

FUND Focus



INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

The newsletter of the
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Sharing the Learning

Participants in the Upper Springfield Development Trust Peace Impact Project share their experiences during a meeting in September.

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CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Although a lasting peace in Northern Ireland and the southern border counties remains elusive, the pursuit of it has encouraged many other divided societies to put aside violence and begin the process of reconciliation.

For almost three decades, the International Fund for Ireland has underpinned efforts to eliminate sectarian division and conflict. Our independence and international backing have enabled us to design and deliver many ground-breaking, innovative and often risk-taking projects that have helped accelerate the Peace Process.

The reality is that we do not operate in a vacuum. When the Fund first came into existence there was no blue-print for how to proceed and no similar model from elsewhere that we could copy. With the generous support and direction of the international community, we evolved to become a major force for building peace on the island of Ireland. While our work remains just as urgent now, the Fund has grown in its own capacity to guide others to move beyond conflict.

This edition of Fund Focus looks at 'Sharing the Learning' and how approaches developed on these shores have informed advances elsewhere. We are grateful for the insightful contributions from Prof Brandon Hamber, Ulster University and

Cllr Tim Attwood who coordinates the influential Forum for Cities in Transition. I was pleased to address the Forum's 2014 meeting and outline the Fund's unique approach to resolving physical divisions with delegates from divided cities in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

In recent weeks, I made my fourth visit to Washington DC as Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland and many conversations touched on how the experiences of the Fund were influencing peace building elsewhere. I was proud to report our engagements with delegations from conflict areas including Sri Lanka, Croatia, Iraq and Timor Leste; and how the shared education programmes we developed with Atlantic Philanthropies are being explored in diverse areas including Mexico, Macedonia and the Middle-East.

The Fund also holds a responsibility for sharing its experiences and intervention models with government and other funding bodies. Learnings from Fund projects particularly in education, housing and youth engagement are evident in

key aspects of the Northern Ireland Executive's Together: Building a United Community strategy and the EU's PEACE IV Programme. I believe this collaborative approach offers an opportunity to support the move towards deeper social integration that Prof Hamber notes in his article.

With the backing of all our donors, the Fund is making remarkable progress and encouraging others to create more stable civic societies.

Since the last edition of Fund Focus, we have welcomed three new additions to the Board: Hilary Singleton, Allen McAdam and Paddy Harte. They join us at an exciting and important phase in the Fund's history and join returning Board Members Dorothy Clarke, Siobhan Fitzpatrick, and Billy Gamble. I am also very honoured to be continuing as Chairman for a further term.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to outgoing Board Members Rose Mary Farrell, David Graham and Winston Patterson for their enthusiasm, energy and service to the International Fund for Ireland.

Nine community projects share in latest International Fund for Ireland commitment

In February, the International Fund for Ireland confirmed financial assistance worth more than half a million Euro (€588,000/£459,000) to be shared among nine community projects in Northern Ireland and the southern border counties.

The funding, approved at the organisation's Board Meeting in County Leitrim, extends six ongoing initiatives and supports three new projects aimed at engaging with marginalised communities and opening new discussions on complex issues relating to identity and the conflict.

All are supported through the Fund's Peace Impact Programme (PIP), which assists community groups to develop innovative solutions to sensitive and divisive issues and engage with young people who are vulnerable to paramilitary influence.

Commenting on the announcement, Dr Adrian Johnston, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, said: "Over the last two years, we have focused considerable effort on reconnecting with

marginalised individuals and groups who remain excluded from government and other interventions. The Peace Impact Programme has been a core part of that strategy, enabling 56 community projects to deliver impressive results and positive change in areas requiring intervention. As a result, the potential for violence has been reduced and many participants are finding employment and positive leadership roles in their community.

"We have taken risks in the cause of peace and reached out to vulnerable young people in areas where the political settlement is strongly, often violently, opposed. The quality of our interventions has never been more evident and the need to engage with those who have had limited participation in peace building and community reconciliation activities has never been greater."

Details of the latest funding are available at the International Fund for Ireland website: www.internationalfundforireland.com



ABOVE: Pictured at the International Fund for Ireland Board Meeting in County Leitrim are Board Members: Dorothy Clarke, David Graham, Rose Mary Farrell, Dr Adrian Johnston (Chairman of the Fund), Winston Patterson and Siobhan Fitzpatrick.



The Good, Bad and Ugly: What lessons can we share?

It is hard to believe that the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement was signed some 17 years ago. Despite the passage of time, many countries in conflict continue to look to Northern Ireland as a model for their contexts.

In the last ten years, the International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE) at Ulster University has been involved in more than 50 local-global exchanges aimed at learning lessons for or from Northern Ireland.

The Agreement is viewed globally as a positive model, particularly in the way it guarantees nationality and identities, regardless of the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland has also demonstrated that it is possible to pursue divergent political goals in a peaceful way.

