

A Social Cost Benefit Analysis of the Rural Social Scheme



*An Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe
agus Gaeltachta*
*Department of Community, Rural
and Gaeltacht Affairs*



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FOREWORD BY MINISTER Ó CUÍV



Having initiated and launched the Rural Social Scheme in 2004, I am delighted to read that the scheme is clearly generating substantial benefits over and above associated costs. In the current economic climate, where significant savings have to be achieved, I see this as one of the most valuable reports to date, highlighting the huge financial gain in terms of the real cost of the scheme to the exchequer, the financial & social gain for participants and the benefits derived within communities.

It is very reassuring to read that for every €1 of cost to the exchequer there are €2.89 of quantifiable benefits. Since its inception, I felt that this scheme was a win-win situation for the state taking into account the comparable cost, additional income benefits for 2,600 participants and the valuable work carried out within the communities. The strong work ethic and skills that exist among participants has played a big part in the success of this scheme, which is further highlighted in this report along with the fact that many RSS participants are contributing voluntary hours over and above those that they are paid for.

I was delighted to see that this report also captured the non financial benefits associated with the scheme for both participants and their families, highlighting the increase in the quality of their lives through income security, the importance of the social aspect of the scheme, flexible hours of work thus ensuring that their farming and fishing activities are sustained with an increased self esteem and self worth amongst participants.

Having been faced with economic challenges, community groups are also benefiting from the many projects undertaken through the Rural Social Scheme, with a minimal overall cost to the exchequer.

I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to all those involved with the Rural Social Scheme for their commitment and work ethic to date and all those involved in the publication of this valuable report.

Éamon Ó Cuív T.D.
Minister for Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs
January, 2009

RÉAMHRÁ LEIS AN AIRE Ó CUÍV



Tar éis dom tús a chur le Scéim Shóisialta na Tuaithe agus é a sheoladh i 2004, tá áthas orm a léamh go bhfuil an scéim ag giniúint sochair shuntasacha atá go maith os cionn na costais a bhaineann leis. Sna cúinsí eacnamaíochta reatha, inar gá le coigiltis shuntasacha a bhaint amach, creidim go bhfuil sé seo ar cheann de na tuarascálacha is luachmhaire go dtí seo, os rud é go léiríonn sé an buntáiste airgeadais suntasach atá i gceist maidir leis an bhfíor-chostas a bhaineann leis an scéim don státchiste, na sochair airgeadais agus shóisialta do rannpháirtithe agus na sochair a bhaineann leis do na pobail áitiúla.

Is mór an sásamh é a léamh go bhfuil €2.89 de shochair inchainníochtúla á fháil ar gach €1 a chosnaíonn sé ar an státchiste. Ón uair a bunaíodh é, bhraith mé go raibh sochair shuntasacha ag baint leis an scéim seo don stát nuair a tógtar san áireamh an costas in-chomparáide, sochair ioncaim bhreise do 2,600 rannpháirtí agus an obair luachmhar atá ar siúl taobh istigh de na pobail áitiúla. Tá páirt lárnach ag an eitic oibre láidir agus na scileanna atá ag na rannpháirtithe i rathúlacht na scéime seo, rud a chuirtear tuilleadh béime air sa tuarascáil, chomh maith leis an eolas go bhfuil go leor rannpháirtithe SST ag déanamh uaireanta oibre deonacha sa bhreis ar na huaireanta dá bhfuil siad á n-íoc.

Bhí áthas orm a fheiceáil gur chlúdaigh an tuarascáil seo na sochair neamh-airgeadais a bhaineann leis an scéim do na rannpháirtithe agus a dteaghlaigh, ag cur béime ar fheabhas ar a gcaighdeán saoil trí shlándaíl ioncaim, an tábhacht a bhaineann leis an ngné shóisialta den scéim, uaireanta oibre solúbtha a chinntíonn go gcothaítear a ngníomhaíochtaí feirmeoireachta agus iascaireachta le méadú ar fhéinmheas i measc rannpháirtithe.

Tá go leor buntáistí do ghrúpaí pobail, a raibh dúshláin eacnamúla os a gcomhair amach, ó na tionscadail go léir atá ar siúl trí Scéim Shóisialta na Tuaithe, le costas foriomlán chomh híseal agus is féidir ag baint leis don státchiste.

Ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil le gach duine atá páirteach i Scéim Shóisialta na Tuaithe as ucht a gcuid tiomantais agus a n-eitic oibre go dtí seo, agus leo siúd a bhí páirteach i bhfoilsíú na tuarascála suntasaí seo.

Éamon Ó Cuív T.D.
An tAire Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta
Eanáir, 2009

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Using traditional forms of cost-benefit analysis will fail to give a true account of the range of costs and benefits associated with the RSS.

Therefore, a methodology designed to produce an integrated social cost benefit analysis has been applied.

The results of this analysis show that:

- ✚ The RSS produces a wide range of both financial and non financial costs and benefits, for individual RSS participants and their families; for communities and for the State, at local and national levels.
- ✚ The non financial benefits accruing to individuals and their families are generating substantial quality of life improvements, through increased social contact; increased social capital and greater access to training, advice and information.
- ✚ For communities, activities are being supported and in some cases stimulated, which are vital to maintaining the fabric of rural communities.
- ✚ However, on top of the financial benefits to individuals, substantial benefits to communities can be quantified. Drawing from analysis of the six measures in this study, it can be estimated that the **RSS as a whole produces total financial benefits of €71,855,953 (see table 9).**
- ✚ By contrast, **financial costs, both national and local, associated with the scheme are estimated to be of the order of €29,552,009 (See Table 9).**
- ✚ It can be estimated therefore, that there is a national total **cost: total benefit ratio of 1: 2.43**, that is, for every €1 expended (nationally and locally), €2.43 worth of benefits are produced (See Table 9).
- ✚ **However, when a comparison is made between the total benefits of €71,855,953 and the real costs of the RSS to the exchequer of €24,898,946 (i.e. payroll and support costs minus existing social welfare payments) an actual exchequer cost: total benefit ratio of 1: 2.89 can be estimated.** Thus, for every €1 of actual cost to the exchequer, €2.89 of quantifiable benefits are generated (See Table 10).
- ✚ Finally, while no substantial non financial costs are identified, the potential for dependency on the scheme and the uncertainty caused by the annual renewal process are noted

INTRODUCTION

The Rural Social Scheme was initiated and launched by Éamon Ó Cuív TD, Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in May, 2004. The aims of the RSS are to provide:

- Income support to low income farmers and fisherpersons who are in receipt of specified, primarily long term social welfare payments.
- Certain services of benefit to rural communities by harnessing the skills and talents available among low-income farmers and fisherpersons.

The Scheme requires participants to work for 19.5 hours per week and is administered in a farmer / fisherperson friendly manner, allowing participants to work flexible hours. While responsibility for the operation of the RSS rests with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRGA), the scheme is managed at local level by the LEADER groups and in Gaeltacht areas by the LEADER groups in conjunction with Údaras na Gaeltachta (the Implementing Bodies). Participants under the RSS are, therefore, employed by the respective Implementing Body. Pobal carries out a payroll function in respect of the scheme on behalf of the DCRGA, administers materials grants to the Implementing Bodies and operates a help desk facility to advise on the operation of the scheme. Since its introduction the scheme has become a key part of many rural communities and is reported to be very popular with participants and local community organisations.¹ While on one hand communities are benefiting from the skills and talents of local farmers and fisherpersons, participants, on the other, have the opportunity to utilise or develop existing skills while working within their own or neighbouring communities.

The work undertaken by RSS participants during the period analysed by this study falls

¹ Pobal (2007) Rural Social Scheme, Performance Indicator Report 2006-2007.

into the following broad categories. These include:

- i. Projects relating to maintenance and enhancement of way-marked ways, agreed walks and bog roads.
- ii. Village and countryside enhancement projects.
- iii. Environmental maintenance work - maintenance and caretaking of community and sporting facilities.
- iv. Projects relating to not for profit cultural and heritage centres.
- v. Energy conservation work for the elderly and less well off.
- vi. Social care and care of the elderly, community care for both pre school and after school groups².

There is also a general “Other” category which facilitates other appropriate community projects identified during the course of the scheme. It should also be noted that more recently, an additional measure has been introduced to enable provision of administrative support to community organisations.

The RSS began in 2004 with a budget of €3,398,000. In the current year, 2008, an allocation of €50,323,000 has been provided. In total, since 2004, €166,856,000 has been allocated to the RSS, which represents a significant and ongoing commitment of funds to this important rural development and social inclusion initiative.

Monitoring and evaluating the RSS

In 2007, to document, monitor and evaluate the results produced by the RSS, Pobal, on behalf of the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRGA), undertook the preparation and publication of two reports on the Rural Social Scheme. The

² Prior to 2009 this measure was known as “Social care and care of the elderly, community after-schools groups and community pre-schooling groups”.

first of these, the “Rural Social Scheme, Performance Indicator Report, 2006-2007” reported on a series of performance indicators, both quantitative and qualitative and articulated many of the benefits arising from the scheme, both from the perspectives of individual RSS participants as well as the community organisations with which they work. This document clearly indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the scheme. At the same time the DCRGA and Pobal commissioned a series of case studies on the different measures under the RSS with a view to illustrating more clearly the types of work it supported and the role of participants within it. This publication, “The Rural Social Scheme - Making a Difference” again highlighted that important benefits were being generated by the RSS. However, it also suggested that it would be useful to move a stage further and to develop a more comprehensive and appropriate cost benefit analysis of the scheme. Thus, in 2008, Pobal undertook such an analysis on behalf of the DCRGA.

The invitation to tender set out the key task as being to undertake a social cost benefit analysis so as to “compare the cost of operating the RSS to the economic value of the work undertaken and to determine the value of the scheme benefits to participants”.

The objectives of this study were:

- To identify and quantify the economic and social benefits arising from the RSS.
- To enumerate the economic and social costs involved in the operation of the RSS.
- To compare and analyse these costs and benefits with a view to deriving a cost: benefit ratio.

In the document that follows these costs and benefits are identified and, where possible, quantified. Section 1 describes the methodology employed in the completion of the analysis. Following this, section 2 presents a detailed measure level analysis, describing both the financial and non financial benefits and costs associated with the implementation of the RSS. In doing so, it quantifies, where possible, financial costs and benefits and derives a measure level cost: benefit ratio. Alongside this, it also describes in qualitative terms the non financial benefits arising from the different measures. Section 3 moves from the local to the national level and applies the measure level data to the scheme as a whole, deriving a national level cost: benefit ratio in the process. The report concludes by presenting a number of conclusions and recommendations which arise from the analysis.

1. SELECTING AN APPROPRIATE METHODOLOGY TO ASSESS THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF THE RSS

Traditional uses of Cost Benefit Analysis

In general terms, Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) is used as a means of informing decisions on the allocation of financial resources, both public and private. It is generally seen as a means of projecting the returns likely to be gained on investments over time. As such, one of the principal uses of CBA is to enable decision makers to make comparisons between a range of possible alternative investment options.

In Ireland, CBA has been used significantly as a tool in decision making in relation to public infrastructure projects e.g. water, transport etc. In this regard, the Department of Finance guidelines for CBA suggest a number of steps to be followed. These include:

- presentation of a clearly defined set of project objectives (these should be explicit)
- a statement of alternatives that would meet the objectives (this should include the cost of doing nothing or minimal intervention)
- statements of constraints that impinge on the project

For each alternative option assessed, a number of factors should be included. For example, there should be:

- a list of costs and benefits expected over the economic life of the project and the underlying assumptions informing these.
- a quantification of costs and benefits in cash flows or economic flows as appropriate (these should include direct and indirect costs, tangible and intangible, and should exercise caution about double counting)
- a statement of projected cash flows or a cost / benefit balance sheet
- a calculation of decision criteria e.g. Net Present Values (NPV), cost-benefit ratio,

- Internal Rates of Return (IRR), maximum effectiveness at least cost, as well as tests for sensitivity to changes in key variables.
- identification of the possible distributional effects of the costs and benefits.
- assessment of the pay back period.
- recommendation as to the proposed choice of resource allocation

Thus, CBA is a tool that is generally applied to aid advance, project appraisal.

