

# INTERVENTION DE SEAN DUNNE MEMBRE DU MOUVEMENT ATD QUART MONDE IRLANDE

## Conditions nécessaires pour résister et pour rompre le silence. Colloque international « La misère est violence, rompre le silence, chercher la paix » Maison de l'UNESCO 26 Janvier 2012

My name is Sean Dunne. I am the Co-ordinator of a community drug rehabilitation programme for recovering heroin addicts in the inner city of Dublin Ireland. This project emerged out of a report commissioned by the government on the extent of heroin in the inner city. An important finding of that report was that the environment (poverty) played a major part in heroin use. Furthermore it pointed out that the method of use was through injecting and sharing needles and caused the spread of HIV and the Aids virus. It recommended (among other measures) that treatment and rehabilitation be put in place and that the causes of addiction be addressed.

Communities were invited to identify gaps in the Aids/Drugs Section of the Health Board services leading to the establishment of rehabilitation programmes, training and development services under community control in co-operation with employment. Education and youth diversion programmes. Needle exchange, and methadone treatment services were established accessed by the poor and inpatient respite services were established for the then terminally ill aids patients. Fear arose in the community as there was little information about the virus was available. The virus ran through large families and young people began to die. Because of the fear sufferers often died without the support of the community and were initially buried in body bags. Many large families lost two, three and four children without being cherished by the community or the health services.

Because families could not afford the burials the health board would only fund cremation, the cheapest form of burials. Mothers sewed quilts with the names of their loved ones embroidered on. An annual service by the family support group is held in the inner city attended by the whole community. The community determined that no other family would go through the violence and loss of the bereaved, established appropriate services to prevent a recurrence of this epidemic. Parents went back to school and

secured the necessary qualifications and skills to establish these services. A Drugs Task Force was established in the twelve identified areas suffering from the subsequent heroin addiction. These were composed of all state agencies that encountered addiction in the course of their work. i.e. the Gardai, the educational services, the Employment & Training services, the community and medical services. The community began to feel good about themselves despite the lack of adequate funding. However it was felt in the corridors of power that the addressing the causes of addiction (poverty) was a bridge too far and began clawing back funding and representation by the community when the financial situation in Ireland was at its best. Now as we are in recession their strategy to dispense with the community services and channel the fund in the failing bank which caused our problems in the first place.

Although the community is sufficiently organised to mount protests there is silence from the government. The community is now in fear for the future. Dialogue between the community and the authorities has ceased. Jobs are disappearing and incomes are dropping at an alarming rate.

The work now has to be between the sufferers of government policy, so that at least, we can be clear on exactly what is happening and why That the void of silence from the government be filled by dialogue between families and the poorest of our community. That we bear witness the events that affect the poor thereby giving support and hope.

When people find out what I work at they say "how do you manage with the violence" I tell them that I have never encountered any violence from the participants or the families or the community. But I certainly have problems which the violence with permits such situation to happen and is prepared to let them happen again and again.

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