Two issues that those wanting to learn comparative lessons also consider significant are policing and funding with its allied impact on community work.

Rebuilding trust in the police following conflict is a common global problem. The extensiveness of the Patten Commission process is of constant interest, as well as the creation of shared civilian oversight mechanisms such as the Policing Board.

On the funding front, the extent of funding used to develop the peace process at the community level is a source of fascination to international visitors. Many cannot believe that over £1.5 billion has been put into community peace work since the Agreement. They are quick to see however that funding has helped develop a skilled community sector who can share lessons on a range of peacebuilding methods as diverse as using art, sport, dialogue, and development.

At the same time, international lesson-learners are also often astounded

at how much still needs to be done. Seeing the ugly truth of "Peace Walls" and some murals with their violent imagery is a revelation to visitors, as they tend to believe the process has moved well beyond these types of manifestations of conflict.

Explaining that only 7% of children attend integrated schools close to twenty years on from the Agreement is shocking to most visitors. Pointing out that, despite some slight improvements in residential mixing, most people reside in largely single-identity communities is also often a surprise.

Those who study and practise conflict transformation are quick to realise that many aspects of the Northern Ireland process represent a negative peace. That is a context where political violence has decreased but the underlying issues that fuel conflicts have not been addressed.

When asked why this is the case, I respond that a more vigorous policy move towards integration has not taken place because there is no commonality of vision in terms of the type of society we are ultimately working towards.

Is the goal thin integration or deeper social transformation? Are we going to settle for a society where the dominant communities are going to remain separate and, hopefully, equal, co-existing in negative peace? Alternatively, are we seeking more profound change, where all aspects of life are integrated? This is not an academic question but a practical one as it touches on what is needed to sustain peace in Northern Ireland in the long run.

International lessons would suggest that minimal social change might not be enough for peace to endure, especially in a context where different cultures and political aspirations are inevitably going to rub up against one another.

In this context, even outsiders can see that a deeper level of social integration is needed. Without this, peace will always remain tenuous and will mean we can only share the lessons from limited specific examples rather than the peace process as a whole.



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International peace forum descends on Belfast

Late last year, the International Fund for Ireland welcomed the fifth annual Forum for Cities in Transition (FCT) to Belfast for a series of discussions on the theme of “promoting reconciliation through resilience.” The Chair of FCT, Cllr Tim Attwood, shares his experiences from the event.

The simple concept behind the FCT is a philosophy of peace building and reconciliation that is the life work of energetic Professor Padraig O'Malley, from the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Padraig has worked for peace in the North of Ireland, South Africa, the Middle East and Iraq.

The core idea of FCT is that divided cities have much to learn from each other. Divided cities can share patterns as well as political, social and characteristics that may lengthen conflict. The best way to overcome these patterns and characteristics is through a constructive dialogue by those who have experienced them and have learned how to break the cycle of violence.

Over the week delegates from Baghdad, Kirkuk, Jerusalem, Tripoli, Mitrovica and Kaduna in northern Nigeria, spoke powerfully about the impact of conflict on their cities.

It is so easy to despair over many of the conflicts such as the insurgency by the brutal Islamist group Boko Haram in Nigeria which has killed thousands of people and kidnapped 200 school girls over a year ago. Yes, so easy to despair, were it not for the remarkable example of Christian Pastor James Wuye and Muslim Imam Muhammad Ashafa. In the 1990s, these two men led opposing, armed militias dedicated to defending their respective communities as violence broke out in Kaduna, northern Nigeria. In pitched battles, Pastor James lost his hand and Imam Ashafa's spiritual mentor and two close relatives were killed. In a true spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation Pastor James and Iman Ashafa joined together to establish the Muslim-Christian Interfaith Mediation Centre in Kaduna, which now plays a leading role in resolving conflicts across Nigeria, including talking to Boko Haram.

Every day, it was uplifting to listen to their stories and immense personal acts of peace building in the face of adversity.



It was important to hear the voices of the forgotten victims and the unaddressed legacy of the past. It was important for delegates to witness the consequences of the 40 long years of conflict which took a terrible toll, too many people died, too many families grieved and every family was denied the quiet blessings of a normal life.

Delegates heard about the challenges of building a shared space and maintaining the peace in divided communities. At the IFI funded Suffolk and Lenadoon Interface Group, delegates listened to the personal journey of two champions of peace in Jean Brown and Renee Crawford who have done incredible cross community work in the area.

Delegates also visited the WAVE project to listen to the emotional and traumatic journeys of victims and survivors such as Paul Gallagher, paralysed by loyalist gunmen in 1994 and Alan McBride,

who lost his wife Sharon in the Shankill bombing and their collective efforts to support victims and seek justice and truth.