Social Cost Benefit Analysis

Social Cost Benefit Analysis (SCBA), as it was originally developed to meet the needs of developing countries, extended the use of CBA to introduce additional concerns around equity and redistribution. One of the key elements of SCBA was to recognise that even in the case of tangible costs and benefits; often the market price was an inaccurate reflection of their true values. For this reason, a process to develop alternative pricing was developed, known as shadow pricing. This is used therefore in situations where the market price is inaccurate or where it is more difficult to place value on a cost or benefit e.g. human lives saved. However, these can be difficult to construct and are highly dependent on assumptions.

Limitations of mainstream approaches

A number of limitations with the traditional application of mainstream techniques of Cost Benefit / Social Cost Benefit analysis can be identified.

Firstly, despite being presented as the basis for rational, scientific decision-making, cost benefit / social cost benefit analysis has not always been the sole arbiter of what constitutes efficient investment choices. While on paper it may offer some level of

technical underpinnings for decisions made, in reality, such decisions may have already been made. In such cases, cost benefit / social cost benefit analysis may be used, or abused, simply as means of verifying a decision that has already been made on different, perhaps political, grounds.

Clearly data limitation may be an issue in undertaking cost benefit / social cost benefit analysis. In some cases data may simply not exist and the gathering of necessary data may be seen as time consuming and/or prohibitively expensive. Hence, a key issue for analyses of costs and benefits is how far and how deep they can go. This is of particular importance when looking at the social impacts of investment decisions as these impacts may require much more intensive investigation and the development of previously untried means of valuing non tangible benefits.

The reliability of assumptions is another significant factor in cost benefit / social cost benefit analysis. Assumptions may be strongly value based and any analysis is inevitably influenced by the value systems of those who carry it out or those who commission it or both. In some cases, assumptions may be contested. For example, how do you measure the value of time saved by the development of new transport infrastructure? Some might use the equivalent value of production while others may value the time on the basis of increased leisure and/or family time.

In addition, context specific factors may exist which determine whether an analysis produced with a general set of assumption can be applied in the same way in all areas or in relation to all communities.

Finally, it should be noted that more traditional forms of cost benefit / social cost benefit analysis do not lend themselves to the analysis of all activities. Thus, either more appropriate forms of analysis need to be deployed or other forms of appraisal tools may be necessary. In the case of this analysis one such alternative tool has been employed.

Cost benefit analysis and the measurement of social impact

Efforts have been made to develop approaches to cost benefit / social cost benefit analysis that aim to more fully capture the range of direct and indirect; easily quantifiable and less easily quantifiable; tangible and less tangible, costs and benefits that arise in projects such as the RSS. One such approach, developed in Australia by Ziller and Phibbs³, provides the methodology that will be applied in the analysis of the RSS. The essence of this approach is to ensure that the full range of costs and benefits are captured and presented together. Thus, costs and benefits may be primarily non financial and therefore less easily quantified or they may be primarily financial, and therefore more easily quantifiable. In addition, costs and benefits may accrue to both individuals as well to the broader community and the state. Within this methodology the identified financial and non financial costs and benefits are presented in the form of a matrix, as in Table 1 below. This matrix enables presentation of all financial and non financial costs and benefits but does so in a way which deliberately avoids creating a hierarchy between the financial and non financial elements.

³ Ziller, Allison and Phibbs, Peter (2003) 'Integrating social impacts into cost benefit analysis: a participative method: case study: the NSW area assistance scheme'. Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal

Table 1: Sample matrix of costs and benefits

	Non Financial Benefits	Financial Benefits	Non Financial Costs	Financial costs
Cost and benefits to individuals e.g. RSS participants				
Costs and benefits to groups (e.g. local communities; the state etc)				

Developing and applying the methodology for the RSS

The key principles to be observed in the social cost benefit analysis of the RSS, deriving from the Ziller and Phibbs methodology are that:

- It describes both quantitative and qualitative benefits, ensuring that financial and non-financial costs and benefits are taken into account.
- It manages to integrate the social impacts of the RSS into the more standard CBA.
- It does so in a participatory way that harnesses the energy and enthusiasm of those directly involved in the RSS.

In assessing the range of non financial and financial costs and benefits, three levels of analysis are presented

Measure level

To gain an accurate picture of the experience of the RSS around the country this study utilises the RSS measures as the principal unit of analysis. Six geographical areas were chosen within which this measure level analysis could be undertaken, with one measure analysed in each. The six areas were chosen to represent a mix of geographical location and measure size, and therefore capture a range of RSS experiences, both in terms of scheme management but also in terms of the rural contexts in which they are located. It is important to state that the

location of the case studies is considered to be largely incidental and, based on the case study and performance indicator research undertaken during 2007, comparable findings would most likely been produced were the analysis carried out in other locations. It is at this level that the more detailed financial cost: benefit ratio is established.

Data at the measure level was gathered in two ways. Firstly, each area was visited and generally meetings took place with RSS supervisors and co-ordinators and, in some cases, with the managers and administrators of the Implementing Bodies. In a number of cases, detailed documentation had been prepared in advance in response to a framework sent to each area prior to the meeting. In others, documentation was provided subsequently. In all cases, an extremely high level of co-operation was received from all of the participating RSS schemes.

The non financial costs and benefits of the RSS were identified through discussions with the Implementing Bodies and RSS teams in each of the six selected areas and through a review of supporting documentation. Estimation of the range of financial benefits and costs arising from the implementation of the measure was based on a combination of locally derived data (e.g. local costs, local financial benefits etc) and information supplied by the Pobal Payroll system. In

terms of financial benefits, the analysis firstly identified the additional income accruing to RSS participants through the generation of additional income. As described below, the average additional income generated at scheme level is used. In certain cases, additional income benefits attributable to the RSS have also been identified.

Financial benefits also clearly accrue to local communities. The measurement of these benefits has been undertaken either through assigning a proxy valuation to the direct work undertaken based on current market rates, or, where possible, a market based valuation of the services provided. For example, in the analysis of the “Energy Conservation” measure, the financial benefit of the service is measured by using the comparable market value of the work were it to be obtained or available on a commercial basis.⁴ Equally, on the cost side of the equation, while the cost of the RSS participants to the exchequer is clearly the principle item, in some cases, additional local costs were generated, either in terms of nominal charges for services provided or through the recognition of the cost of administrative overheads not covered by existing payments from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. In some cases, the RSS is seen as having been directly responsible for stimulating volunteer involvement. Where information has been provided, the number of additional volunteer hours has been valued using the €25 / hour rate set in the guidelines for the LEADER Programme⁵.

Finally, it should be noted that information was not gathered on the general “Other” measure which currently accounts for approximately 5% of RSS participants. It was considered that initiatives undertaken under this measure varied widely from place to place and therefore did not provide a

⁴ This should not however be taken to imply that the RSS is displacing commercial activities. In most cases, recipients of support and services provided by the RSS would not be in a position to access or afford the commercially available services.

⁵ Rural Development Programme, 2007-2013, Outline Operating rules for Axes 3+4 p.43

reliable basis to extrapolate to the subsequent scheme wide analysis⁶.

Scheme level analysis

The purpose of this level of the analysis was to establish the costs of running the RSS at an individual scheme level so as to be able to establish an average cost per participant and to identify the average additional income accruing to each participant. To do this a particular point in time was chosen at which to measure the costs involved in running the scheme. The point picked was payroll week 47 in 2007 i.e. week ending 23 November, 2007. As described in the section on limitations and assumptions below, the development of a scheme level estimate of costs and additional income per participant was done to avoid possible distortions which might be generated by relying only on a limited number of RSS participants within a limited number of measures.

National level

At the national level, the SCBA matrix has also been completed and presents the combined assessment of the range of non financial and financial benefits generated by the RSS. The description of the non financial costs and benefits is based on a national workshop held with the representatives of the Implementing Bodies in August 2007 and supported by available documentation

In terms of the analysis of national level costs and benefits, this is presented in two ways. Firstly, drawing from the measure level data, a national level estimate of benefits and costs has been extrapolated, using a weighted system to reflect the numbers of participants involved in the different measures. From this a national level cost: benefit ratio is developed, incorporating the entire range of financial costs and benefits, arising at both the national and the local levels.

In addition, a comparison has been made between the estimate of benefit arising from

⁶ In addition, as the measure “Community Administration/Clerical duties” was only introduced to the RSS in July 2008, it does not feature in the analysis.

the RSS as derived from the measure level analysis, and the actual costs to the exchequer of implementing the RSS.

Assumptions and Limitations

Questioning assumptions

At various stages in any form of cost benefit analysis it is necessary to make assumptions. This may be about including or excluding items as costs and/or benefits and may involve assumptions on how to place a value on both benefits and costs. While such assumptions are unavoidable it is important to ensure that the assumptions have a clear rationale and can be defended. In this study, a deliberately conservative approach has been taken so as to ensure that the measured cost: benefit ratio is neither under nor over stated.

In some cases, direct financial benefits will be immediately obvious e.g. in the case of house insulations carried out by the RSS in the Warmer Homes initiative, clearly, the comparable commercial cost of carrying out the work is a legitimate value. In other cases, where an easily quantifiable output is not produced, e.g. maintenance of community facilities, the market value of the job undertaken is used as a proxy value. In general, nationally recognised hourly rates, where available, have been accessed and utilised.

Sample size

The scope of this study limited the number of measures that could be analysed. As such, the costs and benefits described in the measure level analysis represent the experience of almost 80 RSS participants in six schemes in Donegal, Duhallow, Kilkenny/Tipperary, Longford, South West Mayo, and South Kerry. Given that there were almost 2600 participants on the scheme at the point of analysis chosen in 2007, it is clear that this is a relatively small sample of the overall number. However, given the correlation between this study and the two documents produced in 2007, there is nothing in the analysis to suggest that the experiences and the cost and benefits identified would be different had a larger sample been utilised.

Avoiding distortion

However, to mitigate the effects of the relatively small sample the analysis uses scheme level data in devising the costs of participants in the chosen measures and to devise an estimate of the additional income accruing to the participants by virtue of their participation in the RSS. This ensures that any distortion which might arise as a result of individual circumstances within a small sample is not carried forward when the data is applied to the wider programme.

This is also important as it enables national and measure level administration and animation costs as well as grants for materials and capital materials to be allocated equally across all participants.

Financial vs. Real costs and benefits

At all levels of the analysis an effort has been made to present data on real cost and benefits as opposed to nominal costs. In particular, the cost per participant is presented net of social welfare savings, as these amounts would have been paid irrespective of whether or not the RSS ever existed. In the same way, the financial benefits accruing to individuals are net of prior social welfare payments, which individual participants would have received in any case.

Whole participant equivalents

While the sample size is described as comprising just under 80 participants, in reality it represents the experiences of a higher number, given that in many schemes some participants will work across a number of measures. For the purposes of the analysis whole participant equivalents are used e.g. in the South Kerry case study reference is made to 13 participants, whereas in reality up to 20 participants may at different times work on the walkways measures.

The benefits of deeper analysis

Because the analysis is taking place across so many disparate activities, a detailed analysis of any one individual measure is not possible. Were this to be done it is likely that considerably more detailed and expanded benefits could be enumerated. For example, in the analysis of social care provision in

South Mayo, there is little easily available information on the economic benefits of enhanced health amongst older people as a result of better nutritional status. While it is unlikely that significant resources will be available to conduct such studies it might be possible to develop mechanisms to enable

such analysis to take place at a more local level, possible on an interagency basis.

2. MEASURE LEVEL ANALYSIS

The most significant analysis within this study of the RSS takes place at the level of the individual measures. To facilitate this, six areas were chosen as sample sites of analysis. These six areas represent a balance of scheme size and geographical location. The six areas chosen and the measure analysed in each are:

- **Maintenance and enhancement of way-marked ways, agreed walks and bog roads.**

Case study location - South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd.

- **Village and countryside enhancement projects**

Case study location - Longford Community Resources Ltd.

- **Energy conservation work for the elderly and less well off**

Case study location - IRD Duhallow Ltd.

- **Social care and care of the elderly, care for both pre school and after schools groups.**

Case study location - South West Mayo Development Company Ltd.

- **Projects relating to not for profit cultural and heritage centres**

Case study location - Donegal Local Development Company Ltd.

