

Shaping and Delivering Peace at Local Level ?: *Learning from the experience of Peace II*

Vol 3

Learning from Peace II





Community Relations Council

This publication is the third in a six volume series of reflections on the contribution of the EU Peace II Programme to the development of Peace & Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland. Each volume in the series will focus on a specific aspect of Peace Building.



All publications in the series have three sections. In the first section (colour coded yellow) you will find the thoughts of a selection of the guest speakers at the seminar which was held to discuss the theme. In the second section (colour coded light blue) there is a record of the ideas and issues that emerged during the seminar. The third section (colour coded dark blue) is devoted to an overall reflection on the theme under consideration.



The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Community Relations Council (CRC) or the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).



Contents

Preface 4

Jim Dennison,
Director, European Programme, CRC

Introduction 5

Shaping Our Shared Future
Duncan Morrow, Chief Executive, CRC

**Shaping and Delivering Peace at a Local Level?:
Learning from the Experience of Peace II** 8

Shaun Henry, Director, Peace II and Interreg IIIa Programmes, SEUPB

Delivering Peace at Local Level – The Practical Experience 14

Jim Eastwood	Cookstown Local Strategy Partnership	14
Deidre O’Loan	Belfast Local Strategy Partnership	17
Paddy McGinn	Border Action (formerly ADM/GPA)	22

Telling the story of PEACE II 26

**An assessment of the impact of PEACE II funding in Strabane, East
Belfast and Cavan**

Gordon McCullough, Head of Research, NICVA

Round Table Reflections – Highlighting the Key Issues 33

Sean Pettis, Project Manager – EU Events & Seminars, CRC

Coping with Conflict in Peace Programmes 36

Frank Gaffikin, Queen’s University, Belfast

Designed and published by Profile Publishing
Midland Building, Whitla Street, Belfast BT15 1NH
Tel: 028 9075 6112 Fax: 028 9075 6113 Email: info@profilepublishing.com

The cover picture was designed by a group of young people from Derry / Londonderry, Belfast and Dublin whilst on a cross – community, cross-border residential at the Corrymeela Centre, Ballycastle in the summer of 2005. Cover Picture © Community Relations Council 2005

Preface



Jim Dennison
Director – European Programme, CRC

Last year, CRC, as part of a project sponsored by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), embarked upon the delivery of an ambitious project to organise and co-ordinate a series of events addressing critical issues within and beyond the current EU PEACE II Programme. Entitled ‘Learning from Peace II’, the project’s aim is to examine aspects of the impact and implementation of peace-building work in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland and to harness and disseminate the lessons learned.

All good programmes and projects should quantitatively and qualitatively assess the inputs and outcomes of activities undertaken. Although funding bodies and funded projects gather information on the participation and impact of work at particular levels, there has not (as yet) been a co-ordinated attempt to gauge the impact the entire Programme is making across the range of constituent sectors. This project attempts to apply this co-ordinated approach by organising a series of events which will ultimately evaluate and assess the impact of the Programme. It is also intended that it will provide feedback on performance, suggest areas for further engagement and development, challenge assumptions about peace-building work, as well as help identify weaknesses or gaps intended or unexpected successes. The project will not focus on the administration of the PEACE II Programme, rather the impact it is making on peace-building and reconciliation work.

The first event in the series was ‘Beyond Sectarianism? The Churches and Ten Years of the Peace Process’ and the publication relating to both that event and our third event ‘Prosperity – A Part of Peace? Learning from the Economic Experience of Peace II’, are available in hard copy from our resource centre or in PDF format from our website (the details of which are located on the inside back cover). This however is the publication relating to the second event in the series, ‘Shaping and Delivering Peace at Local Level?: Learning from the Experience of Peace II’, held at the Europa Hotel, Belfast on Friday 3 December 2004. It is not a written regurgitation of the day, rather a document encompassing key inputs, underlying themes, salient issues and topics for debate and allows contributors the opportunity to more fully expand upon the local impact of the Peace II Programme on reconciliation work over the last few years. This will form the third of six volumes and will also contribute towards the final publication of overall findings. I hope you find it both challenging and thought provoking.

I’d like to take this opportunity to thank all of those involved in the staging of this event: Paddy McGinn (Border Action) for his presentation and written contribution; Deirdre O’Loan (Belfast LSP) for her presentation and written contribution; Jim Eastwood (Cookstown LSP) for his presentation and written contribution; Gordon McCullough (NICVA) for his research presentation on the geographical impact of Peace II and written summary of those findings; Shaun Henry, the Director of the Peace Programme, for his written contribution; Sean Pettis, Events and Seminars Manager for the untiring work; Frank Gaffikin for his insightful article and all of CRC’s EU Programme Team for ongoing help and assistance.



Introduction



Duncan Morrow
Chief Executive Officer of CRC

Shaping our Shared Future

What is the role of international financial support in enabling the embedding of a peace process? That, along with the inevitably accompanying question of 'how?' are the core intellectual questions which we are seeking to answer through this series of seminars. In order to get a grip on these questions, the 'Learning from Peace II' seminars and their accompanying publications focus on different dimensions of the enormous EU PEACE programme of the last decade.

Under PEACE I and PEACE II, over £1bn sterling has been invested in Northern Ireland and the border counties by the European Union. The core questions therefore have to be asked of the private, public and voluntary sectors, of churches and governments and, in this case of local structures all of whom have benefited from financial aid. In the end these questions must also reach past the structural bodies to the 'end-users' – the people and communities who were supported by the resources of the member states in this huge act of international solidarity.

What we know is that different localities face different problems. In the Irish case, the experience of violence North of the border was considerably different to that in the

surrounding border counties. Within Northern Ireland, the experiences of East Belfast and of Strabane are only comparable at a high level of generality. So it is right that the PEACE programmes took account of local variation. Under PEACE I, each District Council in Northern Ireland had a European Partnership Board made up of local elected representatives, representatives of communities and representatives of business and trades unions. Under PEACE II these were reshaped into Local Strategy Partnerships which had a closer connection to the elected frameworks within each District, a different composition and a wider remit.

By making a commitment to reflect local variations, the European Union was making a wider commitment to engaging all of the key social and political partners in peacebuilding and a broader commitment to building new partnership-based models of stakeholding and participation. This seminar sought to reflect some of the local variation, to engage with the different approaches taken in different areas and to ask whether the experience of partnership had left a lasting legacy. We were also interested in a further, perhaps deeper question: how is a complex peace programme experienced in different

localities and how do its many strands combine to create or support outcomes which are greater than the sum of the parts? In this publication we have contributions from different local implementing bodies as well as research which looks at how the peace programme impacted on three very different settings.

What emerges is that three potentially very different models of peacebuilding appear to be operating simultaneously, although in different proportions in different localities. The first could be summarised around the word 'reconstruction'. Its intellectual parent

“There is no doubt that a community which shapes prosperity together is a community with a common interest in working together.”

appears to be the Marshall plan that rebuilt Europe after World War Two. Through structural investment in economic infrastructure, labour market initiatives and training there is a presupposition that economic prosperity is both a key dividend of peace and a key driver to sustain peace.

There is no doubt that a community which shapes prosperity together is a community with a common interest in working together. Furthermore, in an economically driven society, Deng Xiao Ping's maxim for China that 'to be rich is glorious' has a resonance in Belfast as much as Beijing. There is considerable evidence that local communities appreciate infrastructural investment and will combine together to promote it. 'Partnership around a shared cheque' certainly creates a willingness to combine together.

The difficulty is, of course, that we have already arrived at prosperity as far as the rest of the world is concerned. Over the period of the PEACE II programme, Northern Ireland ceased to be an 'Objective One' region, justifying additional regional investment by virtue of its GDP alone. As the European Union expanded eastwards, Northern Ireland ceased to be one of the poorest parts of the Union. Unemployment fell to levels lower than many other parts of the UK and industrial growth outpaced that of any other UK region. Additionally, the economy in the

Irish Republic became the miracle economy of Europe with growth rates that were unthinkable elsewhere. The very rapidity of change has left us all rather breathless, as our cultural understanding of our own story struggles to keep up with changes at home and abroad. Songs of poverty, emigration and dependency have had to give way to stories of expansion, immigration and congestion with astonishing speed. So while we still have many people living below the poverty line and, especially in Northern Ireland, a shortage of skilled labour, the specific justification for further international investment is receding. Put another way, the reconstruction is done, but the peace still seems fragile.

The second visible model of peacebuilding appears to revolve around social inclusion. The PEACE programme has invested huge amounts to ensure improved access to services in many communities while trying to smooth the pathway into the labour market for many who have been outside it. At local level there is clear evidence of a willingness to engage in developing the social economy, in developing training programmes aimed at greater access to the labour market and in community economic development. PEACE has left a considerable footprint by reaching out to rural communities, impoverished urban communities and previously excluded groups of people. There is no doubt that the Irish labour market is more inclusive than previously and that access to services is better spread. All of this has to be set against wider global trends, which while encouraging participation in the labour market have also increased the income and wealth differentials and generated new strains. Nevertheless, in its social inclusion work, PEACE has made a clear and measurable contribution in Ireland, North and South.

The difficulty of course is that social exclusion is not a distinctively Irish phenomenon. Violence has undoubtedly exacerbated the situation, placing unusual barriers to participation in the way of many people. Nonetheless, exclusion in Donegal bears comparison with that in southern Italy, while Liverpool or Dortmund could make a claim that de-industrialisation has hit them equally as hard as Belfast. Now that Leipzig and Warsaw are also to be considered, it is

difficult to see how the EU will continue to prioritise Irish issues. Social inclusion is critical to peace, but to the social peace of the whole Union, not only the north of Ireland.

The third model of peace building in Northern Ireland might be summarized as 'A Shared Future'. Paradoxically, the centrality of this model seems to grow the further away one is from local life. From Brussels, Dublin and London it may appear that the issue in Northern Ireland is that we have not learned to live together and that a peace process is about enabling us to do so, but it is clear that the implications of undoing hatred and trusting the previously untrustworthy remain the most difficult area for investment and acknowledgement closer to home. On the one hand, the very nebulosity of trust appears to be difficult to translate into practical projects. On the other, the reality is that vested interests in many areas do not want to tackle the well-worn path of separation and suspicion. 'Community Relations' or even 'Reconciliation' remains for some a frightening and threatening idea. Even worse, we can create a short term communal peace by agreeing that we will not talk about them and leave dreaming to the dreamers.

The difficulty is that the basis of the contract was the construction of a shared future together. Both social inclusion and reconstruction can be pursued by competitive communities separately. The danger is that the PEACE programme would, or perhaps has, deteriorated into a zero-sum game of 'you got more than me'. The remedy is not to parcel out unearned money in equal chunks but to insist on a new basis for political, economic and social life in a zone of conflict. Europe's £1bn act of solidarity with Northern Ireland and the border counties was and is based on a presumed commitment to a shared future based on non violence, the rule of law, cross border and international relations, power-sharing, equality and human rights. To take the money and not be committed to this is, in reality, to threaten bad faith. And at the very least, it is that commitment against a difficult backdrop, which is the only basis on which we could now ask for further international support here.

Drawing lessons from this is a hazardous task. Despite this, a number of key issues

suggest themselves. First of all, it is important to make explicit what the basis of international financial support for peace processes is all about. The existence of three related but different models of peacebuilding under PEACE I and PEACE II without reference to the priority of each allows for too much emphasis on those for which there is already consensus and not enough on the more difficult but more necessary choices. Investment should mitigate hard choices not lubricate easy ones. Secondly, local conditions must determine specific actions, but central distinctiveness criteria are essential to generate creative tensions. Thirdly, investment should measure change – in structures, relationships, social capital and integration of economy and society – not outputs. The key outcomes of the PEACE programme should be a society where business is normally done together, where freedom of expression and movement are taken for granted, where barriers to entry are agreed and amenable to democratic change and where threat and violence do not intimidate people, communities or the law. The society which a social economy furthers should reflect these values and tackle these hard issues.

