

Fund



INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

FOCUS

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Chairman's Introduction

As we look ahead to how we deliver on our new strategy – ‘*Connecting Communities 2021 - 2024*’ it is important to reflect on the obstacles we have overcome as a society as well as those we continue to face. Strong leadership and collaboration demonstrated across communities has played a key role in our progress and strengthening these will be a vital part of our next phase of work.



Significant progress has been made in areas across the island of Ireland, including removal of interfaces, addressing paramilitary activity, critical intervention in some of the hardest to reach communities and enhanced community relations. While this progress is significant, how we navigate the complexities around the NI Protocol and Covid-19 as well as a range of other challenges will play a vital role in how local communities continue to prosper.

Fergal Keane's contribution in this edition is very timely as it underlines the importance of patience and quiet diplomacy in achieving real reconciliation. It emphasises the need to understand that many people continue to experience trauma that is caused by the violent conflict of the past. This trauma, which manifests itself intergenerationally, threatens to dominate the lives of future generations unless we, as a society can address this issue. We cannot afford to allow what he refers to as “a second silence” causing future lives to be ruined by further violence which will continue the cycle.

He challenges us to be open about the psychological costs of conflict. The healing of trauma is not only an individual journey; it requires collaboration from across a range of support services, government, and statutory agencies. What is needed is a holistic approach with a clear understanding that this cycle can only be broken by real long term, sustainable support.

Cross border relations have never been more relevant in our pursuit of maintaining a sustainable peace and reconciliation across this island of Ireland.

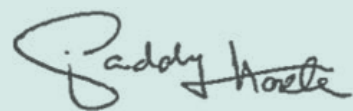
This edition of Fund Focus is a chance to review our work whilst proactively planning for how we continue to deliver for communities across Northern Ireland and the southern border counties. For over 35 years the International Fund for Ireland has developed and implemented innovative programmes and initiatives aimed at tackling the most difficult community issues, with an overarching aim of building a sustainable peace and a truly reconciled and shared strategy.

Identifying the need to further enhance and engage on cross border relations has led to the development of a new programme aimed at supporting co-operation on projects that have a meaningful benefit for local communities. *The Communities in Partnership Programme* will complement our existing

initiatives which are aimed at developing long term sustainable opportunities across communities.

You will also read about the real tangible outcomes of the other IFI funded programmes – Peace Impact Programme (PIP), Personal Youth Development Programme (PYDP) and Peace Barriers Programme (PBP) – how they have worked within local communities to find solutions that work for them.

Now more than ever, it is vital that we continue to play our part in empowering communities to build a shared future. As we start this new venture into our new strategy we will continue to advocate for the support of local communities, enhancing opportunities for all.



Paddy Harte, Chairman

Funding update

The International Fund for Ireland (IFI) has allocated £476,469 / €538,410 to further support community projects across Northern Ireland and the southern border counties at a critical time in peace building work.

IFI Chairperson Paddy Harte said; *“Peace building in any context is a slow process, but we are committed to supporting and empowering communities. Over the last 35 years, we have achieved a lot by implementing innovative programmes and initiatives aimed at tackling the most difficult issues and reaching out to marginalised communities.*

“There is still however much work to be done as we continue to work against an incredibly challenging backdrop of instability where many simply feel that the Peace Process has alienated them and left their communities behind.

“Through our work we believe that continued partnership and collaboration will enable communities to evolve and ultimately create better lives and futures for all. Our work is more important than ever, and we are greatly encouraged by the difference our projects are making at a grass roots level daily.

“Difficult conversations have resulted in the removal of Peace Walls, some which have stood for more than 40 years. In the last year alone, we have diverted more than 3,000 young people away from paramilitary recruitment, with more than

3,200 young people achieving a range of accreditations and a further 528 in further education and training.

“This latest support package of £476,469 / €538,410 will provide much needed support, benefiting communities who need intervention the most.”

The Chairman also took the opportunity to thank the international donors who contribute to the Fund – the European Union and the Governments of the United States of America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

Funding Allocation is as follows:

	Stg £ Award (£ equivalent)	€ Award (€ equivalent)
Peace Impact Programme (PIP)		
Dalaradia Cultural Historical Association, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim	91,640	103,553
The Carson Project, Ballymena, Co. Antrim	64,983	73,431
	£156,623	€176,984
Personal Youth Development Programme (PYDP)		
Duncairn Community Partnership/ Limestone United, North Belfast	189,669	214,326
Inishowen Development Partnership, Donegal	130,177	147,100
	£319,846	€361,426
TOTAL FUNDING	£476,469	€538,410



A The Fund Board

35 years of the Fund

35

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The IFI is created


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USA first contribution to the Fund signed by President Ronald Reagan


- 

Shannon-Erne Waterway Opening


- 

Fund moves away from economic development to focus on reconciliation


- 

Launch of Peace Walls and Peace Impact Programmes


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Personal Youth Development Programme is launched


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New Connecting Communities Strategy launched



What is shared and what is not

The International Fund for Ireland (IFI) is one of the great moral success stories, not just of the Irish story, but in the history of peacebuilding across the globe. It is easy – in Ireland and elsewhere – to wallow in the ecstasy of righteousness. To retreat into the firm convictions of our ancestors or be driven by our anger.