In this section, a brief background is provided on each of the measures and on the case study locations. Following this, a more detailed analysis of the selected measure is presented, including numbers of participants and the principal financial and non-financial costs and benefits identified. For each measure, a cost: benefit ratio is established. In describing the non financial costs and benefits, it will be seen that there is significant similarity between the different case studies. Rather than being seen as repetition, however, these similarities serve to emphasise the widespread benefits being generated by the RSS all around the country.

- **Environmental maintenance work / maintenance and caretaking of community and sporting facilities.**

Case study location - Barrow Nore Suir Rural Development Ltd.

2.1 Maintenance and enhancement of way-marked ways, agreed walks and bog roads.

Case Study Location: South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd.

Introduction

The measure analysed in the South Kerry case study is the provision of support to projects relating to maintenance and enhancement of way-marked ways, agreed walks and bog roads. At a national level, 7% of RSS schemes support activities under this measure, involving 283 or 11% of all participants⁷.

Across the country responsibility for the development of walking, as an economic and a social / leisure activity is dispersed across a range of different entities. Historically, in many cases, local committees, community organisations and LEADER groups were responsible for organising walking activities and for initiating the development of way marked walks. In others instances, Failte Ireland and local authorities have taken on a role in the development and marketing of certain walking routes, particularly with a view to enhancing their tourism potential. More recently, and since the publication of a national Irish Trails Strategy in 2007, the National Trails Office, as part of the Irish Sports Council and the National Trails Advisory Committee have become more directly involved. The particular function of the National Trails Advisory Committee (NTAC) is to generate “agreement on a harmonised approach to certain elements of trail provision including; trail standards, trail classification systems, trail signage policy, trail development guidelines, trail quality assurance and appropriate marketing and promotion” leading to “systems and standards which are consistent and coherent to all users and developers”⁸.

The RSS in South Kerry is managed by the South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd (SKDP). SKDP is responsible for delivering the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP), the LEADER programme along with a number of other national schemes in this area. In Kerry, the RSS is seen as being especially valuable in complementing the prominent social inclusion focus of the LDSIP. The RSS in this area commenced in September 2004 and undertakes activities across all RSS measures, with a total of total of 138 participants (109 males and 29 female), supported by seven supervisor posts. In terms of employment, given that it effectively employs 138 (145 if the seven supervisors are included) people, the RSS is an important source of part time employment and income in the South Kerry area and is of crucial importance given the extremely limited availability of alternative off farm employment. While there are currently 25 people on a waiting list for the RSS there is an estimated potential for further positions to be filled were the funding to be made available given that there are almost 400 farmers on weekly farm assist payments.

Walking in South Kerry

Given its outstanding natural resources, it is of little surprise that there is a long history of walking as a leisure and tourism activity in County Kerry. Indeed, while the Wicklow Way was being developed by the NWWAC, a voluntary committee formed in Kerry to create a walking route around the Iveragh Peninsula. With the help of local FÁS schemes the first section of the Kerry Way from Killarney to Glencar was opened in 1985, emphasising the long history of co-operation between voluntary community organisations and schemes such as the RSS and Community

⁷ Pobal (2007) Rural Social Scheme: Performance Indicator Report 2006-2007.

⁸ For more information see <http://www.irishtrails.ie/about-us-overview.aspx>

Employment, often facilitated by LEADER and Partnership companies. These relationships, with local committees and national organisations, continue to be supported by the RSS today. The RSS in South Kerry therefore, works closely with a number of voluntary committees across its area of responsibility, providing support to the Kerry Way Committee, the Dingle Way Committee, the Annascaul Walking Committee and the Caherciveen Outdoor Club, either responding to requests or playing a more active role in stimulating the development of walking routes. For example, in the case of the Kerry Way Committee, support was requested from the RSS to maintain parts of the walking route, which were in danger of being closed due to lack of maintenance. According to the chairperson of the Kerry Way Committee, “The RSS was critical to the survival of the Kerry Way”⁹. The role of the RSS is evident in the fact that two RSS supervisors participated in the Kerry Way inspection carried out by the Waymarked Ways of Ireland in 2007¹⁰. By contrast, the initiative of the SKDP and the RSS were central to the development of loop walks in both Caherciveen and Annascaul and, as such, can be credited with stimulating substantial amounts of volunteer time. In this regard, five loop walks are being developed in the Annascaul area, three of which have already been finished with two others under development. A new walking route was also developed in the Caherciveen area.

Costs and benefits of the RSS in South Kerry

Through the lens of the ‘maintenance and enhancement of way marked ways, agreed walks and bog roads’ measure, important costs and benefits can be identified, as summarised in Table 2 below.

⁹ Interview with Sean O’suilleabhan, Chairperson, Kerry Way Committee, 30/9/2008.

¹⁰ The Kerry Way, 2006/2007 Inspection Report by John Monaghan carried out on July 11, 2007.

Non financial costs and benefits

In the South Kerry case, an average of 13 participant equivalents were involved on the walking measure during 2007, though at different times more than 20 participants may be involved in walks related activities. Moreover, the number engaged in this work is likely to vary at different times of the year as during poor weather participants will not be in a position to work outside. This adds an additional planning pressure on RSS co-ordinators and supervisors to ensure that a body of internal work is available for participants.

As with the national profile of the RSS described earlier, substantial non-financial benefits, for both participants and for local communities, can be identified.

Particularly noticeable in the RSS case is the opportunity offered for participants to carry out work appropriate to and utilising existing skill sets. This contributes to the development of a sense of pride in the work done and removes any unjustified stigma that might be associated with participation on the scheme. The opportunity to socialise with other participants has again been identified as the most important benefit of the scheme, clearly highlighting the role of the RSS in addressing the isolation experienced by many of those living in rural areas.

In terms of the local community, the RSS is clearly providing much needed support to enable the maintenance of existing walkways, preventing them from becoming inaccessible in some cases. It is also facilitating the development of new trails, thereby adding vital leisure and tourism infrastructure. By virtue of the existence of the RSS, volunteer members of local walking committees are now freed up to engage in other activities such as planning and monitoring the quality of walkways. For the SKDP, closer relationships with local communities are now facilitated, enabling a deeper understanding. There are also important health benefits for the local community arising from the availability of the looped walks.

Few non-financial costs are reported in the South Kerry case, though the demand on voluntary time from increased activity in the cases of the Annascaul and Caherciveen committees is noted.

Financial costs and benefits

The financial costs and benefits associated with this measure under the RSS in South Kerry are set out in Table 2 below.

Benefits

To estimate the financial benefits for RSS participants, the average additional income per participant on the overall RSS scheme in SKDP is used as a proxy value. Taking this as the basis for calculation, an additional income of €7,247 is generated per participant¹¹, yielding a total financial benefit of €94,211 for the 13 participants on this measure. The principal quantifiable benefit accruing to the community at large is the value of the work undertaken by the RSS participants in the development of local walking routes. Given that the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs has used the “own labour” rate of €14.50 established by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as the basis for payments under the Walks Scheme¹², it is considered appropriate that this be used to estimate the benefit to the community of the work undertaken by the RSS participants. Applying this rate to the 12675 hours worth of work undertaken in a single year by the RSS participants, direct financial benefits of €183,788 can be estimated. The benefit of RSS supervisor wages to the local economy must also be taken into account. For this measure, pro rata benefits of €18,271 are calculated.

What is not calculated here however, due to the non availability of accurate numbers of walkers, are the additional financial benefits generated by tourists availing of

the new walking routes or of the better maintained existing routes.

In total then, the financial benefits generated by the RSS can be estimated at €296,720 producing an average benefit per participant of €22,825.

Costs

As with the benefit side of the equation, given that most participants were already receiving a welfare payment for some time, only the additional or real cost per participant is recorded. Again, for the reasons outlined earlier, an average for all participants on the scheme has been generated, producing a real cost per participant of €10,840¹³, leading to a total cost for those involved in this measure of €140,920. Along with this, a number of the participants reported an increase in travel costs as a result of taking up the RSS position, estimated at €9,750 per year for the 13 participants. Taken together, it can be estimated that there is a total financial cost of €150,670 associated with the operation of this measure or €11,590 per participant.

Conclusion

In the case of the RSS measure to support the maintenance and enhancement of way marked ways, agreed walks, bog roads etc. it is clear that there is a surplus of benefit over costs. From the available information, it can be estimated that financial benefits of €296,720 have been generated or €22,825 per RSS participant. Total costs of €150,670 are estimated or €11,590 per participant. In purely financial terms it can be estimated therefore that there is a cost: benefit ratio of 1: 1.97 or, put another way, for every €1 of cost, quantifiable financial benefits of €1.97 are generated. Given that the value of additional tourism business arising from walking is not calculated, this can be safely assumed to be a conservative figure. However, it must also be remembered that over and above these economic values, substantial non financial benefit have been

¹¹ See annex 1 for detailed calculation of this figure.

¹² “The Walks Scheme”, Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, p. 7.

¹³ See annex 1 for detailed calculation of this figure

produced, which, for participants in particular, produce quality of life improvements far beyond monetary value.

Table 2: Cost and Benefits of RSS support to the maintenance and enhancement of way-marked ways, agreed walks and bog roads in South Kerry

	Non financial benefits	Financial Benefits		Non financial Costs	Financial costs	
Individuals and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers individuals a chance to have a shared sense of pride in their work. • Also offers socializing possibilities through the work environment. • Avoids stigmatizing RSS participants who are clearly doing a valuable job and carrying out valuable functions. • Allows RSS participants to both apply existing skills and develop new ones. • Puts RSS participants in a position to be able to access broader advice and support services. • Has encouraged greater on-farm efficiency. 	Additional annual income of €7,247 / participant x 13	€94,211	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None reported 	Additional participant travel costs for 13 participants @195 / week x 50 weeks	€9,750
Community & State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RSS is a vital tool in identifying and providing local solutions to local problems. • Creates a means of enhancing contacts within rural communities. • Facilitates SKDP to have greater contact with local communities. • As a result, the RSS is now woven into the fabric of the SKDP work. • RSS labour support is freeing up voluntary activity to engage in planning activities. • 6 new loop walks developed and parts of two existing routes maintained with associated health benefits. 	Economic value of RSS labour (12675 hours x €14.50 / hour ¹⁴) Pro rata benefit of supervisors wages Unquantified tourism benefits	€183,788 €18,721	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input of voluntary time at committee meetings. 	Average real cost / participant (€10840/ participant x 13)	€140920
Total Financial Costs and Benefits		Total Financial Benefits	€296,720		Total Financial Costs	€150,670
		Economic Benefit / participant	€22,825		Economic Cost / participant	€11,590
<p>Cost: Benefit ratio = 1: 1.97 i.e. for every €1 of cost each RSS participant produces a minimum €1.97 of quantifiable benefits</p>						

¹⁴ Department of Agriculture ‘own labour’ rate

2.2 Village and countryside enhancement projects

Case Study Location: Longford Community Resources Ltd.

Introduction

The village and countryside enhancement measure has been taken on board strongly by both community organisations and RSS schemes around the country. Almost one quarter of all community groups involved with the RSS are involved in activities under this measure, which accounts for approximately 26% of the total number of RSS participants nationwide¹⁵. As well as providing support to undertake local maintenance and enhancement work, this measure plays a strong role in stimulating an increased level of voluntary activity. In doing so, it helps to maintain a high environmental standard in the supported areas, creating the base for stronger communities and potential tourism related activities.

The RSS commenced in Longford Community Resources Ltd. (LCRL) in October 2004 with the first participants coming on board in January, 2005. The scheme currently has a total of 54 RSS participants, 18 of whom are women and the remaining 36 are men. Participants are supported by two supervisors and one co-ordinator. In Longford, the scheme currently supports activities within 32 community groups and a number of these, it is suggested, were reactivated and/or initiated directly as a consequence of the support provided by the RSS. In terms of locally available off farm employment opportunities, a number of large employers in the area, including Bord na Mona, previously provided some opportunities. However, opportunities in these have contracted and with the more recent decline in employment in the construction industry, off farm options are limited. In general, LCRL report that at least 30% of RSS participants have never had off farm employment previously.