The long run lessons have yet to be drawn. The Irish example shows that peacebuilding in a democratic society is a very long drawn

“What is clear is that the issue of a Shared Future must still be answered no matter how much reconstruction and social inclusion is done, and that this must permeate right down to the local level.”

out affair which moves at the pace of the slowest. The proportion of money which should incentivise peace and that which should reward it is difficult to calculate. What is clear is that the issue of a Shared Future must still be answered no matter how much reconstruction and social inclusion is done, and that this must permeate right down to the local level. Through this publication, CRC and SEUPB are committed to keeping it at the forefront of public debate.



Shaun Henry

Director, Peace II and Interreg IIIa Programmes, SEUPB

Shaping and Delivering Peace at Local Level - Learning from the experience of PEACE II.

Violence, thankfully, is much reduced from the height of the Troubles, but that does not mean that sectarianism and division are still not a major feature of life in Northern Ireland. There is evidence that there is a hardening of attitudes with rising levels of mistrust; housing is becoming more segregated; the number of “peace walls” has increased over recent years; the prevalence of local sectarian and racist attacks remains stubbornly high; and rioting is still a feature of our summers, and with all of this being set against a political context characterised by frustration and delay.

It is in this environment that the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation has had to operate and make its contribution to transforming society in Northern Ireland and the border region of Ireland. The PEACE Programme has set itself a challenging objective “to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and promote reconciliation”. From its inception, the Programme has recognised the importance of “local”. It has been designed to maximise impact at a local level. The great political issues of the day are for different actors in other theatres. Whilst political progress, or lack of it, undoubtedly impacts on the Programme, the PEACE Programme is essentially about transforming local

communities. It is about creating partnerships, opening up new economic opportunities, tackling disadvantage and exclusion, and creating an environment where reconciliation can take hold.

There is probably no other European funded programme that has been subject to such a level of monitoring and evaluation over the last few years. Everyone from the European Court of Auditors, to the House of Commons Select Committee, to numerous independent researchers and academics, have all voiced their views on the strengths and weaknesses of the programme. MEPs and MLAs take an active interest in funding decisions at a local and regional level. The voluntary sector take a particular interest in ensuring adequate resources are invested in their sector. And all of this is played out in local media and newspaper reports. Much of the debate has created more heat than light – so it is with some trepidation that one tries to distil out some of the lessons of the Programme at a local level. In an attempt to generate some of that light, we will ask ourselves five questions -

- Have attitudes changed?
- Who benefits from the Programme?
- Has partnership worked?

- How does the Programme look from the bottom up?
- What have we learned?

Have attitudes changed?

The PEACE Programme carried out a major survey of attitudes during June 2004 of both the general public and those people involved in PEACE II funded projects. The findings from the survey were encouraging. The Programme creates space for people to meet and develop relationships and, through this contact, mistrust and stereotypes can be broken down.

Over 75% of people involved in the Programme in Northern Ireland had regular contact with the “other community” compared with 50% of the general public. Equally, cross border contact was much higher for those involved with the programme (88% as opposed to 61%). This contact appears to feed through to rising levels of trust, with 80% of those involved in the programme having high levels of trust as opposed to 56% of the general public. Similarly there were indications that those involved in the Programme had lower levels of prejudice. This survey will be repeated again in 2006, it will be interesting to see how attitudes change over time.

So there is real evidence that the PEACE Programme can be effective in changing attitudes. However, the real impact of the programme can only be realised when those changes in attitudes ripple out from projects into wider society. Not only does that take time, it also depends on civic and political leadership and a conducive wider environment. Often these other ingredients are missing, and therefore the full potential of the Programme to impact on reconciliation goes unrealised.

Who benefits from the Programme?

There is probably no aspect of the PEACE II Programme which has received so much public comment recently as that relating to “who benefits from the Programme”. Proceedings of the Monitoring Committee, correspondence and media coverage of the

Programme are dominated by this issue. However, fundamentally the Programme is not about shares; it is not about quotas; it is not about ring fencing. It is about investing in the best projects that promote peace and reconciliation.

That being said, it is important, that everyone, and every section of the community, Protestant and Catholic, has an equal opportunity to participate in the Programme. Any barriers, real or perceived, must be addressed. The overall effectiveness of the Programme in promoting reconciliation at a local level, depends on the Programme enjoying the confidence of both communities.

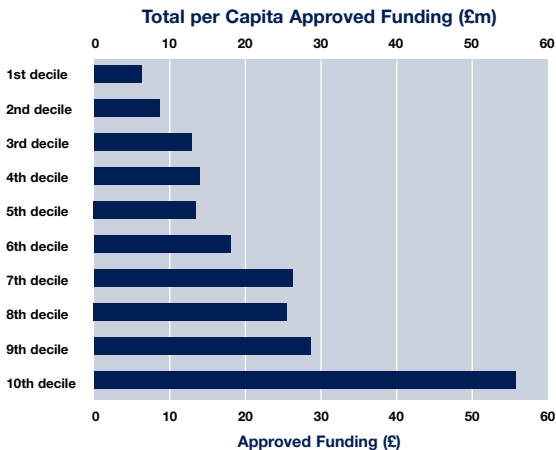
The PEACE II Programme has funded over 5,000 projects and this, coupled with the 15,000 projects of PEACE I, has ensured that the programme has reached into every neighbourhood of our cities and reached every village and townland in our countryside, both in Northern Ireland and the six border counties. No other EU funded Programme enjoys this level of reach. It is questionable whether any other public funded grant programme has ever achieved a similar level of coverage.

Not only does the Programme get coverage across the 12 counties, it also effectively

“Fundamentally the Programme is not about shares; it is not about quotas; it is not about ring fencing. It is about investing in the best projects that promote peace and reconciliation.”

targets resources at those most in need. Our most economically disadvantaged communities receive over 10 times the levels of money than our affluent communities. The Programme is there for everyone, and rightly so, as reconciliation is relevant to everyone, rich or poor. Quite correctly, the Programme disproportionately invests in poorer communities.

But the question is still asked if Protestants and Catholics benefit “equally” from the



Source: Population: 2001 Census of Population
Deprivation: Noble Index of Relative Deprivation, 2001

Note: 1st decile denotes most affluent 10 per cent of COAs, 10th decile denotes 10 per cent of most disadvantaged COAs.

Programme. Independent research has shown that Protestants benefit from 48.6% of the Programme, whilst they make up 54.8% of the population. This level of benefit is up from the 44.2% of the PEACE I Programme, whilst the Protestant share of the population has fallen from the previous 56.8%. The same research shows there is no underlying bias in the Programme, but that Catholics benefit disproportionately due to the fact there is greater disadvantage in Catholic communities and that Catholics are more likely to apply for funding.

The fact that there are larger numbers of Catholics living in disadvantaged areas does not in any way detract from the reality of the extreme disadvantage that many inner city Protestant communities experience. The Programme must be relevant to all, despite community background. A peace and reconciliation programme that is not inclusive is not going to be successful. The Programme has achieved a high level of participation, but there is no room for complacency.

So why the differences in propensity to apply? This is probably linked to a range of cultural and economic factors within Protestant communities which resulted in

there being a smaller number of community organisations, many of which in turn, lacked the skills and experience to successfully apply for funding. There remains a real need for everyone involved in the programme to be vigilant in ensuring that all sections of the community benefit fairly and equitably from the Programme.

Has partnership worked?

One of the main features of the PEACE I Programme was the establishment of 26 local partnerships in Northern Ireland and six in the Border Counties. Whilst the concept of partnership had already taken root south of the border - it was largely a novel concept in Northern Ireland. The 26 District Partnerships that were established gave the first opportunity in many cases, for representatives of the four main political parties to sit around a table with representatives of the social partners (trade union, voluntary, business and rural sectors) and other statutory bodies. Together they made recommendations on how PEACE money should be spent locally. Central co-ordination was supplied by the Northern Ireland Partnership Board, which mirrored the local partnerships at regional level.

This approach was seen to really improve the accessibility of the Programme, and initiated a process that led to improved working relationships at a local level. Interestingly, as we host visitors from across Europe, it is often this aspect of the delivery of the programme that they find most interesting and potentially transferable to their own countries.

The District Partnerships in turn, evolved into Local Strategic Partnerships in PEACE II. These partnerships were designed to maintain the best practice of partnership whilst assuming a wider and deeper role in integrating local delivery of services. As LSP's assumed a greater responsibility for deciding how PEACE II money was to be invested within the context of their Local Integrated

Plans, so the role of the Northern Ireland Partnership Board evolved into the Regional Partnership Board (RPB). Management responsibility was delegated to a local level and the RPB assumed more strategic functions. The reduced operational role for the RPB has been frustrating for some (though not all the LSPs). In addition, the RPB's ability to influence government has been hampered by the absence of the two Junior Ministers in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), who would have been able to provide proactive leadership and act as a focal point for integration across government.

An independent review of the Programme found that "partnerships... whilst they were not without their difficulties, resulted in genuine bottom up involvement in the delivery of the Programme and also provided a forum for discussion for political, statutory and community representatives who might not otherwise have met".

But perhaps the greatest success of the partnerships supported by the PEACE Programme, is that through their innovative actions, partnership working is now a common place feature in Northern Ireland. Participative democracy is now recognised as having an inherent value, which complements that of representative democracy. If anything, we are now suffering from partnership fatigue, with nearly 600 partnerships of one type or another being present in Northern Ireland.

Partnerships must again evolve and change in light of changing circumstances. The Review of Public Administration recognises the importance of the principle of partnerships and has recommended that the partnership principle, with leadership from the local authority, should lead community planning. Structures and delivery mechanisms will change, but it is important that the skills and experience of the current partnerships, are captured and transferred to the new structures, to maximise the effectiveness of the new local authorities in addressing issues of division and reconciliation.

How does the Programme look from the bottom up?

It is all too easy for those of us involved in the management of the Programme, to focus on numbers, budgets and reports. We inevitably look at the Programme through the prism of regulatory and audit requirements – and these are important, for without adherence to these, the money will stop flowing. But they cannot be and should not be, the whole story. The Programme often looks very different when viewed from the perspective of a small voluntary group in Tempo or Ballynafeigh.

This alternative perspective was given voice in the House Commons Select Committee Report on the Programme in 2003. This in turn prompted the formation of the 60 Day Action team which, in turn, made significant steps in simplifying the overall administration of the programme, bringing in shorter application forms, quicker responses to applications and simpler monitoring.

The Programme proved responsive to constructive criticism, and was commended by the committee for the seriousness and the speed of the response. That does not mean the Programme cannot still be improved, or that its processes still do not appear somewhat daunting to the uninitiated. But it

“The greatest success of the partnerships supported by the PEACE Programme, is that through their innovative actions, partnership working is now a common place feature in Northern Ireland.”

did represent a landmark in instilling the ethos that the Programme is about people. Those involved in the delivery of the Programme are involved in the delivery of a service to local people, to help them transform their communities. We have still some way to go to get a consistently high quality of customer oriented service across the Programme - but much progress has been made in this regard.

We wanted to hear the voices at a local level. The voices that are not present at Monitoring

Committees, or at public meetings, the voices that do not get media coverage. To get an idea of what the Programme looks like in East Belfast, Strabane, and Cavan, 84 interviews were held, with projects, media, churches and politicians in those areas to garner opinion about the impact of the Programme. Across all three areas there was almost unanimous agreement that PEACE II has acted as a catalyst, which facilitated the development of services, infrastructure, training and engagement that would not otherwise have happened.

“We need to recognise the importance of local development work, especially in encouraging good quality applications from those sections of the community that have not previously applied.”

The Programme provided the resources to invest in social and economic development. But, perhaps more importantly, the Programme and its “distinctiveness criteria” challenged people to think anew about their community, the diversity within their community, and how their activities can contribute to peace and reconciliation. There was talk of tokenism and superficial contact, but there was also evidence of real engagement and real efforts to promote reconciliation. There were also real concerns about how the long term nature of peace building could be reconciled with the time limited nature of funding. But overall, one is left with a strong impression that, for many, the PEACE Programme has been the manifestation of the peace process on the ground. Whilst interminable discussions happen (or do not happen, as the case may be) at the political high table, the PEACE Programme has given people an opportunity to be engaged in peace building and reconciliation. It has facilitated a sense of engagement, and a broader sense of ownership of the peace process, than would otherwise be the case.