By:
**Fergal
Keane**

What the IFI has shown – through its masterful quiet diplomacy – is that resolution and reconciliation is patient, often unglamorous work, but which applied with neutrality and common sense can help to substantially reduce tensions. That work is not only an end in itself. It offers a model to the young who find themselves caught up in the bitter arguments of the day, a model that they can hopefully carry into the future.

I am going to write about something that is central to the aims of the IFI. It is commonly said that we of the island of Ireland – whatever our political or religious affiliation – share the same island.

But over many years as a reporter – in both parts of the island – I learned that we did not share the same experience. So often I felt out of sympathy with my southern friends when I went to Dublin for a weekend after weeks of reporting the conflict in the north. I could not describe to them how it was... how utterly different from their safe, assured world. So, I learned not to talk about it.

The southern memory of conflict appeared to be largely historic. It belonged to the time of our grandparents.

Trauma is something very close to my head, my heart, and my soul.

Eighteen months ago, I decided that I could no longer function as a witness to war. I publicly stepped down from

my role as the BBC's Africa Editor – a job that involved a fair share of reporting on conflict. It came after a career reporting from practically every major – and many smaller – conflict of the last three decades.

I had been officially diagnosed with what is called complex post-traumatic stress disorder caused by repeated exposure to traumatic incidents in conflict zones.

My first exposure to the trauma of conflict came in Northern Ireland. Between 1985 and 1990 I worked first for RTE and then the BBC – my professional life too often a litany of murders, funerals, interviews with grieving family members. The dread of those calls from the police press office reporting that a Catholic man had been found dead in an entry on the Shankill Road, or a policeman or part-time UDR man murdered at home, or the bomb that had obliterated lives in Belfast or Enniskillen or so many other places.

What I did not realise then was the degree to which the trauma of earlier Troubles had impacted on my own family. What my generation in the south experienced, those of us with families who had been involved in the Troubles of 1916-1923, was a collective silence around the brutalities that they suffered and that they inflicted.

There was no sense in my growing up of the bloody awfulness of civil war. I believed my grandparents and granduncles had fought “the good clean fight” when of course there is no such thing in war.

As a child in the 60s, in a country where the heroic narrative dominated, the blood was missing. The mess of mutilated bodies that I have seen in so many places in our time, was never part of what I learned, much less the anguish of nightmares, alcoholism and depression which consumed some of those who had been participants, willing and otherwise, in the revolutionary period.

There is, if you wish to find it, abundant evidence of psychological distress. In file after file in the Military Archives references surface to trouble with “nerves” or a “collapse” or “nervous breakdown”.

“...in both parts of the island – I learned that we did not share the same experience.”

One veteran recalled: *At night when asleep if a motor car stopped within hearing distance I would spring on to the floor.*

Another told of how a traumatised killer, a young man who had taken part in the Bloody Sunday attacks in Dublin in 1971 had – and I quote – *become mentally upset and wished to give himself up. It was pointed out that should he do this it would allow the British to discover the identity of all or some of the others involved, with dire consequences. I suggested taking the boy into the Mental Hospital.*

The traumatised policeman Sergeant Hamilton in West Cork who “suffering from his nerves...went almost crazy when we fired the first shots... and the remainder of the garrison had to tie him up and secure him.”¹

The archives illuminate a world of pain, but they are largely devoted to the experiences of those fighting for the Revolution. There is, for the most part, a great silence where the voices of the defeated are concerned.

I remember visiting one relative of an RIC man shot during those times and asking if she had ever told her family's story before. “Nobody ever asked,” was the poignant response.

Free Staters, Republicans, ex RIC might have shared the name of Irishmen and women, but their memories of the wars were so shaded by the bitter memory of killing, by what had been won, lost, and not won, that it would have been impossible to conceive, in the circumstances of those times, a process of truth and reconciliation that would have enabled an honest emotional accounting of the time. And it was not a trauma experienced exclusively in the south. The sectarian riots in Belfast and Lisburn and other towns, with the loss of hundreds of lives, represented a deep wound on the psyche for many of those who suffered and witnessed the violence. They were such very different times.