Village and countryside enhancement projects in Longford

In Longford, village enhancement activities are supported in six communities, involving 15 RSS participants. In the village of Abbeysrule, five RSS participants maintain hedges and grass in the village and its environs and also carry out necessary painting and rubbish collection in public areas. In Newtowncashel, two participants take care of and enhance amenity areas at Barley Harbour and Lough Ree viewing points. In Abbeylara, the two RSS participants manage rubbish collection in public spaces, help to maintain the 'Bring' centre and manage grass verges and flowers in hanging baskets. Similarly, in Drumlish, the work of the two participants allocated to the local group is mainly concentrated on gardening related activities, as it is in Ballinalee, though here the two participants also spend some time maintaining the local cemetery and collecting rubbish. Finally, in Lanesboro, two RSS participants manage and maintain public green spaces, cutting grass, developing shrub beds and maintaining a local walking track. In all cases, the 15 participants work with at least one other person, producing social contact, which for many participants, was absent on a regular basis.

Costs and benefits of the RSS in Longford

Through the lens of the 'village and countryside enhancement' measure, important costs and benefits can be identified, as summarised in Table 3.

¹⁵ Pobal (2007) Rural Social Scheme: Performance Indicator Report 2006-2007

Non financial Costs and Benefits

Firstly, significant non-financial benefits are reported as a result of the RSS in Longford. Along with the previously noted benefits of flexibility and better time management, a link is suggested, in some cases at least, between the RSS and enhanced mental health and self-esteem. This may arise from the fact that none of the participants on this measure work alone and appear to derive important benefits from working as part of a team of two or more. Moreover, it has been suggested by the RSS team in Longford that the opportunity to exercise skills for broader benefit has inspired a greater sense of working as “custodians of the countryside”, achieving in practice one of the ideals of EU rural development policies from as far back as the Cork Declaration in 1996 which stressed that “farmers have a duty as stewards of many of the natural resources of the countryside”¹⁶. Partly as a result of working alongside, in many cases, other farmers, RSS participants also have an opportunity to share knowledge around farming practices and, by virtue of being more closely linked with LCRL, can also avail of relevant training, including health and safety. In addition, participants are also more closely linked to other related activities in LCRL, for example, the smallholder initiative.

As regards benefit to the community, the Longford case highlights a comment repeated in discussions on all of the different cases, notably the existence of an extremely strong work ethic, one that sees many RSS participants contributing volunteer hours over and above those that they are paid for. Indeed, it is suggested that this work ethic, allied to the appropriateness of participant skills, sets the RSS apart from other labour market schemes and generates its unique community focus. In the absence of the RSS there would appear to be little doubt that the benefits of this work ethic/skills mix would remain unharnessed and its value would be lost to local communities.

¹⁶ “The Cork Declaration - A living countryside”- The European Conference on Rural Development, November 1996.

Interestingly, alongside these non-financial benefits, the Longford RSS team have identified a potential non-financial cost arising from dependency on the continued existence of the RSS, for some participants at least. This dependency, however, is not necessarily financial but relates even more so to the socialising and networking opportunities provided by regular opportunities to interact with RSS colleagues. Thus, it is reported that a certain level of stress is generated by the annual renewal process and associated uncertainty about ongoing participation in the scheme.

Financial Costs and Benefits

Financial benefits for participants arise primarily from the additional income generated for participants. In the case of the Longford RSS this amounts to €5,732 per participant¹⁷, producing a total benefit of €85,980. In addition, it is also reported four participants, joined the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) as a result of their participation in the RSS. Based on the average farm size of the participants, the suggested annual average benefit per participant of this is estimated at €4,680, producing an undiscounted total of €93600 in additional income over the five years of the REPS.

From a broader community perspective, the work undertaken by RSS participants is highly visible within the supported communities, in activities ranging from gardening / landscaping to painting, with an annual total of 14,625 hours of work being generated by RSS participants. Based on the going rates for gardening/landscaping and painting in the Longford area researched by LCRL, a proxy rate per hour for work undertaken can be set at €22. This produces an estimated economic value of the work undertaken of €321,750.

However, beyond the direct work of the RSS, there is clearly a significant volume of voluntary input. In many cases, the voluntary input would happen irrespective of

¹⁷ See annex 1 for detailed calculation of this figure

the RSS. However, in a number of cases, it is suggested that it is the presence of RSS support that has actually stimulated this voluntary activity and thus, it is justified that it be included in any calculation of benefit. The number of such voluntary hours estimated by Longford Community Resources is 3450, which, when valued at the agreed voluntary labour rate in the LEADER programme of €25 per hour produces a total economic value of €86,250. Finally, it is also estimated that a number of communities have succeeded in attracting prize money totalling €3,750 for environmental enhancements, largely due to the input of the RSS.

Finally, the pro rata value of supervisor's wages is estimated to be €24,062.

Taken together, a total financial benefit to individuals and the broader community of €615,392 can be estimated, producing a benefit per participant of €41,026.

The only financial costs identified in the Longford case are those associated with the participants. In this case, the total cost for the 15 participants is €144,525, equivalent to a cost per participant of €9,635¹⁸

Conclusion

In the case of the RSS measure to support village and countryside enhancement, it can be seen that again, there is substantially more benefits generated than cost incurred. Total financial benefits of €615,392 are estimated or €41,026 per participant, compared with costs of €144,525 or €9,635 per participant. In purely financial terms therefore it can be estimated that there is a cost: benefit ratio of 1: 4.26, or, put another way, for every €1 of cost, quantifiable financial benefits of €4.26 are generated.

¹⁸ See annex 1 for detailed calculation of this figure

Table 3: Cost and Benefits of RSS support to Village and Countryside Enhancement Projects in Longford

	Non financial benefits	Financial Benefits		Non financial Costs	Financial costs	
Individuals and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better time management has been supported. A more positive outlook on farming encouraged. Increase in participants role as custodians of the countryside. Mental health benefits / increase in self esteem. Provides skills appropriate work. Increases awareness of other services. Enables access to further training opportunities. Facilitates participation in events, such as the national ploughing championships and increases exposure to different farming options. 	<p>Additional annual income of €5,732 x 15</p> <p>Increased income due to participation in REPS by 4 participants for the five year period of the programme</p>	<p>€85,980</p> <p>€93,600</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependence on the scheme and fears cause annual renewal process. 	None reported	
Community & State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive work ethic has been harnessed to the benefit of the local community. Maintaining smaller scale family farming activities in rural Ireland. Generates tourism benefits / potential by presenting the countryside as well maintained RSS participants act as informal tour guides. <p>RSS participants contribute an unquantified amount of voluntary hours and many are reluctant to take holidays.</p>	<p>Equivalent value of 14625 hours of village enhancement work undertaken¹⁹</p> <p>RSS stimulated volunteer hours in the community²⁰ - 3450 @ €25²¹</p> <p>Pro rata value of supervisors wages</p> <p>Prize money attracted following substantial RSS input</p>	<p>€321,750</p> <p>€86,250</p> <p>€24,062</p> <p>€3,750</p>		Average real cost / participant (€9635 x 15)	€144,525
Total Financial Costs and Benefits		Total Financial Benefits	€615,392		Total Financial Costs	€144,525
		Economic Benefit / participant	€41,026		Economic Cost / participant	€9,635
<p>Cost: Benefit Ratio = 1: 4.26</p> <p>i.e. for every €1 of cost each RSS participant produces €4.26 of quantifiable benefits</p>						

¹⁹ A proxy rate of €22/hour was used to illustrate the benefit accruing to the local communities. This was calculated using an average of the current daily rate for painters and gardeners in the Longford area i.e. €200 and €150 respectively.

²⁰ As calculated by Longford Community Resources Ltd. This does not include all volunteer hours from the different sponsor groups, only those considered to have been stimulated by the RSS.

²¹ LEADER programme rate of €25 / hour for volunteer input.

2.3 Energy conservation work for the elderly and less well off

Case Study Location: IRD Duhallow Ltd.

Introduction

Under the 'energy conservation work for the elderly and less well off measure', IRD Duhallow Ltd. participates in the Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) "Warmer Homes" initiative. This initiative commenced in 2004 and aims to "improve the energy efficiency and comfort conditions of homes occupied by low-income households"²². As described in an earlier case study on this initiative "an important element of this is to create and enhance the capacity of a variety of community based organisations to offer a locally based, insulation service to 'install such measures which includes attic insulation, draught proofing, lagging jackets, energy efficient lighting, cavity wall insulation and energy advice'. The service is offered free of charge to those considered eligible"²³.

Relatively speaking, only a limited number of RSS schemes undertake work on this measure and only 1% of RSS participants work on energy conservation activities²⁴, reflecting both the need to front load resources for materials as well as the very difficult nature of the work undertaken, particularly in carrying out attic insulation.

IRD Duhallow Ltd. is located in Newmarket in Co. Cork and has a catchment area that includes Northwest Cork and parts of East Kerry, approximating with the ancient barony of Duhallow. The area covers almost 1800 km² and incorporates a population of

roughly 30,000 people, located in areas of open countryside, small villages and in the market towns of Rathmore, Kanturk, Millstreet and Newmarket. In terms of land quality, more than 90% of the land in the area is classified as disadvantaged or severely handicapped. Like many rural areas the patterns and structures of agricultural in the area have changed considerably in the twenty years to 2007 with a "loss of 918 farming families; renting and sale of farms to large landowners; closure of creameries and other services; out migration of young people; a gender imbalance; an aging farming population; and increasing afforestation (area tripled since 1970)"²⁵

In this context, the RSS plays an important role in stemming the decline not just of agriculture, but of the entire area. The RSS in Duhallow, like South Kerry and Mayo commenced in 2004 and currently has 58 participants active across the range of RSS measures. Of these, 40% are women.

In terms of the Warmer Homes Scheme, in the IRD Duhallow catchment area in 2007, a total of 172 houses were insulated by 12 fully trained RSS participants and certified by SEI. Training in initial surveying and in insulation techniques was provided by SEI in centres in Tralee and in Dublin. To date, the primary emphasis of this measure has been attic and hot water tank insulation and on draught proofing. Information on the availability of the service is provided in local media outlets, through the HSE and, in some cases, through public representatives. A nominal average fee of €75 is charged for the insulation work carried out, though this

²² For further information see <http://www.sei.ie/index.asp?locID=666&docID=-1>

²³ Pobal (2007) The Rural Social Scheme – Making a difference in Rural Ireland, p.24.

²⁴ Pobal (2007) Rural Social Scheme: Performance Indicator Report 2006-2007.

²⁵ http://www.coillte.ie/community/community_partnerships/munster/

varies depending on individual circumstances.

Costs and benefits of the RSS in Duhallow

In this case, the experience of the Warmer Homes scheme is used to illustrate the costs and benefits produced by the RSS, as summarised in Table 4 below.

Non financial costs and benefits

As can be expected, some of the non financial benefits for RSS participants identified in the earlier cases are also present in the Duhallow experience, illustrating just how significant the RSS has been in changing the lives of those involved in it for the better. However, along with the previously identified benefits of increased social contact and enhanced farming practices and efficiency, the Duhallow case illustrates that there have also been benefits at the level of the family, the importance and value of which should not be underestimated. Thus, discussions in Duhallow suggest that the RSS is stimulating changes beyond individual participants and in fact, is having an impact on the aspirations of their children, who now view their parents, their work and their role in a different, more positive light. Moreover, the contribution of the RSS in providing an off farm outlet for women is seen as offering opportunities for self-fulfilment that might not otherwise have been available.

In terms of the broader community too, the impact of this measure is considerable. As well as providing a service that, for many, might otherwise have been unaffordable, the RSS is providing an additional point of contact and care for a community in which isolation is increasingly the norm. There is no shortage of testament to the way in which RSS participants carry out their roles, going beyond a technical, home insulation role, towards one where there is time to talk to and be concerned about the people for whom the service is being provided. In this way, the RSS can be seen to fit seamlessly as an essential thread in the fabric of a healthy community,

integrating with and complementing other social service provision. On the issue on non-financial costs, as in some of the other areas, some concerns were expressed about potential dependence on the RSS and the consequences if access to the scheme were to cease. In particular, where farming practices had changed to suit off-farm employment in the RSS e.g. through a cessation in milk production, it was felt that this might have implications.

Financial costs and benefits

The Duhallow example lends itself particularly well to the presentation of the financial costs and benefits of the energy conservation measure.