What have we learnt?

The recent independent review of the Programme captured the learning of the

Programme to date. The report refers to the complex nature of the Programme and how, paradoxically, the complexity of the delivery structures improved accessibility to a whole range of Implementing Bodies that were close to communities. The complexity absorbed management time and proved to be a barrier to entry. Perhaps the PEACE II extension has struck a better balance in this regard.

The distinctiveness criteria and the recent introduction of the new definition of reconciliation has helped to focus the Programme and target the resources of the Programme at those areas, groups and sectors most in need. It has put reconciliation centre stage. However the challenge is to ensure that the distinctiveness of the Programme is not only at the selection stage but that it is carried through to implementation and monitoring. We must capture the positive impact that the Programme is having on peace and reconciliation. Given both the diversity of activity funded and the reality that the impact of the Programme is affected by external factors like political progress, it is difficult to effectively aggregate and define the impact of over 5000 projects. And yet that must be the challenge that projects, implementing bodies and ourselves, collectively accept going forward.

We need to recognise the importance of local development work, especially in encouraging good quality applications from those sections of the community that have not previously applied. Providing that type of high quality support is all the more challenging in an environment where administrative costs are rightly being reduced, and there is a greater focus on ensuring the maximum benefit flows to local communities. It is anticipated that the measure designed for areas of weak community infrastructure in the PEACE II extension will be critical in this respect.

The Programme has been really successful in facilitating a bottom-up approach. In essence, local communities up and down the country define their own needs, make applications and, if successful, get awarded funding. This builds a high level of participation and engenders a broad sense of

ownership. This also makes the Programme very responsive to local needs. These are invaluable attributes which must be protected. However there are drawbacks with this demand-led approach. Communities can be left behind. The success of the approach depends on there being capacity to engage in the Programme. Whilst that is generally the case, it is not universally so. There are also issues of duplication and cost effectiveness. Should three excellent projects in one area get funded at the expense of a less good, but still worthy project, elsewhere?

Whilst the “competition” for funding should ensure the efficient allocation of resources to maximise impact, can this be at the expense of discouraging collaboration between organisations at a local level? To date, about 50% of applications receive funding, that means there are about 5000 applications which did not receive funding. That, in turn, represents an enormous effort, often voluntary, which has not resulted in useful outputs. Whilst this may be judged an acceptable level of unproductive effort, would that still be case if the success rate drops to 20% or 30%, as may be the case in the PEACE II extension? In such a scenario, is there a case for exploring differing ways of allocating resources to maximise impact? But perhaps most importantly, the question we must ask ourselves in this regard is whether the challenging agenda of “A Shared Future” can be delivered entirely through a demand-led application process or whether more strategic direction is called for? We do not as a society have a great record in voluntarily agreeing to share with the other community yet that is the challenge we face. We must get the balance right between preserving local ownership and the readiness to take risks and be innovative in our quest for peace and reconciliation.

As we face the design of a new PEACE Programme (PEACE III?), we can reflect and take pride in the achievements to date. The PEACE Programme has impacted at a local level, attitudes have changed, partnership working is a process that is now valued across government, and most importantly people have been engaged in transforming

their own communities. But in a society still wracked by division and sectarianism, a reality manifest in the peace walls of Belfast, we are humbled by the challenges that lie ahead. Hard choices will have to be made; the failure to make them will be an opportunity squandered. In designing what is going to be a smaller programme, we must all ask ourselves how that money can be best invested to help make peace and reconciliation a living reality for all communities in Northern Ireland and the border region of Ireland.

- 1 Attitudinal Survey, A NISRA report for Distinctiveness Working Group Peace II Monitoring Committee, NISRA (2004).
- 2 Community Uptake Analysis of Peace II; Helm Corporation with T Hasse and J Pratschke (2005)
- 3 Ex-post Evaluation of Peace 1 and Mid –Term Evaluation of Peace II, PWC (2003)
- 4 House of Commons, Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, Peace II (2003)
- 5 60 Day Action Team Report, Peace II, SEUPB (2003)
- 6 Telling the Story of Peace II, NICVA (2004)
- 7 The Mid Term Evaluation Update of Peace II, PWC (2005)
- 8 A Shared Future, OFMDFM (2005)

All above documents are available on www.seupb.org

“Whilst the ‘competition’ for funding should ensure the efficient allocation of resources to maximise impact, can this be at the expense of discouraging collaboration between organisations at a local level?”





Jim Eastwood
Chairman, Cookstown LSP

Delivering Peace at Local Level - The Practical Experience

Cookstown Local Strategy Partnership

My involvement in Partnerships dates back to the 'District Partnerships' that were created back in 1995 as part of the implementation of the first Peace Programme. My background is in the private sector, and for the last 13 years I have been the Chief Executive of Cookstown Enterprise Centre and I am also currently the Chairman of Enterprise Northern Ireland, the umbrella body for all Enterprise Agencies in Northern Ireland.

The significance of me explaining my background is to stress that I'm not a community relations expert, but I am a firm believer in working together to produce a society where we can respect and cherish differences. I believe that the Local Strategy Partnerships have allowed this to happen and the history of our Partnership to date illustrates this.

In 1995 the Chief Executive of Cookstown District Council called together a number of people to discuss potential funding coming to the district via Europe. My background in business made this an attractive prospect and I believed it could be economically beneficial to the Cookstown District Area. However, it was not long before we appreciated the reality that with money comes responsibility, and that responsibility was to create a climate in which Peace and

Reconciliation could flourish in our local area. That was a very different remit for both myself and a number of colleagues as we were entering new territory. Our learning curve was both starting and startling. Whilst I am not writing this article solely to retell the story of how Cookstown LSP spent their PEACE money, I do want to highlight an important programme we ran called IMPACT 2000, as I feel it sheds some light on how we operated. IMPACT 2000 was a training programme with the following aims:

- To allow the capacity of our community to grow;
- To work with people and groups at their individual and different levels;
- To build in respect for differing views; and
- To provide conflict management skills.

From the feedback we received and through the in-built monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, we feel we achieved these aims. Spend on this project was nearly £1/2m, and by successfully working with well over 1500 people, we had laid a solid training foundation and infrastructure in place by the time Peace II arrived.

The particular relevance of this project was in its packaging and presentation. We advertised and sold this programme without mentioning the word 'training'. Like the term 'community relations', we have found that 'training' does not attract people. In Cookstown, we do our community relations work in a similar way - within community development, within economic and social development, within youth groups, projects for people with disabilities and sports projects. We call it respect for others and we don't give it a name.

Our open door policy at the LSP has taken some of the work we do into uncharted water. Our staff deal with all shades of political opinion and work with groups ranging from ex-prisoners to the Loyal Orders, and from Churches to bee keepers. We find that the activities of our own Board and how we discuss our business has provided a successful model and helped to set the pace for others.

We have a very committed staff team, chosen for their ability to work with people at whatever level required. This however has meant finding other sources of funding. Our technical assistance budget would allow us to pay 1.5 people. We felt this was insufficient and couldn't allow us to competently be the guardians of over £1.4m and also achieve the difficult task of implementing the programme efficiently. In our case, Cookstown District Council came to our rescue, having the foresight to see Peace II funding as firstly additional funding and secondly as an opportunity to take risks for peace. The relationship between staff and Board is supportive. We operate a sub committee system, meaning I have 2 vice-chairs who both chair a sub committee; one strategic and one operational. We have an open transparent way of doing business and our Board members can and often do visit the LSP offices any time, just as the general public does. Our offices also house the Leader + Programme which covers Cookstown and Dungannon District Council areas.

Part of our close working relationship with Cookstown Council has led to the

Community Relations Officer for the district, being both housed and line managed within the LSP. We were also successful in applying to CRC's European programme to access funding for a second Community Relations worker. The advantage of this is that our programmes and projects have dedicated workers who can add extra value to the work that is going on.

The learning for us over the years in dealing with Peace money has been significant, but at the core was us learning to work together. One of the main strengths of the LSP is that we have Councillors on our Board who bring with them an electoral mandate, providing an additional degree of expertise and accountability. They also bring their politics to the Board, but are able to work for the greater good, often at the sacrifice of a political point. The importance of this should not be underestimated.

My own background, from both attending a mixed school (Raine Endowed in Magherafelt) and from my rugby career, has shown me the immense value of meeting and mixing with people in non threatening environments. Peace money has given us an 'excuse' if you like to sit down and talk and unfortunately the reality in Northern Ireland is that we often do need an excuse.

“Our staff deal with all shades of political opinion and work with groups ranging from ex-prisoners to the Loyal Orders, and from Churches to bee keepers.”

The hatred and bigotry is still in Cookstown and still in Northern Ireland as a whole. This surely begs the question of how big an impact Peace money has made. In Cookstown, I believe our experience is that it has made a very positive impact; incidences of sectarian violence are less now, we have a buoyant economy and crime levels are now comparatively low.

A lot of this is because people now 'know' each other in ways they did not before. We have allowed them to connect and build

relationships, and whilst this doesn't mean everybody is best friends, it certainly makes hatred more difficult.

We don't claim big victories, and I don't believe there are any in Community Relations work. What we do here, and I think we do well, is allow people the opportunity to be civil to each other. We don't ask them to look into their souls – we only ask that they are civil to each other. Some day they may want to dig deeper, but for now, we are where we are.

The underlying reality to this process is that we need money to initiate, develop and

sustain the process we are in. It allows us to employ staff and without staff, projects or programmes will not happen – it is ridiculous to suggest otherwise. I support the idea that money must go to those who need it most. However, without some mentoring, money can often be a burden. We need to employ dedicated staff and they shouldn't be seen as paper pushers; projects in disadvantaged areas won't happen if we don't fund competent support systems.

Community Relations shouldn't be seen as one theme. There are a whole range of differing things which can help people connect. So it may be a sewage problem that a number of people feel strongly about or it may be counselling course allowing people to delve into their souls. Does it matter? People need to connect and learn to live with each other. They don't have to like each other; it would be nice if they did though.

“People need to connect and learn to live with each other. They don't have to like each other; it would be nice if they did though.”





Deirdre O'Loan
Senior Project Development Officer, Belfast LSP.

Delivering Peace at Local Level - The Practical Experience

Belfast Local Strategy Partnership

What did we do?

In setting the scene for the approach taken by Belfast LSP in embracing the dual aims of addressing the legacy of the conflict and taking the opportunities arising from peace in Belfast, reference is made to an extract from an address by Duncan Morrow Chief Executive Officer of the Community Relations Council to the CRC Policy Development Conference in Belfast on the 28th May 2004 entitled "Towards a Shared Future".

"No amount of money spent to achieve peace and reconciliation will achieve its goal if it does not embed and develop a culture which leaves antagonism behind. The paradox is that every time we confront our antagonism we are brought back into its orbit, so dealing with it threatens to derail the project every time. The very process of addressing issues, risks bringing back conflict. But there is no choice but to set the goal and embrace the risks and setbacks intrinsic to this enterprise. What cannot be allowed to happen is any deviation from the goal of a society beyond antagonism. The difference will not be made by the size of the cheque but by what we choose to spend it on."

In determining how it could effectively address the dual aims of the Peace II Programme, how it could make that difference, the very real conundrum which faced Belfast LSP as a Board was that on one hand it must be representative of the City yet in being so, it will by the same token reflect the divisions of Belfast.

"The very process of addressing issues, risks bringing back conflict. But there is no choice but to set the goal and embrace the risks and setbacks intrinsic to this enterprise."

In the spirit of "... setting the goal and embracing the risks and setbacks intrinsic to this enterprise....", Belfast LSP therefore determined that the challenge was to be both reflective of the City, and to deliver a challenge to the City.

In developing its Integrated Local Strategy, Belfast LSP established that the principle thrust of its approach would be to bring a clear focus through the investment of the

Peace II Programme, to the processes of reconciliation and regeneration within the City.