One of those listening was Amir Kulagic, a survivor of the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995, where more than 8,000 boys and men between the ages of 14 and 75 were murdered. He lost his father, his step-father, two uncles, two cousins, his brother-in-law and his father-in-law. Despite his wrenching pain, he is an independent activist who speaks out for the victims of Srebrenica. He said many victims have never been found and the perpetrators not only walk free, but have active roles in the city government.

He said “There is still a war in people's minds.” He spoke for many when he said to Paul Gallagher and Alan McBride, “You are not victims and survivors, you are victors.”

www.citiesintransition.net

County Leitrim Orange Order Lodge – Peace Impact Programme

In March, residents and community representatives met at Killegar Orange Hall, County Leitrim to launch a new eight-month project aimed at engaging more members of the minority protestant population in the area in cross-community peace and reconciliation events. The 'Reaching Out, Looking Forward' project, is delivered by the County Leitrim Orange Order Lodge. The initial phase of the project will incorporate a World War 1 research programme that examines how an estimated 2,000 men from County Leitrim contributed to the war effort. Pictured at the launch of the project are Joe Morton, David Morton and Alan Madill, all County Leitrim Orange Order; Dorothy Clarke, International Fund for Ireland Board Member; and Paul Kirkpatrick, Leitrim County Council.

Sport Changes Life – Peace Impact Programme

A unique project that uses sport to connect young people with training and employment support has been praised for its role in reducing tensions and boosting work-related skills in Carrickfergus, County Antrim. Supported by the International Fund for Ireland, the one-year Sport Changes Life Peace Impact Project has engaged more than 80 young people in a range of mentoring activities and accredited training delivered in partnership with the Ulster University. The project, which uses the successful eHoops model, has assisted more than 40% of those participants who are seeking work to secure jobs and has built new relationships within and between communities and with the PSNI. Pictured at the Sport Changes Life celebration event in Carrickfergus are (Back row centre) Billy Gamble, International Fund for Ireland Board Member; flanked by coaches Alan Teggart and Joanne Quinn; and programme participants (front row) Chantelle Harper and Adam McFarland.

PIP Youth Conference – Peace Impact Conference

More than 100 young participants from across Northern Ireland and the southern border counties teamed up in Monaghan in March at a major cross-border and cross-community youth event. The Youth Conference was organised as part of the International Fund for Ireland's Peace Impact Programme (PIP) and drew young participants from more than 50 rural and urban projects to share their experiences, identify critical training needs and discuss difficult issues linked to the legacy of the conflict. Pictured are some of the young people who took part in the Peace Impact Programme youth event in the Hillgrove Hotel Monaghan.



Roe Valley Residents Association – Peace Impact Programme

Demand for places on focused community and employment-related courses has exceeded all expectations, according to organisers of a Limavady-based project. Since launching in June last year, more than 150 people of all ages have signed up to the Roe Valley Peace Impact Project and its practical training aimed at boosting employability and tackling social issues such as anti-social behaviour, isolation and inter-community tensions. Led by Roe Valley Residents Association, the project is delivered through a partnership of community groups in the Roe Valley, The Glens, Cooleasan and Bovalley areas of the town. The training includes accredited and non-accredited courses designed to prepare people aged 16-30 for employment and community leadership roles. Pictured are Ashleen Schenning, PIP Project Officer; Dr Adrian Johnston, International Fund for Ireland Chairman; Cllr Alan Robinson, Mayor of Limavady Borough Council; and Cathy O'Hare, Roe Valley PIP Coordinator.

AMBIT

In March, 12 community leaders from Northern Ireland teamed up with US counterparts through an intensive programme aimed at building partnerships with U.S. community groups and swapping exemplars of good practice. The annual AMBIT programme is organised by the International Fund for Ireland and the U.S. Consulate in Belfast. The AMBIT class of 2015 was drawn from projects supported through the IFI's Peace Impact Programme (PIP) and visited community, voluntary and public sector organisations in Chicago, Baltimore and Washington DC that work with young people at risk. Leadership coaching was also provided by the Fund and the NI Council for Voluntary Action. The 2015 AMBIT group is pictured (TOP) at NI Bureau office in Washington with Danny Kennedy MLA who spoke with participants and in Boston (BELOW).



Inter-Estate Partnership – Peace Impact Programme

A community outreach project based in Antrim, which aims to engage with and provide training and employment support for over 500 local youths and adults has won acclaim for the impact it has had on the town. The Inter-Estate Partnership (IEP) works closely with five housing estates in Antrim to offer a range of practical employment-related training courses and aims to help tackle big social issues such as anti-social behaviour, isolation and inter-community tensions. Supported by the International Fund for Ireland, the project has assisted more than 20 people to gain full time employment and enabled 128 young people to learn new skills and gain accreditation for future employability. Pictured are David Graham, International Fund for Ireland Board Member (second from right) with Samuel Chestnutt, Rev William Orr, Raymond Taylor and Craig Logan, all from the Inter-Estate Partnership.



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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. PO Box 2000 Belfast BT4 1WD / PO Box 2000 Dublin 2