Benefits

In terms of the individual participants, average additional income of €7,194²⁶ per person produced a total additional income of €86,328. On top of this however, important financial benefits for the broader community can be estimated:

- The value of the insulation work undertaken is the most obvious of these. Based on locally available rates, it is suggested that the full market cost of insulating an average size house of 125 meters² is approximately €919. For the 172 houses insulated by the Warmer Homes Scheme in 2007, this generates a total benefit to the community of €158,068.
- On top of this 154 lagging jackets and 264 CFL bulbs were installed to the value of €3,080 and €2,640 respectively.
- However, beyond the direct value of the work undertaken and materials installed, it is necessary to include the value of energy savings produced. In terms of heating alone, a local survey in the Duhallow region suggests that there has been a 25% reduction in heating costs. Assuming an annual heating bill of €1,200 (1.5 tanks of

²⁶ See annex 1 for detailed calculation of this figure

- home heating oil or equivalent), a saving per house of €300 / year can be estimated, leading to a total saving on heating of €516,000 over a 10 year period. It can be argued that such savings occur each year for a number of years and thus, conservatively, the undiscounted savings produced for a ten-year period are included.
- In addition, using ESB figures for energy savings, it can be estimated that the savings produced by the installation of lagging jackets, over a ten year period is €30,800, and CFL bulbs, over the estimated lifetime of a bulb, is €44,800.
 - The pro rata value of supervisors wages is estimated in this case to be €18,18254 and
 - Finally, donated vehicles for use on the warmer homes schemes produced an approximate benefit of €7,000.

In total therefore, it is estimated that financial benefits to individual participants and to the broader community can be placed at €867,050, producing a benefit / participant of €72,254 per participant.

Costs

On the costs side of the equation, and again using the average cost / participant on the Duhallow RSS scheme as a whole as the basis for calculation, the real cost of participants comes to a total of €132,924 or €11,077 per participant. On top of this, the nominal insulation fee charged per house of €75 / house produces a total cost of €12,900 while insulation materials, the costs of which must be paid for in advance by IRD Duhallow, comes to €67,080 for 172 houses. Finally, IRD Duhallow estimates unreimbursed administration costs of approximately €690 per participant or a total of €8,280 for participants involved in the energy conservation component. No financial costs for individual participants are reported. In total, therefore, costs of €221,184 can be estimated, equating to €18,432 per participant.

Conclusion

Based on an estimate of total benefits of €853,322 or €72,254 per participant and total costs of €221,184 or €18,432 per participant, a cost: benefit ratio of 1: 3.92 can be calculated in this case. In other words, in the energy conservation measure, for every €1 of cost €3.92 of quantifiable financial benefits are produced.

Table 4: Costs and Benefits of the Warmer Homes scheme in Duhallow

	Non financial benefits	Financial Benefits		Non financial Costs	Financial costs	
Individuals and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company and an opportunity to socialize • Flexibility and adequate time to carry out farming Activities • Has an impact beyond generations, especially on the outlook of children and their aspirations. • Causes children to view the parent working on the RSS in a different, more positive light. • Increased efficiency on the farm • Enhances personal development • For women participants, contributes to a sense of personal fulfillment. 	Additional annual income of €7,194/ person x 12 =	€86,328	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential dependence on the RSS And on IRD Duhallow. • Encourages changes in farm Practice e.g. leaving milk production, to suit off-farm work. May have implications if RSS participation were to cease. 	No additional costs reported.	
Community & State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides additional source of contact for local communities, especially those who are more isolated. • Allows informal monitoring of community wellbeing. • Enables potential linkage with different social services 	- Full economic value of insulation work done on 172 houses at current market prices at approx. €919/ house.) -Pro rata value of supervisors wages - 25% saving on heating costs (1.5 fills of diesel / year or equivalent = €1200) - 154 Hot water tank jackets (€20 each) - Energy saving €20/ year x 154 x 10 years - 264 CFLs @ €10/ bulb CFL Energy saving ²⁷ (264 x €170 savings) -Donated Vehicles	€158,068 €18,254 €516,000 (300 x 172 houses x 10 years) €3,080 €30,800 €2,640 €44,880 €7,000	No additional non- financial costs	Average real cost / participant (€11077 x 12) Nominal insulation fee (€75/ house) Insulation Materials Non reimbursed Staff time / participant (12 x €690)	€132,924 €12,900 €67,080 €8,280
Total Financial Costs and Benefits	Total Financial Benefits		€867,050		Total Fin. Costs	€221,184
	Economic Benefit / participant		€72,254		Economic Cost / participant	€18,432
Cost: Benefit ratio = 1: 3.92 i.e. for every €1 of cost each RSS participant produces €3.92 of quantifiable benefits						

²⁷ Source for lagging jacket and CFS savings: ESB http://www.esb.ie/main/downloads/energy_home/esb_energy_efficiency_tips.pdf

2.4 Social care and care of the elderly, community care for both pre school and after school groups.

Case Study Location: South West Mayo Development Company Ltd.

Introduction

Across the RSS as a whole at national level, approximately 11% of the total number of RSS participants are involved in providing and supporting a variety of care services²⁸. This measure also accounts for the largest proportion of women on any measure in the RSS, with 41% of female participants

The Rural Social Scheme operated by the South West Mayo Development (SWMD) Company Ltd, which commenced in September 2004, is one of the largest in the country with 191 participants. For the purposes of this case study, the role of the SWMD Company RSS in the provision of “social care and care of the elderly, community care for both pre school and after school groups” is being focused on. The geographical remit of the scheme ranges from Mulranny near Achill Island to Glencorrib and Shrule, near the border with Co. Galway. Thus, the area covered by the scheme is a predominantly rural one in which small farm holdings dominate.

Given the isolated nature of much of the area covered by SWMD, the Social Care measure is seen as being of particular importance and, as a consequence, 25 RSS participants are involved in supporting a variety of activities, ranging from meals on wheels, childcare services, and provision of support to community organisations. These 25 RSS participants, 22 women and 3 men, work with a number of local, community based sponsor groups which includes: the Louisburgh Senior Citizens Committee and the Mayo Abbey Parish Centre, both providing a meals on wheels service; St. Vincent de Paul, where the participant is involved in

redistributing second hand furniture; Castlebar Social Services, where a participant supports the existing meals on wheels programme; a number of community based childcare providers, where RSS participants act as childcare assistants and the Ballinrobe and Claremorris Family Resource Centres, where a variety of support roles are occupied.

Costs and benefits of social care in South West Mayo

The costs and benefits associated with the implementation of the social care measure in South Mayo are summarised in Table 5 below.

Non-Financial Costs and Benefits

In terms of non financial benefits perhaps the most noticeable difference between this and other measures on the RSS is the fact that such a high proportion of women are involved, thereby distributing the benefits of the scheme more widely across the gender divide (albeit that an overwhelming 80% majority of participants on the RSS are male²⁹). As such, the RSS team in South West Mayo Development Company consider that a broader range of opportunities have been offered to women in rural areas that would not otherwise have been available, thereby contributing to an enhanced sense of self esteem and promoting personal empowerment. Moreover, the RSS is again seen as providing an outlet for existing skills as well as affirming the very existence of these skills amongst participants. The experiences of this

²⁸ Pobal (2007) Rural Social Scheme: Performance Indicator Report 2006-2007

²⁹ Pobal (2007) Rural Social Scheme: Performance Indicator Report 2006-2007.

measure echoes others which highlight how the benefits of working within the RSS can be accessed in a flexible and farm friendly way, while at the same time encouraging better time management. The benefit to individuals, it is suggested, is also reflected in the way that they approach their work. According to the RSS team “There’s a fantastic level of good will” amongst the participants and the fact that there is “no turnover whatsoever” illustrates the sense of value that exists in the RSS.

At the broader community level the provision of meals to a significant number of people in two areas, Louisburgh and Mayo Abbey, is seen as a vitally important service, which depends heavily on the personnel supplied by the RSS. This involves twice a week deliveries to homes in both areas as well as meals in day care centres on a Friday. In some cases, meals are delivered to people who are bed bound or to people with particular dietary requirements, with referrals often being provided by the public health nurse. However, the particular value of the RSS is in the fact that it is a locally run service. According to one RSS supervisor: “A lot of these people will not accept a meal from anyone else” emphasising the security of meals being delivered by local people, as well as providing the chance for recipients to catch up with local news....“Each delivery could take up to 20 minutes between chatting and that”(RSS supervisor).

This measure, more than amply illustrates the role of the RSS in encouraging volunteerism. While providing the meals on wheels service on a voluntary basis would perhaps be a daunting task, the fact that a core of skilled RSS participants are on hand to support the process makes it all the more manageable. In Louisburgh, for example, the preparation and delivery of the meals is undertaken by a team comprising of half RSS participants and half volunteers from the local community. In Mayo Abbey, the service is provided purely by RSS participants.

As well as the meals on wheels, the other participants also generate important benefits, supporting Family Resource Centres and providing inputs into a number of community based childcare facilities, thereby freeing up the time of fully qualified childcare workers to devote themselves to child care activities.

A particular benefit identified in the South West Mayo case is the valuable synergies that are taking place between statutory bodies and community provided welfare services. While other elements of the RSS have fostered good relationships with local authorities, it would appear that in terms of social care, the RSS is providing an essential care in the community service that existing professional services could not provide on their own. Given current national budgetary constraints initiatives such as the RSS will surely become even more important over time.

Finally, in terms of non-financial costs, it was noted that in a small number of cases, some degree of stigma may arise from being perceived to be on a scheme such as the RSS.

Financial Costs and Benefits

The financial costs and benefits of the RSS in South Mayo are set out in Table 5 below.

Benefits

Visible financial benefits accrue to both RSS participants and to the local community. For participants, using the average figure for the scheme as a whole in South West Mayo, additional income of €5,658 per participant³⁰ is generated, producing in this case a total benefit of €141,450. For the wider community, even more significant benefits can be calculated. In the first instance, at least 170, two and three course, meals are provided each week by the RSS supported meals on wheels programmes. Given the quality of these meals and the alternative cost of obtaining a meal in a local

³⁰ See annex 1 for detailed calculation of this figure

restaurant it is justifiable to value the meals at €12 each, leading to a total annual value of meals produced of €106080. However, at least 90 of these meals are delivered to people's homes. In the absence of the RSS, to access these meals would require the recipients to travel to nearby population centres, usually by hackney or taxi, at an estimated cost of approximately €15 per trip. Thus, the service provided over 52 weeks represents a saving of €70,200.

In addition to the meals on wheels the value of the other RSS participants can be estimated based on the current market rate for the type of work provided. In the case of childcare support workers, given that the RSS participants free up the time of a qualified childcare worker, an hourly rate of €9.15 is applied, based on rates recommended by the Labour Court³¹. In the case of the RSS participant working as a chef, a rate of €9.15 is also used, again based on Labour Court rates. Finally, for the remaining general support workers the national minimum wage of €8.65 is applied. Taken together these three categories of RSS activity produce benefits of €121,973.

In this case, the pro rata value of supervisor wages in this case is €37,981. On top of this, it is estimated that the RSS has stimulated an additional 3276 volunteer hours. When these are valued at the LEADER volunteer labour rate of €25 / hour, a total benefit of €81,900 can be estimated. Finally, a total of €22,000 in additional funds was levered by the RSS supported activities to purchase vehicles needed to carry out the meals on wheels programmes.

In total then, financial benefits from this measure of €581,584 can be estimated, that is, €23,263 for each of the 25 participants.

³¹ Recommended hourly rate as per Labour Court determination CD/06/261
<http://www.labourcourt.ie/labour/labcourtweb.nsf/cfcbbe5c5fe85fa680256a01005bb356/80256a770034a2ab80257138004b3ace?OpenDocument>

Costs

Regarding costs, a number of factors feed into the calculation of costs. Firstly, the RSS participants, at an average of per participant of €9,245³², cost a total of €231,125. On top of this, South West Mayo Development incurs an unreimbursed administration cost per participant €186 leading to a total of €4,650. Production of the meals supplied is estimated by the RSS team to be €5.00 / meal, including overheads, leading to a total production cost of €44,200. Finally, a fee of €5 is charged for each meal supplied, that is, a total of €44,200. Total financial costs incurred within the measure, therefore, are estimated to be €324,175 or €12,967 per participant.