“ ... There was no sense in my growing up of the bloody awfulness of civil war. I believed my grandparents and granduncles had fought “the good clean fight” when of course there is no such thing in war. ”

Only in recent years has there been an attempt to address trauma in that conflict. And in that I believe there is a lesson. We cannot afford a second silence. If trauma is to be overcome in the north of Ireland there will be, there already are, many personal journeys to undertake... the journeys that could not be undertaken in the south after the War of Independence and the Civil War.

“ ... If trauma is to be overcome in the north of Ireland there will be, there already are, many personal journeys to undertake... ”

The healing of trauma is not only an individual journey. It needs to be supported – most obviously by the medical services of a state, by the efforts of voluntary support groups – but by Governments – and by society at large – which accept that the costs of conflict can endure for generations.

We know of the exceptionally high levels of post-traumatic-stress-disorder in Northern Ireland.

But we do now live in far more enlightened times where the recognition and treatment of mental health problems is concerned. Recently I visited the WAVE trauma support centre in Belfast. What an inspiring group of people treating the pain of those experiencing PTSD without reference to where in the community they come from or what side, if any, they took.

It should go without saying – but I am afraid it does still need saying – that healing trauma cannot take place without a truly stable peace process.

Nor can it happen if the major parties to a conflict do not show the necessary, the essential, honesty and humility and generosity.

Beyond the financial and structural support for those traumatised, there is something more we can do. We must speak of war as it actually is, put all mythologizing to one side, make the moral leap and try to really see the blood pooling on a kitchen floor, the scattering of flesh on branches, the haunted days and nights of those who live on after the wars.

Would the young men we sometimes see nowadays shouting Loyalist paramilitary slogans or chanting ‘Ooh ah up the Ra’ really be so full of voice if they knew what war was really like?

Perhaps a few would, but most I argue would recoil from their jingoism and recognise the pain it causes to those living with the trauma of the Troubles.

Too often we believe that if we re-build broken cities and towns, we build factories and create jobs, we open parliaments and have democratic votes it is enough. We urge the survivors to “move on” and to find closure.

What a word: closure. As if the past had a door that could be swung shut. It cannot. I believe we must strive for openness about the psychological costs of conflict and when we look through that mythical door into the past let it be with clear eyes. If you value the future of your children and grandchildren let there be no revising the past to suit a political agenda. Whoever you are. Whatever side you come from.

Fergal Keane has won numerous awards for his radio and television reports. In 2015 he was awarded an EMMY for his role in the BBC coverage of the migration crisis. In 2018 Fergal stepped back from war reporting disclosing that he was suffering from Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Fergal is also a distinguished author whose most recent book “Wounds” won the Christopher Ewart Biggs prize. He is currently writing about his experience of PTSD.

¹ WS 1450, John Ryan.

Communities in Partnership

It has been clear for some time that Brexit is likely to have significant consequences for the island of Ireland. Borders are in danger of, once again, becoming a significant barrier, physically and psychologically, to harmonious relationships on these islands. The issues impacting border counties (north and south) are still evolving but it is likely they will represent significant challenges for governments.

Over the course of this strategy, the IFI will strengthen links by introducing a new community partnership programme that will embed cross-border co-operation. This will build resilience in the face of uncertainty and friction, and support the development of local leadership.

In line with our strong belief that communities are best placed to design their own future, groups are encouraged to put forward initiatives that show innovation and creativity in addressing the challenges they face.

We look forward to working with projects that can meet two criteria: that it builds genuine connections on a cross-border basis and that it provides meaningful benefit to the communities involved. Projects that bring people together to serve their communities in imaginative ways include:

- Using culture and the arts to create a space for people to deepen their understanding of the past and set a path for their future
- Launching initiatives that strengthen civic engagement thereby empowering communities to face difficult conversations
- Facilitating contact and discussion between diverse groups working on peace and reconciliation across the island
- Creating projects that engage and empower young people from both sides of the border
- Taking practical steps to improve people's social and material wellbeing
- Creating the conditions necessary for the development of social enterprise and innovation.



A Picture of border area near Newry, Co. Down.

Peace Barriers Programme

The IFI has invested more than £6.9m/€8.1 since the launch of the Peace Walls Programme in 2012 enabling groups to deliver interventions in their area. It focuses on helping interface communities bring about the conditions that allow for the removal of walls and other barriers.

The Programme has now been renamed to the Peace Barriers Programme (PBP), to more accurately reflect the diverse range of structures that make up the collection of interface barriers, which range from fences to gates to walls.

Over the course of the new strategy the PBP will continue to: engage directly with communities impacted by peace barriers, facilitate difficult conversations and help them reach a position where they feel safe and ready to begin the dialogue necessary towards their removal. This is carried out through a range of confidence-building initiatives within and between communities on either side of the barrier.