What was our method?

The concept of "One City" adopted by the Belfast LSP Board in January 04 further defined this strategy endorsing six guiding principles which would shape the future direction taken by Belfast LSP in making its contribution to addressing the dual aims of the Peace II Programme in the city of Belfast, and which would be applied to all the initiatives it supported and endorsed.

action promoting cross-community links or an action promoting reconciliation through single community identities.

Both the Distinctiveness and Reconciliation criteria are qualitatively assessed and scored accordingly.

This information, together with other project-related data, forms the basis of 6 monthly progress reports to Belfast LSP and an end of grant report, for every project awarded funding.

Progress

An analysis of the Distinctiveness and Reconciliation criteria in relation to the projects currently supported by Belfast LSP under Measure 3.1 and Measure 3.2 raises a number of points.

The extensive targeting of Areas and Groups/Communities (89%) is to be expected in a city where a high level of conflict and violence has been experienced both geographically, and by particular groups and communities. The challenge for these projects, and Belfast LSP, is to ensure that they form part of a common vision and strategic framework for the effective development of the City.

Whilst the percentage of projects targeting Sectors is lower than those targeting Areas and Groups/Communities (71%), it is reflective of considerable work being carried out by projects across the City in relation to: Tourism, Entrepreneurship including ICT, and the Arts and Sport. It is also reflective of the strategic direction the Board of Belfast LSP has taken in promoting the Social Economy Sector and initiatives which address the requirements of growth sectors in the City.

In terms of reconciliation, the analysis would indicate that there is a close correlation between the number of projects supported by Belfast LSP which are delivering actions promoting reconciliation through single community identities (51%), and those which are promoting cross-community links (49%). This correlation reflects the significant challenge that Belfast LSP continues to face

“During appraisal careful consideration is given to how specific projects will address the legacy of the conflict and/or take the opportunities arising from Peace.”

Included within these principles was the objective of challenging the conventional discourse about conflict resolution and encouraging projects which adopted a fresh creative approach to long standing enmities, which took risks for peace, and which elevated civic over ethnic leadership.

Belfast LSP recognises that the achievement of the dual aims of the Peace II Programme in the city of Belfast is a long-term project involving a range of partners.

However through its ongoing collaborative strategic work with key stakeholders in the city, and through the projects it has supported under Measure 3.1 and 3.2, Belfast LSP would contend that its contribution to addressing the legacy of the conflict, taking the opportunities arising from peace and working towards a sustainable city at peace with itself, has been considerable to date.

During appraisal careful consideration is given to how specific projects will address the legacy of the conflict and/or take the opportunities arising from Peace. This is applied across the identified categories of Areas, Sectors and Groups/Communities.

Further to this, consideration is given to whether the project can be identified as an

in terms of constantly affirming the concept of "One City" and encouraging initiatives which take risks for peace-building, whilst taking cognisance of the divisions of the city and Northern Ireland as a whole.

For all of these projects funded, a qualitative assessment of how they will develop reconciliation and mutual understanding and respect between and within communities and traditions is carried out as part of the appraisal process. This is monitored on a regular basis through project progress reports.

Monitoring to date in relation to the Distinctiveness and Reconciliation criteria would indicate that projects have progressed positively, however the impact of individual projects and their collective impact on the City is difficult to qualify as project implementation is at an embryonic stage. Notwithstanding this, a number of case studies can be provided which demonstrate how the Board of Belfast LSP has vigorously embraced the challenge of taking risks for peace, investing Peace II funds in key initiatives which will help to build a sustainable city of Belfast at peace with itself.

The role of Partnership

As outlined earlier partnership is critical to all the work of Belfast LSP.

At a strategic level Belfast LSP continues to champion collaborative leadership as a critical condition for progress.

This form of new governance, which welcomes inclusive civic involvement and inter-agency co-operation – informs the practice of our own Partnership at an operational level, and is a quality Belfast LSP wishes to promote throughout the city.

The value placed on partnership by Belfast LSP in the peace-building process, and the requirement to ensure such partnership is effective and meaningful, is probably best demonstrated by an innovative initiative supported by Belfast LSP involving Queen's University, Belfast.

This initiative represents the establishment of an active community-university relationship between Belfast LSP and Queen's University, Belfast and its first and foremost questions: - What type of city do we want? How is this achievable?

It recognises how, despite substantial investment by statutory agencies (and the EU in the shape of the Peace and Urban Programmes) in community development, economic development and conflict resolution, Belfast continues to be a contested city, where communal violence acts as a brake on development. Despite the talk of joined up governance, the city has experienced fragmented development, partly reflected in the parcelling of different "spheres of influence" such as the city centre, Laganside and Cathedral Quarter, together with a series of disjointed community initiatives, and also partly reflected in the nature of much reconciliation work which continues to be more "single identity" than "cross community".

To date this agenda has failed to address the big picture of comprehensive regeneration within a framework of community reconciliation. So, for instance, in many parts of the city the small deeply segregated territories do not have the critical mass of

“In many parts of the city the small deeply segregated territories do not have the critical mass of people, skills, economic and physical resources for sustainable area development.”

people, skills, economic and physical resources for sustainable area development. It is contended that unless the scale of development initiatives is raised above that of the territorial community, such localities will remain permanently dependant on public sector support.

If active citizenship and social partnership are to become real, particularly for those on the margins of society, then time and resources will have to be invested in developing capacity to participate.

The long term gain of confident sustainable communities will be to reduce the costs of maintaining dependency, while shifting social interventions towards prevention rather than cure might just moderate the fiscal pressure on mainstream government spending. This partnership between Belfast LSP and Queen's University Belfast responds to these contentions, presenting a strategic innovative approach to addressing core issues prevalent within the city of Belfast including: the need to achieve greater cohesion and co-ordination amongst a plethora of plans, the requirement to advance civic leadership and the

community and voluntary sector, central government and local government.

Critically, it will also equip practitioners at a community level with a set of knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to link the processes of planning, regeneration and governance, through a bespoke training programme.

Conclusion

In considering the impact to date of the Peace II Programme and specifically Measures 3.1 and 3.2 in terms of addressing the legacy of the conflict within Belfast and taking the opportunities arising from peace, it could be contended that, when it was formulated in 1998, the programme was based on the feel good factor post Belfast Agreement and the premise that the environment was now sound to avail of the new and enhanced economic opportunities this brought with it.

Whilst recognising the considerable complexity of progressing towards a peaceful and stable society, the reality which subsequent events have demonstrated was that in fractious areas like Belfast, rather than putting all the eggs into the one economic basket, a specific focus within the programme on direct interventions in the areas of peace-building, mediation and conflict resolution would have proved highly beneficial in progressing its objective.

Indeed, it is contended that parallel efforts afforded to conflict resolution and reconciliation will in turn enable initiatives aimed at developing human capital, intermediate labour markets and the social economy to bear fruit.

Thus, addressing the legacy of the conflict and taking the opportunities arising from peace underpins all the initiatives undertaken by Belfast LSP at both a strategic, operational and individual project level.

These dual aims underpin the principles and strategies adopted by the Board and are considered at all stages whether in relation to programme design and delivery, contributing

“Building capacity to effect long-term reconciliation in the city of Belfast is a running theme throughout the project.”

imperative to maximise engagement with citizens.

Building capacity to effect long-term reconciliation in the city of Belfast is a running theme throughout the project. An integral element of the initiative will engage practitioners in Belfast with international expertise in three cities with whom Belfast shares significant parallels - Jerusalem, Chicago and Berlin, cities with their own respective explicit and implicit divisions in terms of ethnicity, religion, race, culture, and indeed where physical planning of a city as a means of controlling division can be demonstrated to have the potential to exacerbate this very issue.

In partnership with Belfast LSP the project has commenced work on a number of its key targets including the facilitation of a development dialogue amongst key governance agents in the city, geared to promoting greater collaboration, economy of scale and efficiency.

A range of structured fora have taken place since January 05 around the themes of "Partnerships in Belfast; their impact and future" and "The Urban University and the City", with attendance including representation from across the public sector,

to strategic and policy work in the city, the development of programme criteria, through to decision-making regarding specific projects and subsequent monitoring and evaluation.

In terms of how this has manifested itself practically, Belfast LSP has developed a portfolio of cases representing a broad range of initiatives.

This includes projects working in interface areas, working with disaffected youth, attracting footfall into contested areas, creating employment in TSN areas, enhancing the physical environment, encouraging outward looking communities, contributing to the development of more independent forms of economic development, promoting the internationalisation of local expertise and experience, and exposing the city to international best practice and networks.

Measure 3.1 and Measure 3.2 and the projects funded by Belfast LSP have helped ease tensions at a ground level and bring together community groups to think and act strategically for the benefit of the wider community.

Indeed, the need for the target communities to develop collaborative and comprehensive strategies which provide them with the opportunities to explore potential long-term funding sources, to develop closer working relationships with government and other resource providers, and to actively contribute to networks across the city and region, has become an imperative.

This theme of collaboration lays the ground for the closing point of this report.

Belfast LSP, either strategically or operationally, should not, cannot and does not promote itself as the sole "purveyor" of peace and stability to the city of Belfast.

Collaborative leadership in Belfast is a critical condition for its progress, promoting civic involvement and interagency co-operation.

This is a collaborative leadership model in which Belfast LSP, through the investment of

the Peace Programme and the promotion of necessary preliminary work in the niche policy areas of division and disadvantage, will continue to develop its role as an integral partner in conjunction with key stakeholders. With this in mind we return once again to the comments of Duncan Morrow and his address to the CRC Policy Development Conference in Belfast on the 28th May 2004 entitled "Towards a Shared Future": -

"The vision of a shared future and the measure of progress that flow from it must be embedded at the heart of government policy. There is no doubt that this is a long-term project. Nonetheless, if the vision of the first Programme for Government—of "a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust"—is ever to be more than empty words, this version of community relations must be an essential element of any meaningful public policy mix."

"The vision of a shared future and the measure of progress that flow from it must be embedded at the heart of government policy."





Paddy McGinn
Joint Manager, Border Action

Delivering Peace at Local Level - The Practical Experience

Border Action

(formerly Area Development Management / Combat Poverty Agency)

When the first EU Peace Programmes were conceived in the aftermath of the paramilitary ceasefires in 1994 the architects of the Peace Programme recognised that the "Northern Conflict" and its impacts did not end at the border. The Peace Programme was therefore designed to also target the six adjacent border counties of Ireland and in particular to encourage cross border reconciliation.

Border Action (previously known as ADM/CPA) is a joint organisational structure between Pobal and the Combat Poverty Agency, established in 1995 for delivery of measures of the EU Peace Programme in the border region of Ireland and on a cross border basis. Pobal (previously known as Area Development Management Ltd.) is an Intermediary company established by the Irish Government in agreement with the European Commission to support local social and economic development in Ireland, while the Combat Poverty Agency is a statutory body that works to prevent and eliminate poverty in Ireland.

While levels of violence were generally more pronounced in Northern Ireland, the border region of Ireland was very much part of the theatre of conflict. There had been persistent paramilitary activity, intermittent bomb attacks, sectarian murders, protest and

imprisonment. Normal social and commercial life had been seriously disrupted. The area was often seen as a buffer zone between North and South where latent sectarian attitudes prevailed. The region became the most socio-economic deprived in Ireland, manifested in low levels of economic investment, low educational attainment, isolation, exclusion and depopulation. Furthermore there was a lack of community development structures and responses to the socio-economic deprivation that existed.

In 1996 the first EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (Peace I) was particularly relevant to the border region in helping to address the legacy of the conflict. The broad range of measures and accessible nature of the programme encouraged the involvement of a wide range of voluntary and community groups. During these early days of Peace funding Border Action supported over 1,400 projects in the border region, 300 of which were cross border in nature. Peace I funding was broad sweeping inclusive and accessible. Many new groups were formed, up to 30% of projects supported were provided with small grants to allow social audits and feasibility studies to be undertaken, and cross-community and cross border links to be investigated. Risks were taken and not all projects had a direct

reconciliation component but collectively the twin objectives of Peace I were being met, namely:

- Addressing the legacy of the conflict; and
- Taking opportunities arising from peace.