Conclusion

Based on these figures, it is again clear that the RSS, in implementing this measure, produces benefits that far outweigh the costs involved. Total financial benefits of €581,584 are estimated, that is, €23,263 per participant compared with total costs of €324,175 or €12,967 per participant. At the purely financial level there is a cost: benefit ratio of 1: 1.79, that is, for each €1 of cost, €1.79 of quantifiable benefits are produced. It should be noted that, in this case in particular, placing an adequate financial value on the full range of social benefits produced by the scheme is extremely difficult and would need substantially more time than was available to this study. For example, how can the value of the RSS participants taking time to talk to the person receiving a meal be valued or the additional security felt by the recipient as a result of knowing that the RSS staff will be visiting. However, given that this measure, above all others, targets social needs, these not-directly quantifiable benefits need to be recognised by policy makers as an essential element in building social capital in the areas serviced by the RSS.

³² See annex 1 for detailed calculation of this figure

Table 5:Costs and Benefits of providing social care in South West Mayo

	Non financial benefits	Financial Benefits		Non financial Costs	Financial costs	
Individuals and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of self and of personal esteem / empowerment has been transformed. • Improved social outlets, especially for single people. • A broader range of opportunities have been offered for women that would not have been available otherwise • Skills of women in the community are being accessed, utilised and shared. • The health of participants has benefited. • Work opportunities are offered in a flexible, farming friendly way. • Has encouraged farmers to become better organised. • Provides employment in situations where little other alternative employment is available. 	Additional annual income of €5,658 / participant x 25	€141,450	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some cases, a sense of stigma of being an RSS participant. 	None identified	
Community & State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RSS taps into a fantastic reservoir of good will • The use of community facilities has been expanded, due increased human capacity. • Working families / individuals know that relatives can access a hot meal during the day, therefore some pressure is taken off those who must commute to work. • The service acts as an informal “community watch”. • General community health is improved through provision of access to enhanced nutrition. • Specialised meals are also delivered where necessary, usually in line with dietary or other medical requirements. • Human contact is provided, uniquely, for local residents by people they may already be familiar with. • Brings in additional skill sets for SWMD and deepens the level of community based contact for the company. • Creates a number of supervisor posts and enables well qualified staff to remain within rural areas. 	Value of meals @ €12 / meal x 170 meals x 52 weeks - Equivalent travel cost to access meals @ €15 x 90x52 ³³ -Time freed up by auxiliary childcare assistants (6825 hours @ €9.15 / hour) - Value of 1 Chef x 975 @ €9.15 / hour - Value of work of 6 general workers (5850 hours @ €8.65/hour) Pro rata value of supervisor wages - Increased number of volunteer hours (3276 @ €25 / hour) - Support levered to purchase vehicles	€106,080 €70,200 €62,449 €8,921 €50,603 €37,981 €81,900 €22,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for overreliance on the scheme. • Might at some point induce a decline in family responsibility for elder care 	Average real cost / participant (€9,245 x 25) Charge to the recipient of €5 / meal x 170 x 52 Cost to the RSS of producing a meal @ €5 / meal (including produce, facilities, fuel etc) Unreimbursed admin costs(€186/ per participant)	€231,125 €44,200 €44,200 €4,650
Total Financial Costs and Benefits		Total financial Benefits	€581,584		Total financial costs	€324,175
		Benefit / participant	€23,263		Cost / participant	€12,967
<p>Cost: Benefit ratio = 1: 1.79 i.e. for every €1 of cost each RSS participant produces €1.79 of quantifiable benefits</p>						

³³ The reduced number of meals in this calculation reflects the fact that, on Fridays, meals are provided in the local day care centre.

2.5 Projects relating to not for profit cultural and heritage centres

Case Study Location: Donegal Local Development Company Ltd.

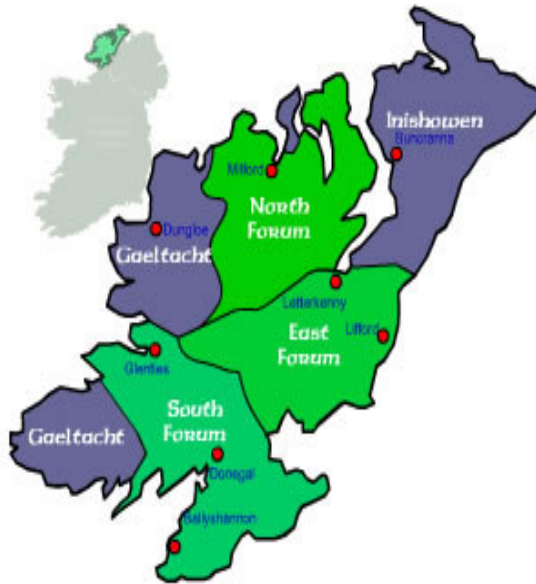


Figure 1: The DLDC catchment area³⁴

Introduction

Within the RSS 8% of participants are involved in “projects relating to not for profit cultural and heritage centres” across the country³⁵. In the case of the Donegal Local Development Company Ltd. (DLDC), four participants are involved on this measure.

The geographical area covered by DLDC extends from Bundoran in the South of the County to Lifford in the East and as far as Milford in the north west of the County. While there are a number of large urban centres in the catchment area, DLDC deals with a predominantly rural environment comprising, as described by the company website, “fragmented, marginalised, indigenous rural communities”. And at a time

when talk of rural depopulation has faded into the background in many parts of the country, Donegal serves as a reminder that while population may be growing in larger urban centres such as Letterkenny, Donegal Town, Ballybofey-Stranorlar, Ballyshannon and Bundoran, for more isolated rural areas, population continues to fall. Indeed, 61 electoral divisions within the DLDC catchment areas have actually experienced a decline in population between 1996 and 2002. It remains to be seen whether the current economic downturn will further exacerbate these population losses. It should also be noted that the region has experienced a series of economic shocks, including the decline in the textile industry, largely due to the pressures of globalisation, reduced activity in the fishing industry, reduction in the number of small farms and increasing amalgamation of farm units, as well as perceived difficulties in attracting replacement industries due to its peripheral location.

It is within this context that the RSS operates in Donegal.

The heritage measure in Donegal

DLDC is responsible for a total of 76 RSS participants, working across a range of different measures. Of this number the vast majority, 69, are male. In addition, there is currently a waiting list of 11 but potential to bring a further 70 participants on board is considered to exist.

For the purpose of this study, the measure analysed concerns projects relating to not for profit cultural and heritage centres. Within the scheme, support is provided to two such projects / centres, firstly the Teightunny Graveyard project and, secondly, the Workhouse in Dunfanaghy.

³⁴ Source:

http://www.dlhc.org/index_areaofoperation.html

³⁵ Pobal (2007) Rural Social Scheme – Performance Indicator Report 2006-2007

The first of these, the Teightunny Graveyard, located near to the Donegal/Fermanagh border is a cross community cemetery in use for almost 250 years. In 2005, a local committee was established to explore how they might restore the graveyard. Subsequently, in 2006, the committee became involved in the RSS and since 2006 have benefited from the support of three RSS participants.

The second initiative, supported by one RSS participant since 2005, is the Dunfanaghy Workhouse, which originally opened in 1845. In 1989 a local committee was established to undertake the restoration and renovation of the workhouse buildings and to establish, operate and maintain a famine heritage centre and generally to promote tourism in the area. The RSS participant has played a particular role in refurbishing a coffee shop, which is now open all year round and the art exhibition area of the workhouse, which as a result now hosts an increased number of exhibitions. The centre also provides a venue for the running of children's courses.

Costs and benefits of the RSS in DLDC

The financial and non-financial benefits of the RSS in DLDC are set out in Table 6 below.

Non financial costs and benefits

Many of the non-financial benefits identified earlier are echoed in the experiences of the RSS in Donegal. Increased self esteem, enhanced mental and physical health, benefits from increased social interaction, job satisfaction and increased access to knowledge, enhanced farm management and farm friendly flexibility are all reported. Alongside this, it is also suggested that the improvements in time management also helps to create a more structured family environment. Moreover, rather than seeing agriculture as something that is in decline, the RSS experience may actually act as a role model for younger farmers who might be considering their future in the industry.

Beyond the individual participants, substantial community benefits have been identified. The fact that community members

are supported to access employment is seen as important, along with the financial benefits that this brings to the local economy. The RSS is also seen as playing an important role in preserving community life and in increasing pride and local quality of life in areas, which, as described above, continue to experience population decline. In the context of this measure in particular, the RSS participants are seen as playing an important role in preserving the heritage of local communities, thereby acting not only as custodians of the land, as described in the Longford case study, but as custodians of history, culture and memory.

The direct relevance and immediate capacity to benefit local communities is also seen as contributing to the positive image of bodies such as DLDC and the Department of Rural Community and Gaeltacht Affairs.

As regards non-financial costs, a number are suggested. Firstly, there may be some cost in being away from the home and/or the farm for 19.5 hours per week and a reduction in free time, though in general the benefits of RSS participation were seen as outweighing this. One possible consequence of this may be a reduced capacity to undertake social care responsibilities. Finally, as in the Mayo case study, some residual stigma of being a participant in the RSS was noted.

Financial costs and benefits

Benefits

The operation of this measure again generates financial benefits for both the individual participants and also for the local community.

Firstly, in terms of the participants, additional income benefits have been produced, estimated to be of the order of €5,905 per participant³⁶, a total of €23,620 for the four participants involved. More broadly, it is estimated by DLDC that the equivalent market value of the work undertaken by the participants on the Teightunny Graveyard is of the order of €91,260, based on an hourly

³⁶ See annex 1 for detailed calculation

rate of €32.50³⁷ / hour for the type of skilled labour involved. In addition, a donation in-kind of stone was received to the value of €3,500.

In the case of the Dunfanagy Workhouse, it was noted earlier that the RSS participant had played a major role in the restoration of the centre's coffee shop and exhibition centre. Increases in the turnover of both the coffee shop and the exhibition centre are attributed to this work. The value of this increase between 2006 and 2007 was €25,235. Finally, the pro rata value of supervisor wages produces a value to the community of €6,192.

It is estimated therefore, that financial benefits of €149,807 have been generated as a result of the RSS input, that is, €37,452 per participant. This of course does not take into account the likely increase in tourism activity that inevitably results from the increased availability of local attractions. For example, the Dunfanaghy centre noted a 65% increase in the numbers attending its famine exhibition between 2006 and 2007.

Costs

The only costs associated with the RSS in this measure relate to the cost of participants. Based on the average scheme cost / participant of €9,713, this produces a total cost of €38,852.

Conclusion

As in all the case studies, there is little doubt that a wide range of non-financial and financial costs and benefits are generated by the RSS under this measure. Total financial benefits of €149,807 or €37,452 are estimated, compared with total costs of €38,852 or €9,713 per participant. Taking these purely financial costs and benefits into account, it is estimated that there is a cost: benefit ratio in this case, of 1: 3.86, that is, for every €1 of cost, €3.86 of quantifiable benefits are produced.

³⁷ This is the rate estimated by DLDC for the type of skilled work undertaken under this measure.

Table 6: Costs and Benefits of the RSS under the DLDC “not for profit culture and heritage centres” measure

	Non financial benefits	Financial Benefits		Non financial Costs	Financial costs	
Individuals and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased self esteem and self worth, mental & physical health • Social interaction with community & fellow workers • Contributing to the community which... • Increases access to information and knowledge of work related entitlements • Job satisfaction • Improvement of farm life through training, better time management • Helps to keep participant actively farming • Gaining extra skills • Creates a more structured family environment. • Gives a participant’s family support and security in the knowledge that the participant is at work each day. • Flexibility of working hours • Acts as a role models for younger farmers 	Additional annual income of €5,905/ person x 4	€23,620	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being away from the home/ farm for 19.5 hours in the week. • Some social stigma. • Not being able to have hot meal ready for other members of the family whilst at work e.g. elderly member of family. • Loss of free-time • Some increased risk of injury 	None	
Community & State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides good PR for the Implementing Bodies, DCRGA etc. • Provides knowledge for local groups of the procedure to access DLDC/partner agencies funding • Provides employment in local community which helps to sustain that community • Maintaining land in good condition for next generations • Preserves the heritage of the local community • Preserves community life for socially and economically disadvantaged rural people. • Creates tourist attractions and enhancing local facilities • Increase in the amount and quality of community networks and linkages • Frees non-participant volunteers to do more strategic work • Increases the synergy, quality and quantity of inter-agency working • Increases community pride and local quality of life 	Estimated market value of participant labour	€91,260	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased meeting time and commitments for community group members • Increased bureaucracy for community committees • Some over-reliance on the scheme as the solution to all community needs • Increased human resources management demands for both the local community groups as well as the DLDC 	Average real cost / participant (€9,713 x 4)	€38,852
	Levered donation in kind	€3,500				
	Increase in turnover in the Dunfanaghy Workhouse	€25,235				
	Pro rata value of supervisor wages	€6,192				
Total Financial Costs and Benefits		Total Fin. Benefit	€149,807		Total Financial Costs	€38,852
		Benefit / participant	€37,452		Cost / participant	€ 9,713
<p>Cost: ratio 1: 3.86 i.e. for every €1 expended €3.86 of quantifiable benefits are produced.</p>						

2.6 Environmental maintenance work – maintenance and caretaking of community and sporting facilities.

Case Study Location: Barrow Nore Suir Rural Development Ltd.

