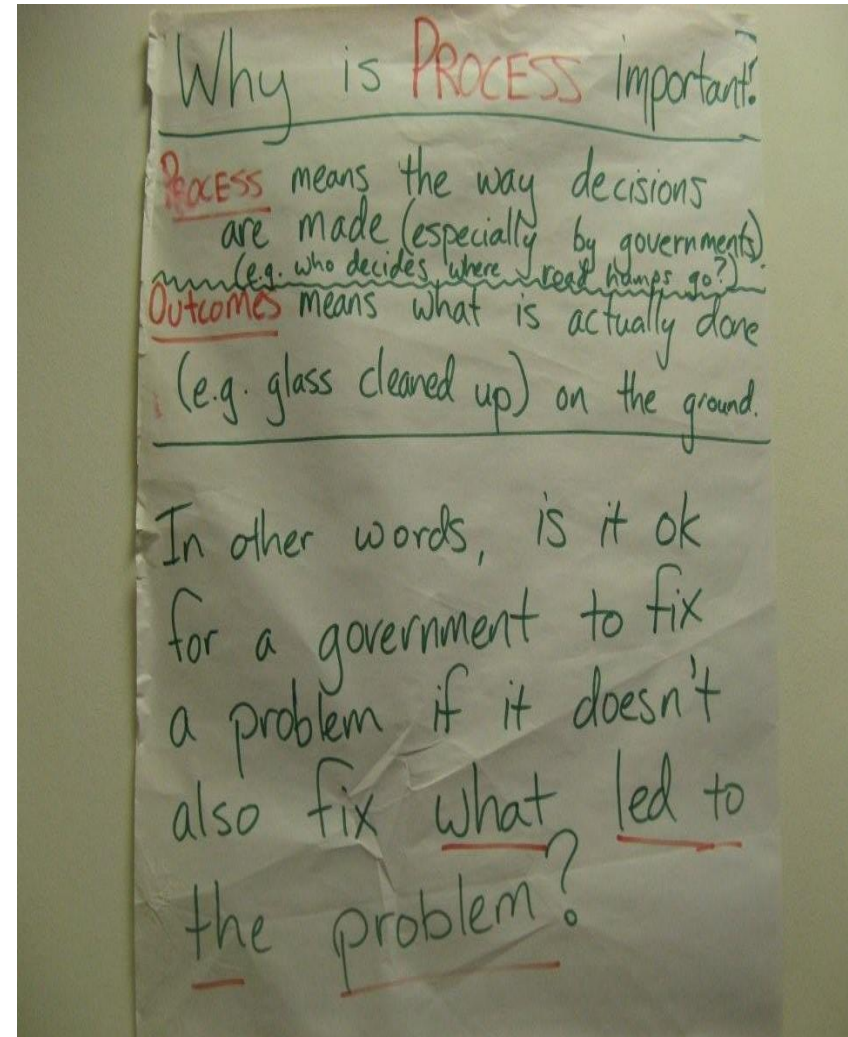
Liam Wiggins of the New Lodge Housing Forum added: "The problems in the Seven Towers are long standing and well known. The flats are overcrowded and in poor condition."





Participation is the
starting point...

...and is the desired
outcome of the
Human Rights
Based Approach





Outcomes on the Ground

- A **£900,000 investment** by the Northern Ireland Housing into a local high rise flats (Seven Towers, North Belfast) to install a **new sewage system**
- The **removal of pigeon waste** from the landings of residents' homes in Seven Towers which accumulated over years, exacerbating asthma in children who lived there and creating mite infestation, and was never cleaned. As a result of PPR's work a **regular cleansing system** was put in place
- Achieved a **review of the proposed £7 million scheme** to invest in the Seven Towers flats which did not address residents' needs. An **improved tender** was re-issued.
- Secured **the re-housing of 60 families with small children** out of the Seven Towers flats into more appropriate accommodation
- Since 2010, approximately **160 people in mental health crisis per month** presenting themselves to A&E have received assessments and an entry point into mental health services as a result of the **Card Before You Leave** scheme which was secured by the Belfast Mental Health rights Group
- Secured the **opening of a local youth centre** in the Lower Shankill from one night a week to five nights a week.
- Chairing the Lower Shankill Regeneration Board, and directing the campaign, PPR secured **first social housing to be built in the area in over 20 years** (39 units).



Outcomes in Policy Change

- **Improvements** made to the **Belfast Trust's Serious Adverse Incident Review** procedure allowing families to make their own record of meetings, the creation of a user-friendly information pack on the process for families, and the appointment of a Family Liaison Officer to support bereaved family members.
- Campaigned for the **first ever Equality Impact Assessment** being carried out **on an urban regeneration scheme**, the £231m Girdwood Barracks and Crumlin Raod Gaol project
- Successfully lobbied the **UN** Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UNCESCR) to include specific **Concluding Observations to the UK government** on Catholic housing inequality in Northern Ireland, urban regeneration and mental health
- Achieved the **withdrawal of a regeneration plan** in the Lower Shankill (West Belfast) and its redevelopment with the full participation of residents and secured a cross-sectoral working group to bring forward new regeneration plans, including Ministerial commitment to work on ground-breaking employment clauses in the procurement contracts.
- Formally advised the minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure on the incorporation of groundbreaking 'equality clauses' into **£42m of government procurement contracts to provide real jobs and apprenticeships** for the long-term unemployed



Applying Human Rights in Practice brings...

- Changes in relationships
- Resistance to change, and response of power
- Constant organising
- Focus on implementation on the ground, not just change in a policy document
- Dignity and empowerment arising from people putting rights standards into practice



“Across the island of Ireland, indeed across the globe, people are increasingly demanding ‘healthy’ democratic participation within the state. This is not some abstract political concept; it is about ensuring public decisions are taken on the basis of transparency, accountability and participation. It applies to ‘big’ questions like national taxation policies as much as it does, for example, to ‘narrow’ issues faced in the daily lives of residents from the Seven Towers here in Belfast asserting their right to adequate housing.

This type of ‘healthy’ relationship with the state is the basis for a sustainable democratic and economic fabric tomorrow. Its absence today is the promise that yesterday’s failures will be repeated tomorrow.”



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