In essence Peace I funding encouraged civil society to take an active role in community and voluntary activity to address the legacy left in the border region of deprivation, exclusion, silence and mistrust. Many communities initiated both social and economic developments in their own areas in an ethos of partnership, inclusion and reconciliation.

The advent of the Peace II Programme brought with it many challenges for the border region and the range of communities already supported under Peace funding. The programme was more targeted and had a greater emphasis on the distinctiveness criteria and promoting reconciliation. While this was a necessary progression on the road to peace and stability, for many communities and sectors in the early stages of development the challenge of accessing Peace II funding was too great. In particular, the onerous application and project selection criteria often prevented the involvement of low capacity groups and sectors most in need of support. This presented major challenges to Intermediary bodies like Border Action to ensure this reduced package of funding got to areas and groups most in need and where the greatest impact and sustainability of peace building actions could be achieved.

Approach to promoting Peace Building and Reconciliation

Throughout both Peace Programmes the primary approach adopted by Border Action centred on promoting consultation, inclusion, equality and partnership at all levels. This involved identifying and targeting the named groups, sectors and areas of the programme, and in particular new areas and groups yet to access the programme, and promoting real inclusion through the involvement of all sectors and agencies within the region. Working relationships and partnerships were

built with statutory bodies, development agencies and representative organisations which helped ensure real cooperation between the voluntary and statutory sector and the promotion of more sustainable activities and development. A particular challenge for Border Action was ensuring the Distinctiveness criteria of the Peace II Programme were addressed by applicants. Pre-application support meetings and information sessions with projects discussed this in detail and allowed groups and Border Action development staff to jointly discuss and investigate the potential for local peace building actions. In addition a series of reconciliation leaflets were produced and incorporated into guidance provided to potential applicants. Border Action staff also underwent reconciliation training to improve their own understanding of the issues involved.

Other methods employed to ensure the accessibility of the programme and quality of implementation included:

- Having a locally based development team working from outreach offices;
- Providing on-site advice and support to potential applicants;
- The establishment of expert working

“Many communities initiated both social and economic developments in their own areas in an ethos of partnership, inclusion and reconciliation.”

groups and advisory panels to ensure the proper targeting of resources and allow the development and funding of the most appropriate and sustainable interventions;

- The establishment of selection panels and management committees with expertise and local knowledge relevant to the development needs of the areas, sectors and groups targeted;
- Ongoing support workshops, seminars and developmental site visits to assist funded projects meet the objectives and targets set for their project; and

- Undertaking and promoting research and evaluation to ensure the development of strategic interventions to address gaps in provision, and to inform public policy and the discourse around peace building and reconciliation.

Measuring Success

Undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges of the Peace Programmes to date has been measuring success at a local level. While indicators in the border region show a high level of activity having taken place, hundreds

“Undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges of the Peace Programmes to date has been measuring success at a local level.”

of jobs having been created, hundreds of thousands of individuals involved in funded projects, and thousands of participants receiving training and accreditation, the outcomes that are directly related to Peace Building and reconciliation are less clear. In looking at such indicators there are two fundamental considerations:

- Firstly, time and context are important factors in assessing the success of projects, initiatives and policies in peace building and reconciliation. Peace building is a long-term process and this needs to be borne in mind. The context will vary depending on a number of factors such as the stage of the peace building process, history, location, and previous level of violence.
- Secondly, qualitative, attitudinal and impact indicators are more important than quantitative and output indicators.

Therefore the following impacts now evident in the border region can be attributed at least in part to the EU Peace Programmes:

- Increased representation and participation in democratic structures and civil society;
- Reduced inequality and social exclusion and improved quality of life;
- Better local integration within and between communities;

- Capital infrastructure; cross community meeting places, with safe spaces and places for discussion;
- Increased numbers of groups/organisations engaging in specific programmes to explore issues of difference and diversity;
- An openness, confidence, and an ability to acknowledge, accept and celebrate difference and diversity. This includes being able to name things which previously it may have been difficult to mention, and having an opportunity of "breaking the silence" and "telling one's story";
- The involvement of local communities i.e. local ownership of and active participation in reconciliation; and
- Increased cross community and cross border interaction.

Good Practice in Community Based Peace Building

Through the implementation of the Peace Programmes to date much has been learned both from successful interventions and mistakes that were made. From an assessment of projects funded by Border Action, as well as information on other successful peace and reconciliation projects, some features evident in illustrating good practice include:

- Addressing mutual need and engaging in collective action towards meeting that need.
- Learning from international experience.
- Cross community and/or cross border interaction.
- Inclusion of all relevant sectors and stakeholders.
- Having a practical tangible focus.
- Understanding, respecting and ultimately celebrating cultural diversity.
- Identifying and creating win-win situations.
- Being realistic about what can be achieved.
- Breaking the silence and addressing the issues.

Overall Learning for future Programmes:

Going forward there are a number of actions and supports which should be taken into account in any future programmes:

- Specific measures to target under-represented communities or geographic areas.
- Particular actions that will support and facilitate small, localised and possibly intense peace-building projects.
- Targeted actions at all levels of society from grassroots organisations, to social partners and opinion makers, and additionally from government, political and religious leaders.
- Seminars featuring academic, professional and political experts in peace-building, including former combatants.
- Practical reconciliation "road-shows" which would visit areas of low interest and/or raise thorny reconciliation issues in focused workshops and discussions
- The provision of peace-building leaflets for promotion of good practice.
- Peace building experts and mentors to support groups.
- Provision of quality peace-building and reconciliation training.
- Encouragement of a peace building dimension to the work of a range of groups and organisations.
- Provision of training in cross-border development and co-operation.
- Capacity building for groups and organisations engaged in peace building activities.

- Mediation skills, conflict resolution and managing difference.
- Analysis and understanding of conflict.
- Provision of safe and neutral meeting places.
- Dissemination of examples of good practice.
- Setting of long-term qualitative goals.

In conclusion, the "peace process" is now a fact of life and there have been many achievements. Peace II is playing an indispensable role in promoting peace-building actions and strategies with thousands of people engaged at a grassroots level in peace and reconciliation. While for some peace may be seen as a product and to have been achieved e.g. through the ceasefires and through the creation of political and administrative structures, for others peace building is seen as a long term process, where much work is still to be done to achieve a lasting peace. It is to be expected that many difficulties will be encountered along the way. The EU funded peace programmes are making, and continue to make, an important contribution to this long-term process.

“Peace II is playing an indispensable role in promoting peace-building actions and strategies with thousands of people engaged at grassroots level in peace and reconciliation.”





Gordon McCullough
Head of Research, NICVA

Telling the story of PEACE II

An assessment of the impact of PEACE II funding in Strabane, East Belfast and Cavan

This research provides an insight into the impact that PEACE II funding has had in Strabane, East Belfast and Cavan. This research was intended to supplement additional quantitative data that is available on PEACE II funding in Northern Ireland and the border counties.

The research, commissioned by the SEUPB's Distinctiveness Working Group, was conducted by the NICVA (Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action) Research Unit between June and September 2004. A total of 84 interviews were carried out with PEACE II recipient organisations and other key actors from the media, political parties and other civil society organisations across each of the three study areas. This research was not intended to be an evaluation of monitoring forms or an audit of PEACE II funding projects but more of an attempt to garner opinion on the wider impact PEACE II funding has had in each of the areas.

In relation to the level of funding received by each area, a total of £6.2 million went to 86 projects in the Strabane District Council area. East Belfast received £14 million under PEACE II across 74 different projects. Finally, a total of 58 projects in County Cavan received PEACE II funding amounting to €7.7 million.

In essence this research attempted to measure the impact PEACE II was having on the ground, whilst also trying to examine the progress or otherwise of funded projects and to provide an assessment of learning.

Taking Strabane District Council area first, the research posed a number of questions in relation to the effects of PEACE II funding. What had PEACE II achieved in the Strabane District Council area and what did the recipients of PEACE II and key actors in the wider community believe this achievement to be? The second part of that question was perhaps easier to answer than the first.

Across the full spectrum of individuals and organisations interviewed for this section of the research, it was clear that PEACE II has impacted in a range of ways. The most tangible impact was the fact that PEACE II provided a mechanism through which other things have happened. This perhaps goes some way in also answering the first part of the question. Respondents recognised that the direct outputs that are captured in monitoring forms are not the only measures of success. It is the wider impacts such as increased employability, a better and more confident tourist product and a basis from which different cultures and traditions can be understood that are the real indicators of success.

What became evident during the research and in particular when respondents talked about the impact that PEACE II had had in relation to peace and reconciliation work, was that there appeared to be a shared commercial and economic life but considerable social segregation. This was borne out by many of the responses to the research in so far as community groups worked together to a limited degree but there were still tensions and resistance to cross-community activities. With this comes the usual politics of who got what and it was no different in Strabane District Council area but considerably more analysis would have been necessary to substantiate any of these claims. Nevertheless PEACE II had provided the opportunity and the conditions for organisations to work together and certainly this was more the case, at a cross-border level at least, than in any of the other study areas.

This clearly demonstrates the limits a programme like PEACE II faces in the context of continued social and political problems and the fragility of the political institutions in Northern Ireland. The PEACE programme was never expected to solve community relations problems or to deliver overall peace. That was very clear from the responses to this research but PEACE II has provided a basis from which some of these wider issues may be addressed.

The mixture of socio-economic and cultural factors that shape Strabane District Council area was reflected in the spread of funding. In a similar vein to East Belfast a significant proportion of PEACE II funding was distributed under the Economic Renewal Priority and the two social economy measures (2.3 and 3.1). The main difference in Strabane District Council area was that the capital expenditure on workspaces, etc, was very closely linked to the local economy. In East Belfast the major funding under the Economic Renewal Priority was more closely associated with the wider Northern Ireland economy. Linkages with the local economy in East Belfast are perhaps more difficult to ascertain. In a similar vein to Cavan there has been significant funding in developing the area as a niche tourist destination and

improving the environmental and built infrastructure in the area.

Moving onto East Belfast and in trying to sum up or provide an overview of the impact PEACE II has had in East Belfast, the best place to start was to ask the question, what would it be like if PEACE II funding had not existed? Without a doubt the violence at the interfaces would have continued, the role and influence of the paramilitaries would be the same if not greater and the decline of the traditional employment base in East Belfast would have continued unabated. So what has PEACE II really achieved in East Belfast and has the investment of £14 million been money well spent? It was a difficult question to answer and was perhaps beyond the scope and remit of this research but it did throw up some interesting points for discussion.

There was no escaping the fact that interface violence and paramilitary feuds have blighted East Belfast over recent years and have impeded the development of key PEACE II objectives. This was most notable in the ability of organisations to work together and interact. Without doubt the process of ensuring that projects fulfil the distinctiveness criteria had created a positive change in how the other communities and their needs and

“The most tangible impact was the fact that PEACE II provided a mechanism through which other things have happened.”

traditions were viewed. However PEACE II funded projects in East Belfast were unable to claim to have had a substantive impact on reinforcing progress towards the creation of a more stable and peaceful society. This was not a criticism of PEACE II or the projects funded under the programme but it was a stark reminder of the impact that events on the ground can have on funding programmes. In the objectives for the research the question was posed concerning synergy between projects and their interaction and what factors have facilitated or impeded development. The

answer was quite clear; PEACE II facilitated a process where an environment and structure existed that meant organisations had to address how their particular project or development may promote reconciliation. However, the manifestation of these activities on the ground was reduced because that synergy on a cross-community and intra-community basis was not feasible and meant a lot of development and trust built up over the years essentially faded away.