Introduction

The measure analysed in this case study, “environmental maintenance work - maintenance and caretaking of community and sporting facilities” accounts for the largest number of RSS participants across the country, involving approximately 38% of the total³⁸.

Barrow Nore Suir (BNS) Rural Development Ltd. was formed in 1991 and included Kilkenny and South East Tipperary within its catchment area. As a result of the cohesion process, the responsibilities of BNS have now been assumed by the County Kilkenny LEADER Partnership Company and the South Tipperary Local Development Company respectively. The RSS scheme in the former BNS area is one of the smaller schemes in the country. At the end of 2007, the scheme had 22 participants from a quota of 23. These participants were involved in a variety of different activities, providing administrative support to community organisations, undertaking maintenance of community facilities and contributing to village enhancement, provision of social care in the community, supporting a local farmers market and helping to develop walking as a tourism and leisure activity in the BNS catchment area. The work of these 22 participants is supported by the employment of one RSS co-ordinator/supervisor.

The maintenance measure in BNS

The equivalent of five and a half³⁹ participants work on the maintenance measure in the BNS scheme providing support for the operation of a number of

different community facilities. In the community centre in Kilmoganny, the RSS has supported the centre since its inception. In this case the RSS participant provides supervision in the local community centre, acts as caretaker in St. Eoghan’s centre and assists in the preparation of sets for a local drama group. Another RSS participant supports the activities of the KCAT (Kilkenny Collective for Arts Talent) Arts and Study Centre in Callan⁴⁰, which provides art classes and studio space for those with and without special needs, and thereby “provides an environment in which artists and students from different backgrounds and with different abilities can work together and create as equals, ensuring that life long learning is a possibility for everyone”⁴¹. In this case the RSS participant is involved in a variety of activities. He prepares spaces for exhibitions, supports the presentation of the exhibitions, undertakes ongoing repair of equipment and general maintenance of the centre, supports the preparation of art classes and maintains the KCAT library.

In Piltown two RSS participants offer support to the ongoing development of the Iverk showgrounds and the work of the community group which organises the Iverk show, the oldest in the country and the largest in the South East of Ireland. The RSS participants in this case are involved in “development and maintenance work such as fencing, replanting and maintenance of tree boundaries, upgrading of waterpipes, replacing drains, maintaining roadways and general upkeep of the grounds in preparation for the Iverk Show and other

³⁸ Pobal (2007) Rural Social Scheme: Performance Indicator Report 2006-2007.

³⁹ One participant divides his time with another measure.

⁴⁰ For more information on KCAT see

<http://www.kcat.ie/>

⁴¹ Barrow Nore Suir Rural Development Ltd (2008) A Partnership for Progress: A Review of the Barrow Nore Suir Leader Programme – 1994-2007 p. 74

community events”.⁴² In Gowran, one RSS participant supports the local development association, taking responsibility for the local village community centre and for the maintenance of community property in the village. Finally, one RSS participant provides half time support to maintain the regatta club in Graignamannagh.

Costs and benefits of the RSS in BNS

The costs and benefits of this measure under the BNS RSS are set out in Table 7 below.

Non financial costs and benefits

In terms of the non financial costs and benefits produced by the RSS in the case of the environmental maintenance measure, similar benefits for individuals and communities are reported in the BNS catchment area as were experienced in other parts of the country. Once again, the principal non financial benefit described was the enhanced social networking opportunities available to participants, even though in the BNS case quite a number of participants work individually as opposed to working in teams. Related to this is the creation of a stronger sense of contributing to and being part of community.

For communities too, important benefits are identified. Again, the RSS is seen as strengthening the linkages between the Implementing Body and local communities, thereby enabling an improved two-way flow of information. Moreover, it is again suggested that the RSS is contributing to community capacity to maintain and, in some cases, expand the range of community activities in place and that it has played a role in facilitating the involvement of local volunteers, thereby deepening the resource of social capital available to the local community.

It is also suggested in this case, as in some of the others, that potential non financial costs may exist, but that these do not apply in all cases. Some changes in farm practice to suit the RSS working regime were observed, though it is unclear whether these might have happened anyway. Potential dependency on the scheme was also identified as a factor, again being associated with some level of stress caused by the yearly renewal process.

Financial costs and benefits

The financial costs and benefits associated with the RSS in the BNS area are set out in Table 7 below.

Benefits

As in the other areas, the RSS has made an important contribution to enhancing the income of participants. In terms of income, the RSS in this case provided average additional income of €9,043 per participant, a total of €49,736 for the measure analysed.

The value of the work of the participants is measured at a current market rate of €9/hour for general maintenance work. This produces an estimate of the total value of this work of €48,258. Alongside this, the pro rata allocation of supervisor's wages generated a further benefit to the community of €7,352. Total benefits, therefore, of €105,028 are calculated on this measure or €19,096 per participant.

Costs

The only identified financial costs in this case are those associated with the employment of the RSS participants by the Implementing Body. In this case costs of €12,684 per participant are recorded, generating a total cost of €69,762.

Conclusion

The environmental maintenance measure, as with all of the other measures, again generates a surplus of financial benefits over financial costs. In addition it supports the undertaking of work that is

⁴² Barrow Nore Suir Rural Development Ltd (2008) A Partnership for Progress: A Review of the Barrow Nore Suir Leader Programme – 1994-2007 p. 75

seen as being the lynch pin for many community organisations. A comparison of financial benefits of €105,028 (€19,096 per participant) to financial costs of €69,762 (€12,684 per participant) produces a financial cost: benefit ratio of 1: 1.51. However, while this may be the lowest of the cost: benefit ratios recorded, this should in no way imply that the work undertaken, which brings huge benefits to both individual participants and local communities alike, is of any less importance than the other measures, which may, by virtue of the type of work undertaken, have greater potential to generate or stimulate quantifiable financial costs.

Table 7: Costs and Benefits of the measure for “Environmental maintenance work – maintenance and caretaking of community and sporting facilities”

	Non financial benefits	Financial Benefits		Non financial Costs	Financial costs	
Individuals and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social aspects, especially for those working in Teams. • Noticeable improvement in quality of life amongst participants. • Increased access to information and training Opportunities. • Activities and a greater sense of being part of their community. 	Additional annual income of €9,043 x 5.5 persons	€49,736	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some changes in farming practice noted • Some degree of restriction on work time • Possible build up of dependency on the Scheme for individual participants • Yearly renewal process can be a cause of stress for some participants. 	None reported	
Community & State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities can get better access to information on grant opportunities. • Benefits BNS by providing closer linkage to community organisations • Has increased the capacity to hold and expand community activities. • Levels of social capital have been both enhanced and deepened. • Very strong work ethic of participants seen as benefiting the broader community. • In some cases, the RSS has stimulated voluntarism e.g. youth activities. • Enhanced environmental monitoring and maintenance 	Economic value of RSS labour (5362 hours @ €9 / hour)	€48,258	May produce some degree of Community dependence on the RSS	Average real cost @ €12,684 participant x 5.5	€69,762
		Pro rata value of supervisor wages	€7,033			
Total Financial Costs and Benefits		Total Financial Benefits	€105,028		Total financial cost	€69,762
		Benefit / participant	€19,096		Economic Cost / participant	€12,684
<p>Cost: ratio = 1: 1.51 i.e. for every euro of cost each RSS participant produces €1.51 of quantifiable benefits</p>						

3. THE RURAL SOCIAL SCHEME (RSS) - THE NATIONAL PICTURE

Introduction

Having described the origins of the RSS, the methodology developed to conduct a social cost benefit analysis of its role and having presented the analysis of the different measures, this section now extracts some of the key findings as they apply to the scheme as a whole across the country. As is done throughout the analysis an effort has been made to locate the less tangible and less quantifiable non financial costs and benefits alongside the more tangible and more easily quantified, financial costs and benefits. This section of the document therefore presents the key non financial costs and benefits of the scheme as identified by representatives from the six Implementing Bodies at a workshop in Oranmore, Co. Galway on August 28, 2008. Participants at this workshop included both the managers of the Implementing Bodies as well as RSS co-ordinators and/or supervisors. Alongside these, significant and quantifiable costs and benefits are enumerated and described. As described in the section on methodology earlier, these benefits and costs are largely extrapolated from the more detailed measure level analysis presented in the last section.

General costs and benefits of the RSS

A summary of the costs and benefits of the RSS are outlined in Table 8 below.

Non Financial Costs and Benefits for individuals and communities

As has been evident from the more detailed measure level analyses presented in the last section and as confirmed in the 'Performance Indicator Report 2006-2007' and the 'Making a Difference in Rural Ireland' publications, the RSS is producing

a broad range of non-financial benefits, for both individual participants and for local communities. For the purposes of this study, the initial workshop collectively discussed the non financial benefits arising from the scheme and these discussions were followed up during the visits to the individual schemes, the outcomes of which have been described in the last section. Given that there is a strongly shared sense of the benefits produced by the RSS across the participating Implementing Bodies, it is not intended to describe these in detail at this point. To summarise however, the non-financial benefits identified on a recurring basis across the RSS include:

- Visible increases in quality of life and corresponding decreases in stress;
- Improved mental and physical health, in part at least as a result of enhanced interpersonal networking and socialising opportunities;
- Greater income security as a result of having a regular RSS payment;
- Strong and sincere personal and professional support as a result of the visible commitment of RSS supervisors and Implementing Body managers;
- Flexible working hours, which makes the RSS farming / fishing friendly;
- Improved health and safety awareness and;
- The opening up of broader opportunities and horizons for families, especially children.

For communities too, there is renewed evidence of substantial non-financial benefits being produced. Feedback from the participating schemes points to the existence of increased and redirected volunteerism, enhanced linkage between Implementing Bodies and local communities as well as improved contact between farmers and the Implementing Bodies. It is also clear that important

processes and institutional developments have also been generated, not least the cultivation of increased co-operation between statutory bodies and the Implementing Bodies, achieving the types of synergies envisaged in the 1996 Better Local Government White Paper.

However, one of the principal benefits reported by all of those who contributed to this study is the fact that an extremely strong work ethic and level of commitment has been harnessed by the RSS from amongst the participants. And while all participants wished to avoid direct comparisons with other schemes, there can be little doubt that the RSS has a unique set of characteristics that enable it to produce such a range of benefits, with little negative consequence.

In this regard, some non-financial costs were identified but it was stressed that these occur in a very limited number of cases only. Such costs may include some loss of free time, though as many farms were often under-producing, this wasn't always seen as a negative. Some potential dependence on the RSS - financially and socially, was identified. Where, as in some cases, agricultural practices changed to suit the albeit flexible RSS time demands, it was considered that some increased risk was introduced, especially if access to the scheme was to cease. Again, in a small number of cases some instances of perceived stigma associated with working on a scheme such as the RSS was noted, though given the high value of the work undertaken, this was not a widespread problem.

Financial costs and benefits of the RSS

Estimates of the financial costs and benefits produced by the scheme are also included in Table 8. A more detailed outline of the basis for this calculation is set out in Table 9. It should be noted that these estimates are primarily based on the measure level analyses, which are then extrapolated to the RSS as a whole.

