CULTIVATING RESILIENCE: MONAGHAN ALLOTMENT CASE STUDY

Community Members of Monaghan Community Allottment

Synopsis

This case study demonstrates how Monaghan Integrated Development CLG (MID) used SICAP support to help a diverse community allotment group tackle rising utility costs, lack of infrastructure, and environmental challenges. By combining €4,955 in Local Community Group grant funding with voluntary labor from allotment members, the project successfully installed a 6,000-liter rainwater harvesting system and a central community shed for administrative office space and tool storage. The initiative highlights how social inclusion and local climate action can work together to build strong, self-sustaining community groups.

Beginning: Context and Challenges

Initial Needs and Local Context

The Monaghan Community Allotment brings together 28 active members. Many live in the nearby area of Killygowan, a disadvantaged neighborhood on the Pobal deprivation index. The group represents several key SICAP target groups, including;

- People living in disadvantaged communities
- People who are long-term unemployed
- Migrants, Refugees, and International Protection Applicants
- Members of the Traveller communities

Before this initiative, the allotment faced three major obstacles that threatened its long-term future:

- **High Water Costs:** The group relied entirely on treated mains water provided by Monaghan County Council. Rising water charges created an unfair financial strain on low-income plot holders.
- **Environmental Footprint:** Using treated, drinkable water to irrigate crops was recognized as environmentally unsustainable and contrary to Climate Justice principles.
- **Lack of Basic Infrastructure**: The site lacked a central shelter, secure tool storage, and administrative workspace, which made it hard to organize meetings or run group operation

"The rainwater harvesting system has lifted a huge financial weight off our members' shoulders. Lower water charges mean our growers can keep their plots going sustainably without worrying about rising costs"
- Alice , Chairperson, Monaghan Community Allotment

Community Engagement and Consultation

The Community Enterprise Development Officer - Jeyald Rasaratnam met regularly with committee members of the Monaghan Community Allotment to assess their ongoing needs. Together, they developed SICAP - Annual Support Plans for 2024 and 2025 under Goal 1 (Action 1.4). The project followed a collaborative community development approach: SICAP provided technical assistance, governance advice, and capital funding, while allotment members contributed voluntary physical labor to build and install the site facilities.

Actions and SICAP Contribution

SICAP Supports and Funding Package

Over a two-year period, SICAP provided a total direct grant package of €4,955 through Local Community Group (LCG) Grants. In 2024, an initial allocation of €2,393 funded a digital administration package featuring a laptop to professionalize plot management, record-keeping, and member communications. This funding cycle also covered initial hardware, including a Hitachi 18V drill and basic tools to begin shed construction, along with the first phase of the rainwater harvesting system setup, which established essential collection equipment and basic piping.

In 2025, a second grant of €2,500 enabled key site upgrades. This included €1,455 dedicated to expanding the rainwater system with additional gutters, piping, and high-capacity storage tanks, bringing total storage capacity to 6,000 liters. The remaining funds were allocated toward ongoing site upkeep and technical installation, providing €507 for a commercial grass trimmer to manage grounds and clear pathways, alongside €538 to cover specialized trade costs for professional plumbing and structural work.

Group Empowerment

Beyond financial assistance, SICAP staff provided hands-on support to help group members manage the grant smoothly and build confidence. Community Enterprise Development Officer guided group leadership through basic procurement processes, assisting them with gathering supplier quotes and keeping proper invoices and receipts for grant reporting.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

What Worked Well:

- ***Cost Reduction & Sustainability:*** *The 6,000-liter rainwater system successfully collects rainwater off the shed roof, significantly lowering mains water reliance and saving members money.*
- ***Improved Operations:*** *The shed acts as an administrative center ("office") and shelter, allowing meetings to run year-round regardless of weather.*
- ***Social Inclusion:*** *The group enables cross-cultural collaboration, which enhances social integration among target group members.*

Challenges and Limitations:

- ***Capacity Limits in Summer:*** *The 6,000-liter capacity reduces mains reliance but does not yet deliver 100% water independence during dry summer months. The group still relies on council water during dry spells.*
- ***Trader Availability:*** *Sourcing local certified tradespeople willing to undertake smaller technical jobs within grant timeframes proved challenging and caused minor delays.*

Next Steps and Future Strategy

Looking ahead, the Monaghan Community Allotment aims to install roof-mounted **solar PV panels** to power continuous water filtration, aeration, and pumping systems, while expanding storage tanks for complete summer independence. MID will support these goals by mentoring the group through future renewable energy funding applications, connecting them to regional networks, and documenting the project as a Climate Justice best-practice model to share with other LDCs and community groups through site visits and peer learning.

"This project is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union." "Tá an tionscadal seo cómhaoinithe ag Rialtas na hÉireann agus an tAontas Eorpach."