In conclusion the interviews in East Belfast revealed that PEACE II had in the main made

“The low educational standards, limited employment opportunities and high dependency rates create a vicious cycle of poverty where paramilitary influence can grow.”

a positive impact. This is a predominantly Protestant area that traditionally has had little community activity. However, in recent times with the decline of heavy industry there has been an increased desire to become involved in community activity. PEACE II has acted as a catalyst for community capacity building in this area by building and enhancing the recipient organisations' ability to engage more fully with their beneficiaries. Across East Belfast, in the funded projects, the dedication of project workers was enabling small but positive steps to be made. Such advances are not always measurable on monitoring forms, particularly the raised expectations and hopes of individuals in this community.

In interface areas there are many inter-related socio-economic problems, and East Belfast was no exception. The low educational standards, limited employment opportunities and high dependency rates create a vicious cycle of poverty where paramilitary influence can grow. In this environment low community morale is often widespread. Within East Belfast these factors, coupled with weak community infrastructure, have been a huge challenge to PEACE II funded projects. Such macro issues require a co-ordinated approach from all sections of government, the private sector and the voluntary and community sector.

Finally, the impact of PEACE II in County Cavan was considered. Again, the analysis was based on what appears to be a number of seemingly straightforward questions. What difference has PEACE II made in County Cavan? Have peace building and the development of a normal and stable society been fostered through the distribution of 7.7 million of PEACE monies? What impact has this funding had in an area that although relatively unaffected by the conflict-related violence, nevertheless has a very real and tangible legacy of the conflict?

Throughout the research in Cavan what became particularly evident was the impact that the distinctiveness criteria had in terms of engagement with the religious minority community. Although as researchers we were unable to fully assess the level of engagement that took place, there appears to have been a real change in attitudes towards the needs and issues of the minority community. In many ways this set Cavan apart from the other two areas where a 'polite apartness' characterised relations between the two communities. In Strabane and East Belfast this type of engagement was starting from a much more divisive base. There are examples given by respondents that highlight how PEACE II funding in Cavan implemented this change and started a process of engagement.

Another feature that set Cavan apart was the greater focus on covering salary costs as opposed to providing training opportunities or funding large scale economic development projects. That is not to say one area of funding is more worthy than the other but it does highlight how the funding was applied in different ways across the three areas. It is perhaps because of this we saw in Cavan a much wider impact of the funding articulated by respondents as a funded project worker can be involved in a multitude of activities with a wide range of actors. Equally in Cavan we heard more of how groups engage with one another. This could be attributed to the less politically motivated environment where organisations are less insular and less fearful of repercussions if they are seen to be working together. This is of course a fairly circumspect view but this working together

did seem more explicit in Cavan than in any of the other study areas.

Heritage, the environment and tourism also featured as key areas that were funded under PEACE II in Cavan. In this regard the funding had more in common with Strabane than East Belfast where, as mentioned before, the focus was very much on economic renewal and development. However, it was at times difficult to assess how the development of play or leisure areas or the redevelopment of footpaths really contributed to peace building. There was an argument that such initiatives address the legacy of the conflict through developing facilities and infrastructure which have been neglected. Nevertheless when an individual, whose organisation received nearly €90,000 to develop a play area under Measure 3.4 Improving our Rural Communities (Border Region), was pressed on the applicability to the distinctiveness criteria the researcher was simply told that the town lacked such facilities. It later transpired that the engagement with the religious minority community was through parents of different backgrounds coming together when their children were playing in the playground. This is not to deny the importance of such developments and it makes sense that this is one step in the creation of a normal and stable society, but it is an important feature of the funding that had been distributed into County Cavan that sets it apart from the other areas.

As with the other two areas included in this study, respondents in Cavan felt that PEACE II had provided a kick-start for other projects and allowed organisations to draw down funds from other sources as a consequence of having secured PEACE II funding. This was particularly prevalent in Bailieborough and Blacklion where projects benefited from the sheer existence of PEACE II funding which clearly sent a message to other funders of the credibility and value of the project and its associated activities.

Indeed, nowhere was the synergy between funders and projects more prevalent than in Blacklion and Belturbet where the legacy of the conflict was very evident in terms of the effect on the economy and social fabric in

both towns. In both these towns major investment along with substantial PEACE II funding has turned things around and created the conditions where tourism and economic development are flourishing.

Despite the very obvious differences in each of the areas — the socio-economic profile, the impact of the conflict, history of community development, etc — there were some very clear common messages to emerge in relation to the impact of PEACE II.

The interviews produced a wide range of comments relating to PEACE II and how it has influenced peace building, economic renewal and capacity building. Across all three areas there was almost unanimous agreement with the assessment that PEACE II had acted as a catalyst which facilitated the development of services, infrastructure, training and engagement that would otherwise not have happened or at the very least not happened as quickly. This particular point highlighted two very different ways in which PEACE II funding had provided the impetus for change in each of the areas.

First, the funding provided the capital through which services and infrastructure were developed and in some ways this was a

“Respondents in Cavan felt that PEACE II had provided a kick-start for other projects and allowed organisations to draw down funds from other sources as a consequence of having secured PEACE II funding.”

consolidation of the activities funded under PEACE I. This is a very important aspect of the impact PEACE II has had as this type of investment is seen as essential in terms of the social and economic reconstruction of a society emerging out of conflict. Peace building in this wider sense is only possible if traditional thinking and ultimately the legacy of the conflict can be explored in a safe environment. However, this holistic view of peace building is predicated on a stable political environment and as will be seen in a number of instances throughout this report,

external factors have influenced and shaped how PEACE II programmes have rolled out on the ground.

The second element, which is much more related to the existence of the distinctiveness criteria, is the creation of an environment where applicants have had to think about other communities and the needs that exist there. This has made a lot of recipient organisations of PEACE II recognise the impact of the conflict and how that may be addressed in as inclusive a manner as possible. Many respondents who were in

programme were inflexible to realities on the ground, for instance the interface violence and intra-community feuds in East Belfast, and what may have been appropriate in a rural setting was more difficult to translate into an urban one. There was also a feeling that the distinctiveness criteria had, in some cases, meant that some projects were not funded because of the adherence to ensuring a reconciliation element in all funded projects. This was particularly the case in relation to single identity work in areas.

In relation to any economic renewal associated with PEACE II, it was difficult for respondents to attribute any direct impact to PEACE II because of the multifarious initiatives and policies that exist in each of the areas in terms of regeneration and renewal. Through PEACE II projects individuals have developed their skills and confidence but it is difficult to state the exact number of jobs which have been created directly or indirectly as a result of the funding. Of course improvements in the built and natural environment through PEACE II are self-evident but economic renewal is much more than improved footpaths and a refurbished community hall. There was a recognition by many respondents during this research that things had improved on the surface but to make a judgement on the longer-term impact these improvements are going to have on the economic renewal and regeneration of an area was too difficult.

Outside of the discussions surrounding the impact of PEACE II, a number of issues were raised concerning sustainability, bureaucracy and potential developments for any future funding programmes. Although this was beyond the immediate remit of the research it is desirable to include a summary of some of the more dominant issues that were raised during the interviews.

On the issue of sustainability a number of issues were raised across all three areas about how the recipients of PEACE II funding may sustain and develop their projects in the future. It perhaps comes as no surprise that the main concern was the fear of losing paid posts which have been funded through PEACE II (as has been demonstrated

“A lot of recipient organisations of PEACE II recognise the impact of the conflict and how that may be addressed in as inclusive a manner as possible.”

receipt of PEACE II funding claimed that they would not have otherwise considered quite as fully the needs of the other community and would not have necessarily pursued just as explicit a programme of peace building or cross-community work. Again, this report will attempt to show how relationships and new ways of working have developed under PEACE II funding.

That is not to say that PEACE II funding has provided a solution to all inter and intra community tensions that exist and it is worth noting that a very distinct thread of realism ran through the respondents' comments concerning the challenge ahead. It was not uncommon to hear respondents discuss tokenism, facilitation of engagement but not reconciliation, the difficulties of getting the message further than committees and a focus on meeting the distinctiveness criteria at the expense of meeting real need. There was also a sense amongst some of the respondents, particularly those in East Belfast, that activities to address the legacy of the conflict have been influenced by local conditions which have negatively impacted upon some PEACE II funded projects.

A number of respondents (both recipients and non-recipients of PEACE II funding) felt that some elements of the PEACE II

throughout this research a significant number of posts have been directly funded under PEACE II). The respondents believe that the loss of staff has potentially a serious impact, especially within smaller organisations, where staff knowledge and contacts are essential to the survival of the project.

From a great deal of comments made on this issue there is some anxiety around the sustainability of PEACE II funded projects in the absence of any future funding under the PEACE programme. It would be unfair to suggest that there is a prevailing school of thought which suggests projects should be continually funded even after their natural life expectancy has been reached. The concern relates more to the less tangible aspects of the impact of PEACE II funding and maintaining the momentum that has been created in terms of building confidence and facilitating engagement within communities.

However, the concerns surrounding sustainability are not only focused on the financial side of things. A number of respondents made reference to the decline in voluntarism but more specifically the demands that are placed on individuals working on a voluntary basis (especially those involved in the governance of organisations). There is a fear that a further round of PEACE funding will weaken the community infrastructure with small groups being unable to secure funding.

In some instances a number of respondents felt that the large sums of funding which have been available to groups have in some way spoilt them. It is very difficult to directly attribute both of these particular outcomes to PEACE II; it is perhaps symptomatic of wider issues in society. Nevertheless, respondents recognised this point but they felt that there had been a marked difference in relation to both these issues and at the very least they felt that PEACE II funding had in part contributed to this situation.

There was an issue of funding small, inexperienced groups which may have difficulties rolling out the programmes. These groups could benefit if future funding offered the possibility of small grants. These groups

could also be encouraged to network with larger, more experienced groups in their area. This perhaps underlines the degree to which insularity is common across some of the areas. Indeed respondents felt that a separate fast track programme for smaller amounts of funding would be beneficial. A programme distributing smaller amounts of funding within a simplified framework would assist smaller groups which were previously put off by the bureaucracy.

There was almost unanimous agreement that the administration associated with PEACE II should be streamlined as it was detracting from work on the ground. In many cases the monitoring system has created a perception of mistrust between many funders and funded projects. Although this may be a well rehearsed point, it is nevertheless an important point. It was also felt that a degree of proportionality should be built into any future funding application process to ensure that smaller organisations can avail of funding and that the level of monitoring and audit is in line with the size of the grant.

Despite these concerns it was widely recognised amongst individuals in PEACE II funded projects and other actors in the community that PEACE II has been a further step in a longer, more involved process that

“A programme distributing smaller amounts of funding within a simplified framework would assist smaller groups which were previously put off by the bureaucracy.”

will require further investment and commitment. Indeed for many, PEACE II funding has been the manifestation, financially at least, of the peace process on the ground.

It was evident throughout the research that PEACE II had acted as a mechanism through which a process of change and engagement has been facilitated. There are of course varying degrees to which this process has been a success and the external socio-political environment is a key determining

factor in impeding or facilitating this process. It is therefore perhaps unwise to focus solely on the monetary value of the funding. Equally, it is also perhaps imprudent to view the PEACE II programme in isolation as the external social, cultural and political environment really shapes the extent to which any funding programme, such as PEACE II, can bring about change on the ground.

Like all research, and particularly this type of research, more questions than answers are often posed. This report was no different and at its core the question still remains, is this

type of funding programme the best way to tackle the most basic issues of what divides us? No one initiative or funding programme could ever reasonably claim to tackle such a fundamental issue. At the very least this research has shown us that PEACE II has contributed to putting in place an environment where individuals and organisations have to consider the needs of others. Whether or not this has fully translated into addressing divisions and engendering greater inclusivity within our society is debatable. Nevertheless given the enormity of the task in hand it would be churlish not to recognise the significance of PEACE II in attempting to create the conditions through which a normal and stable society may be achieved. The PEACE II funding programme is a chapter in a much larger and complex story that has yet to reach its conclusion.

“Is this type of funding programme the best way to tackle the most basic issues of what divides us?”