Based on this, it is conservatively estimated that across the RSS nationally

total quantifiable financial benefits of **€71,855,953** are generated or almost €28,135 per RSS participant.

By contrast, total quantifiable costs for the RSS as a whole amount to **€29,552,009**, approximately €11,571 per participant.

Conclusion

Based on these figures, it can be estimated that there is a total real cost: total benefit ratio of 1: 2.43 i.e. for every €1 of cost associated with the RSS, more than €2.43 of benefits are produced.

While total real costs of almost **€29,552,009** have been calculated, this figure comprises both locally generated costs as well as the actual direct cost to the exchequer of the RSS i.e. €24,898,946, as shown in table 10 below. This actual cost of to the exchequer is derived by taking away the value of social welfare savings from the actual financial costs of the RSS.

Thus, when overall financial benefits of €71,855,953 are compared with real costs to the exchequer of €24,898,946 a total real exchequer cost: total benefit ratio of 1: 2.89 is established, that is, for every €1 of real exchequer cost, €2.89 worth of benefits are produced within and for local communities.

Table 8: National Level Costs and Benefits of the RSS

	Non financial Benefits	Financial Benefits	Non Financial Cost	Financial Costs
Individuals and Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased quality of life / decrease in stress. Enhanced networking / socialising capacity Improved health and safety awareness. Support and commitment of RSS supervisors and local development managers. Flexible work hours. Where necessary, job related training. Broader opportunities for families. Improved mental and physical health Greater income security 	<p>Additional income for participants and their families.</p> <p>Income from access to additional programmes such as REPS.</p> <p>Potential access to other benefits e.g. medical cards.</p> <p>PRSI contribution built up.</p>	<p>Loss of free time</p> <p>Potential dependence on the RSS - financially and socially.</p> <p>Some limited cases of residual stigma.</p> <p>Loss of family time, including time for child and/or elder care.</p> <p>Vulnerability arising from changing farming practice to suit RSS time demands.</p>	<p>Some additional travel costs but minimal.</p> <p>Potentially some childcare / eldercare costs.</p> <p>Potentially greater take up of welfare entitlements.</p>
Community & State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased and redirected volunteerism Increased environmental quality Community facilities available for longer periods. Links between local development companies and local communities. Increased synergies and co-operation between local development and statutory agencies Harnessing extremely strong work ethic for community benefit. Labour support within bureaucratic pressures. Small scale infrastructure supports can be more easily delivered. Builds relationships between farmers and community organisations 	<p>Materials supplied to community organisations</p> <p>Helps to open doors to level other funding.</p> <p>Maximises existing funding sources.</p> <p>Local tourism is enhanced.</p> <p>Enables work to be undertaken when alternative open market alternatives might be inaccessible due to prohibitive cost.</p> <p>From the measure level analysis an average benefit produced per participant of €28,135 is estimated, leading to a total benefit for the RSS as a whole of €68,254,715, for the 6 measures analysed⁴³.</p> <p>When applied to the average no. of paid participants per week in 2007 i.e. 2554, total benefits of €71,855,953 are generated.</p>	<p>Some additional meetings for sponsor groups</p> <p>In some cases, state agency resentment reported.</p> <p>Some tensions between RSS and CE at a local level (seems to be the exception rather than the norm)</p> <p>Potential for overreliance on the RSS.</p> <p>Potential for volunteer displacement.</p> <p>Increased personnel / admin management burden on local development companies</p>	<p>The measure level analysis contains a variety of costs including payroll costs and various support costs such administration, materials, capital material costs, local charges unreimbursed administration costs supervisors costs etc.</p> <p>From the measure level analysis the average cost per participant is estimated to be €11,571, leading to total costs of for the RSS as a whole €28,070,937 for the 6 measures analysed.</p> <p>When applied to the average number of paid participants per week in 2007 i.e. 2554, total costs of €29,552,009 are generated.</p>
		Total Financial Benefits - €71,855,953		Total Financial Costs €29,552,009
National level cost: ratio = 1: 2.43				

⁴³ See table 9 below

Table 9: National Cost: Benefit Ratio Calculation

Measure	Case location	National % of part. on the measure	Equivalent no. of participant in 2007 (at week 47)	Average cost generated/measure	Total cost generated / participant	Average benefits produced per participant	Total benefit per measure	Measure level ratio
Walkways	South Kerry	11	281	11590	3256095	22825	6412456	1.97
Village and countryside enhancement	Longford	26	664	9635	6398025	41026	27242905	4.26
Energy conservation	Duhallow	1	26	18432	479232	72254	1878604	3.92
Social Care	SW Mayo	11	281	12967	3642949	23263	6535507	1.79
Cultural & Heritage Centres	Donegal	8	204	9713	1984560	37452	7652193	3.86
Environmental maintenance work	BNS	38	971	12684	12310076	19096	18533050	1.51
Total for six measures			2426		28070937		68254715	
Average cost and benefit / participant (for the six measures analysed)					11571		28135	
Total costs and benefits for the RSS as a whole			2554 (average no. of paid participants per week in 2007		29,552,009		71,855,953	
Cost: Benefit Ratio 1: 2.43								

Table 10: Cost of the RSS to the Exchequer

Payroll costs (as per 2007 Pobal Mgt a/c's)		42376881
(average no. of paid participants per week in 2007= 2554		
Support Costs		
Annual Materials Grant	1,588,686	
Annual Admin Costs (Pobal)	660,340	
Pobal Technical Assistance	59,829	
Capital Materials Grant	1,463,190	
Local Administration Grants	1,412,584	
Local Animation Grants	113,000	
Subtotal Support Costs		5,297,629
Total Payroll and Support Costs		47674510
Financial Cost / participant		18667
Social welfare savings		
Total SW saving 2007	22,775,899	
Total SW saving per participant	8,918	
Actual Exchequer Cost of the RSS / participant		9,749
Total Actual Exchequer Cost of the RSS (cost / participant x 2554)		24,898,946
Benefit produced / participant (from measure level analysis)	28,135	
Total benefits produced		71,855,953
Actual exchequer cost: to total benefits ratio		1: 2.89

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This analysis of the rural social scheme has examined the operation of six measures operating within six different Implementing Bodies, spread throughout the country. One of the most apparent conclusions emerging from this analysis is the shared experience of the benefits being produced by the RSS. The purpose of this analysis was to identify the range of non financial and financial costs and benefits arising from the RSS. However, in doing so, it has been mindful of the need to avoid presenting a hierarchy of such costs and benefits. Thus, the analysis has presented a matrix of benefits and costs with the clear message that no one cell in the matrix should be seen as any more or less important than the other. In essence, when looking at the RSS it is important to take into account both the non financial and financial aspects. While saying this, it is recognised that for some policy makers the bottom line financial cost: benefit figures will be seen as the most important element to be taken into account in ongoing decision-making about the RSS. However, it would be a mistake to focus on these alone, without acknowledging the huge range of non financial benefits that the RSS is generating.

In terms of non financial aspects it is clear that the RSS delivers benefits for both individual RSS participants, for their families, for local communities and, indeed, for the state, both national and local. For individuals and their families, tangible, albeit not easily quantified, benefits are contributing to a clear improvement in quality of life. The benefits identified in this analysis reinforce the experiences reported in previous RSS analyses. However, for communities, the RSS is enabling activities to be supported, work to be undertaken and services to be provided that simply would not be possible if the scheme was not in place. In providing such services, many of those interviewed have commented that the success of the RSS derives strongly from its uniquely

rural character and from the strong work ethic of farmers and fisherpersons. Moreover, it is considered that its voluntary character is of huge importance.

It is clear that as the country enters a period of more constrained public finances that schemes such as the RSS and others will need to be more conscious of value for money assessments of their activities. Having cautioned against reliance on financial data only to judge the RSS it is of course valid and necessary to subject the RSS to rigorous value for money scrutiny, especially in the current economic climate. However, on this metric the RSS can be shown to generate substantial financial benefits over and above the financial costs incurred in running the scheme. Thus, based on the analysis of the six measures, a total cost: benefit ratio of 2.43 is established. When locally generated costs are removed from the equation and exchequer costs only are considered, this ratio improves to 2.89. By any measure, these ratios, which are conservatively calculated, can be seen as representing strong value for money. Moreover, there can be little doubt that were the state to try to directly provide some of these basic services, the cost to the exchequer would be considerably higher.

While acknowledging the importance of measuring value for money, undertaking this study highlighted that, across a range of programmes and sectors, there is a limited focus on measuring outputs, outcomes or impacts, either quantitatively or qualitatively. In fact, the RSS is one of the few schemes to prioritise such analysis. The identification and measurement of results need not be seen as a highly technical or as an exercise in bureaucratic control. It should instead be seen as an essential tool to enhance the delivery and refine the design of programmes. It is recommended therefore that more conscious efforts might be made to gather and produce information to track costs and benefits, either using the model

presented in this analysis or an alternative. However, this must be done in close co-operation with the deliverers of programmes on the ground and should not be imposed in a top down fashion. For example, one item not quantified in this study is the financial benefit of walking, mainly because reliable, localised figures for walking are not available. Thus, it would be worthwhile to develop more precise ways to estimate the number of walkers using routes supported by the RSS, an exercise that could be undertaken by the Implementing Bodies, possibly in conjunction with Walking Routes Ireland (WRI), Failte Ireland and the National Trails Advisory Committee (NTAC).

It should also be recognised that the RSS is playing an important role in breaking into the cycle of social exclusion in rural Ireland, whether this is experienced as low income; as lack of access to welfare provision, such as pensions; as low access to services; as insecurity or as isolation from human contact. While current economic constraints are acknowledged, it would appear obvious that even greater financial and non financial benefits could be generated by a further extension of the RSS, beyond its current limit of 2600. In fact, consideration of such an extension may well be necessitated by the collapse in access to off farm employment in the construction sector and resultant pressure on rural incomes.

In conclusion, it is suggested that as well as contributing to the maintenance of community facilities and the rural environment, the RSS is providing an irreplaceable input to ensure that those who are most vulnerable in rural communities are supported. As such, it is consciously and unconsciously reconnecting and repairing the fabric of many rural areas, which have become weakened by past emigration, by poor rural services and by the effects on rural dwellers of commuter lifestyles. More importantly, given the possibility of increased out migration due to the economic downturn, the role of the RSS within rural communities is set to become all the more important.

Annex 1: Calculation of average cost of and additional income to participants at scheme level

Financial and real costs / scheme At Week 47

	IB parts Quota	Part. Payroll Cost @ wk 47	x 53 weeks	Fuel allowance (FA) x 29 weeks	Total Part Pay & FA. @ week 47	Average wage/FA per part.	Support costs / part.	Annual Fin. Cost / part.	Weekly SW Saving	SW Saving x 53 weeks	SW saving/ participant	Real cost / part.	Add. Income / part.
Barrow Nore Suir	23	8203	434759	5742	440501	19152	3641	22794	4387	232522	10110	12684	9043
Donegal	76	21044	1115307	9918	1125225	14806	3808	18613	12763	676450	8901	9713	5905
IRD Duhallow	58	17540	929617	5220	934837	16118	3882	20000	9765	517558	8923	11077	7194
IRD Duhallow	58	16287	863222	5220	868442	14973	3882	18855	9765	517558	8923	9932	6050
Longford	55	14348	760445	9396	769841	13997	3903	17900	8577	454586	8265	9635	5732
South Kerry	138	41104	2178518	17226	2195744	15911	3594	19505	22561	1195725	8665	10840	7247
SW Mayo	191	51167	2711866	18270	2730136	14294	3587	17881	31122	1649490	8636	9245	5658

Annual Support costs

	IB parts Quota	Capital Materials	Annual Mat. Grant	Admin.	Animation	Pobal Admin allocation (€280/part)	Supervisor Costs	Total Support Costs	Support cost / part.
Barrow Nore Suir	23	14110	13118	14513	3000	6440	32571	83752	3641
Donegal	76	46626	42943	45254	3000	21280	130285	289388	3808
IRD Duhallow	58	35583	31862	39769	4000	16240	97714	225168	3882
Longford	55	33742	29808	35022	3000	15400	97714	214686	3903
South Kerry	138	84663	78800	70736	3000	38640	220089	495928	3594
SW Mayo	191	110000	105982	91305	3000	53480	321369	685136	3587



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