Findings from the IFI's 2019 'Community Attitudes to Peace Walls Survey' indicate a steady increase in inter-community engagement on either side of the peace barriers, which is key to building the confidence necessary to consider future barrier removal or changes at interfaces. The growing appetite for removal is encouraging but challenges remain around much-needed regeneration, employment opportunities, social housing and shared community spaces. There has also been a significant rise in anti-social behaviour near peace barriers, which is having a negative impact on progress as some residents still view them as a form of security protection.

In recent years, the programme has had considerable success in terms of building community confidence and removing barriers at some of the most notorious interfaces across Northern Ireland.

An IFI policy conference, which took place in November this year, examined a decade of Peace Barriers work addressing issues facing communities that live in the shadow of Peace Walls. Political, community and IFI representatives spoke on key themes alongside workshops focusing on regeneration, youth leadership, conflict transformation and roles and responsibilities to deliver change in this area of work.

The IFI will continue to advocate for the introduction of the necessary support for progress to be made and work with interface residents to build confidence at a pace that is comfortable to them. We are confident that with increased collaboration and appropriate statutory resources, much can be achieved for those impacted the most by peace barriers.



A A Peace Wall that separates communities in North Belfast.

Peace Impact Programme

Launched in 2012, the Peace Impact Programme (PIP) focuses in areas where peace building engagement has been low and in some cases non-existent. It is designed to deliver positive community transformation through sensitive interventions led by grassroots community organisations. Funded projects operate in areas that suffer from high levels of economic and social deprivation and where major challenges remain around paramilitaries exerting coercive control.

It increases engagement through a range of activities around cultural identity, education and skills development. This enables communities to build resilience and navigate their way through more challenging issues such as parades, paramilitary gatekeeping, flags and bonfires.

Achievements of the Programme to date include:

- Significant engagement with communities in North Belfast around a notorious interface involving Loyalist parades. The work led by Twaddell, Woodvale Residents Association enabled resolution to a volatile protest camp in Twaddell/Ardoyne area. It had lasted more than 1,200 days, costing the public purse more than £20m. The removal encouraged further dialogue and cross-community activities in the area.
- The Intercomm project is based in Carrickfergus, Co Antrim and the town is severely affected by paramilitary feuds. This project mediated with senior paramilitary figures in the town to remove a mural that had been used to issue public threats in a busy area.



A PIP projects bring communities together through a range of activities to encourage peace building engagement.

- A ground-breaking conflict mediation and resolution model has been delivered by Creggan Enterprises in Londonderry/Derry on a range of issues – including parading and the bonfire at the Bogside.
- Significant cross-border and cross-community relationships were built up by PIP projects, e.g., the Glens Centre in Manorhamilton developed several cross-border initiatives with schools in Leitrim and Fermanagh including a youth drama programme that drew on the history and heritage of the local area.
- Alternative pathways opened up to marginalised young people who are vulnerable to paramilitary punishments or recruitment.

In the next phase of work, the IFI will take on an increased focus on community leadership, with more attention on the role of women in peace building thereby equipping communities with the tools needed to build resilience and navigate contentious issues.

Personal Youth Development Programme

The IFI's Personal Youth Development Programme (PYDP) was launched in 2016 to support participants by connecting them to personalised routes to learning, skills and employment opportunities. It aims to help the most

at risk young people in society improve their confidence and personal resilience, develop a better understanding of culture and identity, and develop practical skills that improve their employment prospects.



A Participants involved in the PYDP develop a wide range of skills that help improve employment opportunities.

It works with 16-25 year olds who are vulnerable to polarisation and come from complex backgrounds including those who have left education with no or low qualifications or who have left the education system early; are vulnerable to paramilitary recruitment; have been involved or are currently involved in substance abuse; are affected by homelessness; come from a difficult family background or community with a negative view of their future; been in, or close to, the criminal justice system; suffer from poor mental health issues and mistrust statutory institutions.

PYDP is unlike any other youth initiative currently being delivered in Northern Ireland and the SBCs. Its uniqueness stems from the way in which each project develops a highly personalised work plan tailored to the individual's needs and has positive community relations as a core element. The Programme typically targets the most at risk young people who face barriers to participation in mainstream education or training, enabling them to take ownership of their own personal development. It adapts and adjusts to their needs by providing personal guidance and encouragement throughout the process.

- 3,278 accreditations have been achieved to date
- 1,888 have/are participating in the programme
- 528 have progressed onto education and training
- 1,044 people have completed PYDP programme completely

Under the new strategy the IFI plans to further support around 120 youth development projects.

The Fund delivers peace and reconciliation work across the six counties of Northern Ireland and the six southern border counties as illustrated in the map.



The International Fund for Ireland is an independent international organisation established by the British and Irish Governments in 1986 with the objectives of promoting economic and social advance and of encouraging contact, dialogue and reconciliation between Unionists and Nationalists throughout Ireland. Donors to the Fund are the United States of America, the European Union, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

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