Sean Pettis
CRC's Project Manager – EU Events & Seminars

Round Table Reflections - Highlighting the Key Issues

Integral to the 'Learning from Peace II' project is the opportunity for all participants to discuss their experience of being involved in Peace and Reconciliation work. In this event, 'Shaping and Delivering Peace at Local Level?: Learning from the Experience of Peace II', delegates questioned the speakers and debated at their round tables a series of questions associated with the topic. What follows are the core issues that emanated from those discussions. It should be noted that these core issues don't necessarily represent the views of all the participants, nor were they always points of consensus, rather these are the issues that came up most prominently.

Question 1

In terms of the legacy of division, where have local initiatives made the most impact? Why and how has this been possible?

- A recurring theme was the involvement of young people in locally based initiatives. Some felt that young people were more open to difference than their parents and that young people were in a good position to challenge adults into being more open.

- The role of women in conflict and in turn in peace was a discussion of varying views. The inclusion of measures specifically for women, it was felt, had made an important impact at local level through the establishment of cross community childcare centres. This has created an environment where relationships could be built around issues of common interest which were previously not possible.

“The inclusion of measures specifically for women, it was felt, had made an important impact at local level through the establishment of cross community childcare centres.”

- It was acknowledged by many that the impacts were small scale as the legacy of 'the troubles' makes it difficult to move forward quickly. However, it was felt in several towns that the creation of civic forums had given people the opportunity to meet in a non threatening environment and begin to see 'the other side's' point of view.

- It was widely felt that local initiatives had made a significantly higher impact where the project had run from Peace I through to Peace II. This had allowed project promoters to build in impact indicators and so enabled them to be more pro active in identifying need. The Peace II Programme allowed many to join up the work on the ground by connecting groups together and preventing duplication of work. It was felt this actually added value to the quality of work.

“The partnership can have the direct result of dealing with the issue, whilst at the same time bringing groups together in a way that can create future initiatives”

Question 2

Where has it been easier to make new opportunities? What opportunities has Peace II allowed us to seize?

- In short, many felt the opportunities seized were primarily in economics, infrastructure, tourism development, and cross border development. However it was added in terms of cross border opportunities that there were positives and negatives. As one participant put it, "For some groups there is a great willingness to do cross border work and a great reluctance to speak with one's neighbours".
- In terms of the economic opportunities mixed views were expressed. Some felt too much financial emphasis had been put on the economic elements of the Peace Programme, when in fact the problem was primarily a social one. The flip side of this, it was argued, was that in terms of local impact the economic measures had created a "cover" for local groups and individuals to meet and start to build relationships. Meeting on economic grounds, some felt, is easier to do than on a community relations programme.

- The issue of single identity work within a programme for peace and reconciliation was a recurring theme. It was widely felt that there needed to be a carrot and stick approach to move groups on to cross community work across the entire programme.

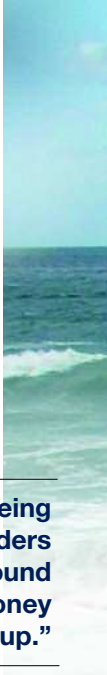
- It was mentioned that in terms of the opportunities Peace has created it is difficult to know the full story. Much of the work isn't well catalogued in terms of sharing learning. Alongside this, there is a lot of work that needs to be kept quiet in order to allow it to happen – there are 'hidden opportunities'.

- The relationship between Community Development and Community Relations also came under some scrutiny. There were differing views over whether Peace II funding made them two of the same or not. It was felt that Peace II money, whilst having the distinctiveness criteria, didn't make cross community contact integral to some projects. This, it was argued, meant that some project promoters claimed to be doing cross community work, when in fact very little or no consultation happened with the 'other' community.

Question 3

Is Partnership a model to be developed for doing business in Northern Ireland? Promote or Drop?

- It was argued that partnership is a model to be developed, but that this should exist within both the public and private sectors. For it to be an effective model there needs to be equality of status between voluntary and statutory bodies.
- Others felt partnerships are useful with locally based projects when they deal directly with issues of deprivation. The partnership can have the direct result of dealing with the issue, whilst at the same time bringing groups together in a way that can create future initiatives.



- It was argued that we talk in partnership, but are not yet in a position to work in partnership. With the time-bound nature of European grant aid, the opportunities for partnership will fade.
- Some saw partnerships as being particularly useful in terms of funders working closely with those on the ground to stop substantial amounts of money going to one group.
- The spend targets, such as N+2, it was argued, militates against partnership. The need to meet spend targets becomes the overarching priority and dampens the energy to actively pursue and promote partnership.
- Partnership was also seen as an excellent way to share knowledge and create models of good practice.

“Some saw partnerships as being particularly useful in terms of funders working closely with those on the ground to stop substantial amounts of money going to one group.”





Frank Gaffikin
Queen's University, Belfast

Coping With Conflict in Peace Programmes

Introduction

A decade ago, at the onset of the 'ceasefires' and the prospect of a post-violent conflict future, a consultation was undertaken with nearly two hundred community/voluntary agencies to elicit expectations about priority investments for reconstruction. Conflating the nine themes that emerged, it is clear that respondents emphasised: capacity building and resources to enable communities to engage better in sustainable regeneration; community care and wider civic objectives; education and training for marginalised youth from Early Years programmes onwards as part of a drive to tackle unemployment and deprivation; and a considered and concerted approach to cross-community work, particularly at sensitive interface areas. Underpinning all of the objectives was a focus on innovative creative processes and targeting to groups such as women, ex-prisoners, victims of violence, and to others experiencing multiple disadvantage (CFNI, May 1995).

Interestingly, the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE I), that came into operation around this time, endorsed many of these aspirations as prerequisites for embedding the infant peace process. It promoted two main strategic goals: (1) redress the exclusion of

those on the margins of social and economic life; and (2) deploy the new opportunity created by a shift to peaceful politics to advance economic prosperity and social renewal. Since then, for the best part of a decade, Northern Ireland and the Border Counties have been the recipients of PEACE I, operated from 1995-99, with an EU contribution of E500m., and PEACE II, scheduled from 2000-2004, with an EU budget of E531m. (In practice, there was a confusing limbo period following the first programme, and thus PEACE II did not get really underway until 2002). Whatever of the final shaping and costing of what has been billed as the likely ultimate phase in these interventions - so-called 'extended PEACE II' - this means that over one billion Euros have been made available for initiatives that 'reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and ...promote reconciliation'. In both programmes, 80% of available funds have been designated for Northern Ireland, and thus any appraisal of such substantial investment must include: lessons that can be drawn by its peace builders and policy makers for future mainstream impact.

Learning from PEACE I

The PEACE II programme has had the benefit of drawing on the evaluation of its predecessor, and it is instructive to summarise these findings. For instance, the

PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) study (November 2003) highlighted the following features:

- PEACE I achieved a near 100% expenditure rate, a notable achievement, given its unique, innovative, complex and devolved character;
- Though incurring the higher unit costs of decentralisation, the delivery systems, like the District Partnerships, contributed to processes of community empowerment and engagement;
- Emphasis was on social inclusion, with less funding allocated to productive investment than originally planned;
- While there was a wide geographical spread of funding approvals, covering a comprehensive range of activities, over 60% of funds went to designated disadvantaged areas, which constitute 34% of the population;
- The programme secured participation from 'hard to reach' groups such as victims of violence; and
- In 95% of projects surveyed, 'added value' was evident, an absence of deadweight that was particularly marked in the social inclusion strand, compared to the economic growth part, where projects tended to benefit from acceleration and expansion rather than direct initiation.

Taking these assessments, many key issues emerge. First, there was lack of clear definition of the central concepts of peace and reconciliation. Second, and related to this, there was no systematic evaluation plan from the start, compromising the potential for robust retrospective appraisal. Third, even taking into account the usual problems of impact 'time lag', there was a tendency to emphasise qualitative criteria of 'process' over quantitative outcomes. Fourth, of those 'hard data' offered, some estimates are quite imprecise. For instance, the total net job creation is given as 'in the region of 7000-8000' (op. cit. p.xii) Fifth, the focus on inclusion to the relative marginalisation of productive investment, and the rapid boost to employment in the community/voluntary sector, raise concerns about sustainability. Sixth, we are told that 'a substantial proportion of projects described themselves as cross-community' (ibid. p. xii). Such self-

definitions invite further questions: were these mostly convenient labels to comply with funding criteria rather than realities on the ground? Did some groups adopt the 'cross-community' approach as a tactical ploy to secure funding, but then found themselves becoming more genuinely cross-community as they worked together? Clearly, various permutations are possible in this arrangement. But, it matters a great deal to try to uncover the extent of real new engagements and collaborations across the divide, and in the case of PEACE I, we don't know. Yet, despite this lack of fine-grained analysis, the evaluation asserts confidently that 'the Programme levered a significant increase in cross-community activity. PEACE I embedded cross-community activity as a normal approach to the establishment and development of groups' (ibid. p.xiii). However, despite attributing this inflated catalytic role to the programme, the report later acknowledges:

It is very difficult to assess the lasting effect on peace and reconciliation. However, over 50% of those surveyed said that their project had a 'very significant' impact in reinforcing progress towards a peaceful and stable society, although only 29% felt the same about the impact on promoting reconciliation.(p.xii)

“It matters a great deal to try to uncover the extent of real new engagements and collaborations across the divide, and in the case of PEACE I, we don't know.”

This conclusion is supported by another study that notes that in PEACE I 'three quarters (of projects) claimed to operate as cross-community projects although the evidence of the impact on community relations is unclear'. (Building on PEACE, 2005, 13). Indeed, a central weakness in PEACE I was that in many ways it seemed indistinguishable from a traditional European regeneration and anti-poverty programme. While any intervention designed to address the imperatives of post-conflict reconstruction will necessarily comprise important elements about inclusion and economic development,

it is critical that the integrity of the core 'peace & reconciliation' dimension be respected. Have this and other limitations been redressed in the second programme?

Covering also a mid-term evaluation of PEACE II, the PWC report identifies a set of lessons that 'have been learned and successfully applied' (op. cit. p.xvii) to the second programme, including the need for clarity in rationale; consistent project selection criteria; and clear procedures, given the complexity in the decentralised delivery mechanisms, covering over 50 Measures and

“Many of the changes from Peace I to Peace II were implemented without any public consideration of options. The process of change was characterised by a lack of transparency”

Sub-Measures, around 50 main implementing bodies, 7 paying authorities and 4 Structural Funds, and operating 260 'indicators' and 11 'horizontal principles'.

But, it insisted that there were other lessons from the first programme that still demanded adoption, including: more transparency; better monitoring and financial information; more rigorous research and evaluation, generating knowledge to be shared across the programme; avoidance of 'back end' loaded funding within an audit approach that allowed the initiative to progress; and anticipation about issues of sustainability. Amongst all of these concerns, there remained *'the need to clarify the relationship between the Peace Programme and peace-building and reconciliation'* (ibid. p.xvii). As part of its response to this challenge, PEACE II has operated 'distinctiveness criteria' to highlight its specific focus and innovative character, and in the mid-term review, these were deemed to be well observed.

PEACE II: Progress from PEACE I?

Compared to its predecessor, PEACE II has accorded greater priority to economic development relative to social inclusion - an interim Rowntree-sponsored review (Harvey, May 2003) estimates that funding for the latter has slipped from a 30% to a 25%

share. This outcome followed a dispute over an 'economic' versus a 'social' focus in the formative stage of refining the rationale. Thus, while acknowledging the overall improved precision in measuring outputs compared to the first programme, the same review suggests that this new emphasis, together with the role of the European Social Fund in supporting the programme, has pressured delivery agencies to produce persuasive data in labour market terms. The review notes in this regard: *'This is in conflict with what many groups feel to be the essence of peace-building'*... (ibid. p.4).

A central critique in the Rowntree review is that the governance procedures have not succeeded in involving civil society to the same extent as the first programme. It argues that this issue formed one of the key contested areas from the start, namely the respective influence of elected representatives, local authorities and officials on the one hand, and the community and voluntary sector on the other, with the former gaining an elevated role. Alongside this shift, there was a new umbrella agency, the Special EU Programmes Body, charged with administering PEACE II, together with other European programmes, and the less defined Regional Partnership Board. Whereas under PEACE I, there was a Consultative Forum comprising inclusive cross-sectoral membership and operating as a discussion arena, there was no such channel for local interests in the second programme. With changed personnel on both the government and EU side for the new programme, there was a loss of institutional memory from PEACE I about these and other matters: *'Many of the positive lessons from Peace I were not documented or recorded and as a result may be lost'* (ibid. p.4).

Thus, it is claimed that PEACE II is at once less participative in its structures and more disproportionately demanding in its procedures for application, monitoring, and reporting requirements. Moreover, the review suggests that *'Many of the changes from Peace I to Peace II were implemented without any public consideration of options. The process of change was characterised by a lack of transparency'* (p.4).

This assessment is despite the prominent role of Local Strategy Partnerships (LSPs) and other intermediary bodies like the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, and the Community Relations Council, which have strong local roots. For instance, the LSPs have been set up in all 26 District Council areas, with 1650 people constituting their boards. Their role indicates the limited value of the social-economic dichotomy in this context, since they are tasked, among other priorities, to develop the social economy and human resource development --- strands that comprise both a social and economic dimension. In a wider sense, there is evidence that some of the LSPs have been both audacious and inventive. The largest, in Belfast, has declared itself in favour of an open compact urban future - ONE CITY, developed through integrated planning, and built on the primacy of civic over ethnic leadership, and on the creation of safe spaces for a new conversation among citizens. Not only is it pressing the 'distinctiveness' criteria, it is also proactively pursuing one of the new measures - an exchange of international experience about conflict resolution - by placing itself at the centre of a global network of leading agencies involved in the prevention of armed conflict. In cities like Belfast, the LSP operates at a critical interface, being at the meso level of governance, able to reach to the micro ground level of community, while able also to influence the macro level of government policy and budgets. Given this unique position, the LSP model offers great potential in developing this set of skills and expertise accrued under PEACE II. As expressed by Harvey: *'The Local Strategy Partnerships may be key determinants in shaping the future of local government in Northern Ireland, far outliving the programme itself'* (ibid. p.3).

This favourable assessment of the LSP performance is supported by the mid-term evaluations of their impact. These have found that the Partnerships have contributed high value-added, with low deadweight, displacement and substitution, and have produced evidence of increased cross-community contact, even if measurable impact on community relations has yet to emerge. (Deloitte MCS Ltd., September

2004). Moreover, their strengths of local knowledge and linkage; equitable processes; partnership networks; good relationships with local Councils; effective organisational systems; and focus on peace and reconciliation provide a platform for innovative new governance. (Deloitte MCS Ltd., January 2005). Both reports suggest many ways in which their capacity could be enhanced, including: a better output indicator framework that would cope with their diverse range of activity and allow for aggregation of outputs across the measures; and a championing by government of Integrated Local Strategies to support their strategic role.

However, not all reviews have been kind to all funding bodies. In drawing attention to the poor transparency evident among some, the Rowntree review notes that many have been 'unable or unwilling to explain' (op. cit. p.4) their spending, and whether their grants have complied with the requirement that 'funding should be distinctly linked to the Troubles and their legacy, and should actively promote reconciliation' (ibid. p.1). Accordingly, it calls for a system to test the operation of the twin criteria of distinctiveness and reconciliation in practice. This conclusion contrasts somewhat with the PWC finding that the 'distinctiveness' criteria were being well implemented. In general, the Rowntree study laments the

“The Rowntree study laments the failure of the second programme to follow and develop the best practice of inclusive participation found in the first.”

failure of the second programme to follow and develop the best practice of inclusive participation found in the first. Indeed, it suggests that compared to rehabilitation and reconstruction initiatives run elsewhere by the European Union, the Irish peace programme has been wanting in terms of inclusion, democratisation, and capacity building for the NGO sector. Among its related recommendations, it calls for a Consultative Panel to be set up to appraise the strategic implications of the programme, and for a greater share of the remaining resources to

be devoted to small grants, designed to stimulate flexible and rapid initiatives at grassroots level. This latter point raises an interesting choice: is it preferable to invest a small number of large grants in carefully targeted strategic opportunities offering critical mass and economy of scope, or a large number of small grants in under-resourced groups and neighbourhood-based projects, which cumulatively may make more impact and achieve more local ownership?

An example of the latter emphasis is to be found in the work of the Community Foundation of Northern Ireland. Its report

“An analysis of the outline descriptions provided for a small selection of successful applicants suggests that some of these projects still largely operate in a ‘single identity’ setting.”

Taking ‘Calculated’ Risks for Peace II begins with recounting its approach to the first programme: the need for resources ‘to hit the streets’ with maximum speed and minimum complexity of form-filling; the importance of ‘social inclusion in the delivery process’ (ibid. p.13); the protection of a self-help/community-based ethos; and anticipation of problems in longer-term sustainability. Accordingly, in the first programme, the Foundation concentrated on grants of up to £30,000 per annum per project, with selected innovatory projects benefitting up to £50,000 per annum. Its monitoring data suggest that it ‘was highly successful in terms of reaching people targeted by the Special Support Programme, and mobilising and engaging large numbers of people in a wide variety of projects’ (ibid. p. 14). Indeed, it estimates that over 10,000 people across Northern Ireland were involved in management committees of projects funded under PEACE I through the Foundation. Highlighting the problem for social inclusion projects to generate funding streams to support sustainability, it notes how: *‘There was the constant danger that the promulgation of unrealistic expectations at a statutory level tended to result in a more rhetorical adherence to the aspiration, underpinned by the shared frustration of*

project promoters and funders alike. A complex minuet of conceptual deception’. (p. 22)

In charting the determinants of PEACE II, the Foundation notes the importance of a series of factors in shifting the emphasis toward employability and peace-building: the way the soft indicators of progress in community capacity and confidence from PEACE I were insufficiently convincing to policy makers; the arrival of new decision-takers in the regional Assembly, and their wish to align such European interventions with the economic objectives of the Programme for Government; and the persistence of street violence, and paramilitary and criminal activity being interpreted as demanding a clearer combination of economic progress and peace-making at grassroots level. In responding to this shift, the Foundation’s report cautions that measurements of success in these objectives have to be customised to the varied particular circumstances afflicting and facilitating local communities within the context of an erratic ‘macro’ peace process. This was especially true for those places and people that had borne the brunt of the Troubles. With this in mind, the report proceeds to summarise some sample initiatives it funded under the second programme up to 2003. These accounts demonstrate a geographic and thematic spread in the projects; a targeting to disadvantaged groups like women and victims, and to deprived areas; and a considerable focus on job training, the social economy, community business, and community empowerment. As a key part of its template, the Foundation operates a valuable assessment of ‘social capital pathways’, comprising: bonding social capital (working within the community); bridging social capital (working between communities); and linking social capital (work with agencies). An analysis of the outline descriptions provided for a small selection of successful applicants suggests that some of these projects still largely operate in a ‘single identity’ setting. For instance, even in an initiative explicitly attempting to offer a cross-community service, it is said that: *‘there is confidence in the group that it will be possible to encourage the engagement of victims and survivors in cross-community initiatives once*

there has been an investment in individual self-esteem and capacity' (ibid. p. 115). These kinds of challenges are identified further in the NICVA report on the impact of PEACE II funding in three specific areas: Strabane, East Belfast and Cavan (NICVA Research Unit, November 2004), highlighting perspectives from recipients and participants at 'ground level'.

PEACE II On The Ground

The NICVA Research Unit's assessment of the programme's operation in these three areas underscores certain patterns — wide agreement that PEACE II has: played a catalytic role in helping to initiate or at least accelerate many projects; helped to develop skills and capacity; and has contributed to a 'feelgood' factor in some areas. But, behind this general endorsement, there lies a varied response about how participants perceive progress in peace and reconciliation. While some acknowledge the programme's role in improving relations, others wonder to what extent there is tokenism; engagement and contact, but not much reconciliation; difficulty in spreading the message beyond committees; focus on addressing distinctiveness criteria at the expense of meeting need per se; and programme inflexibilities with respect to the differentiated realities on the ground. With regard to key aspects such as economic renewal and long-term attitudinal change, many respondents find difficulty in attributing specific impacts to PEACE II, given the multi-faceted dimensions and contexts of such factors. Many express concern about the sustainability of projects, both in terms of future funding and continued community participation, suggesting that good practice may not achieve the consolidation it deserves. Alongside such reservations, practical suggestions are made — for instance, the need for fast track modest grants to ensure that the smaller community organisations are not crowded out; the need for better publicity and transparency in funding; and the scope for greater simplification of the application process, and a rationalisation of monitoring and evaluation.

In the case of Strabane, the report identifies a number of projects such as: the **West Tyrone Voice** — a support system for

victims of terrorism, engaged in confidence-building; training and advice — that has been able with PEACE II funding to extend and professionalise its service; **Border Arts** — that seeks to 'break the mould' by addressing Irish and Ulster-Scots cultural traditions on a cross border/community basis; and **Pushkin Prizes Trust**, that promotes cross border/community youth development. Other projects engaged in training, affordable childcare, rural transport, development of business units and environmental improvement are all seen to contribute to improved economic development and employability.

In East Belfast, it is argued that the void left by de-industrialisation has rendered the area not yet ready for the strong social economy focus of PEACE II. While the programme has helped with training and a notable boost for the community sector, some consider that the real need is for a long-term plan with long-term funding. Blighted by peaceline zones, educational under-achievement, the pernicious influence of paramilitarism, and an extensive drugs trade with its appeal to disaffected youth, East Belfast has seen work to address the legacy of the conflict take a back seat. Certainly, different views are expressed about this, some seeing the interface violence since 2002 hampering

“In East Belfast, it is argued that the void left by de-industrialisation has rendered the area not yet ready for the strong social economy focus of PEACE II.”

reconciliation efforts, with others commenting on the improvements in cross-community relations in more recent times. Nevertheless, the interesting point that emerges is that the programme's evaluation needs to be concerned not only with the projects' influence on the conflict, but also with the conflict's influence on the projects. Projects like the **East Belfast Observer**, a community-owned local newspaper; the **Beat Initiative**, with its proposal for carnivals to evoke community pride; and **Avec Solutions**, engaged in skilling and building

for the social economy, illustrate the kind of initiatives supported in the area under the programme. In the main Catholic part, the **Short Strand Partnership** operates a comprehensive set of services such as youth victim support, after school club, ex-prisoners programme and a tourism project. By contrast, there is recognition that the Protestant section of the area is less internally cohesive. But, interestingly, in both Strabane and East Belfast, respondents comment on the increasing readiness of Protestant/Unionist areas to apply for project funding, representing a significant shift from

“Cavan sees itself as having suffered from a loss of investment and visitors due to its geographic proximity to the conflict.”

the early stage of PEACE I, when some saw the programme as a cross-border/nationalist enterprise, tied to the political project of what eventually became the Belfast Agreement.

In Cavan, PEACE II has helped to make participants more aware of the impact of the Troubles, and for the majority Catholic community there, it has brought home to some at least the need to engage more with their local Protestant community. From respondent comments, it appears that contact between the two communities has been characterised by not so much the polarisation that is more typical north of the border, but by ‘a silence’ with regard to ‘uncomfortable’ political/religious issues that may divide them. At the same time, some acknowledge that complying with the funding criteria for promoting reconciliation may be largely a ‘tick box’ exercise rather than a real change in relationships. Cavan sees itself as having suffered from a loss of investment and visitors due to its geographic proximity to the conflict, and it is unsurprising that a strong tourism focus features among its key projects under PEACE II.

This account of attitudes and experiences ‘on the ground’ reflects not only the challenge faced by the recent programmes, but also the enduring difficulties that have faced public

policy in the task of reconciliation dating back as far as the late sixties.

Public Policy and Division

Since the onset of the Troubles, the various public interventions to address the conflict can be categorised into six main approaches:

1. Traditional community relations:

starting in 1969, this has taken varied forms, such as ‘sectarian awareness’ courses; promoting contact and communication across the divide; school programmes to advance ‘mutual understanding’; cultural traditions initiative to explore the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of cultural diversity, etc. But, the Community Relations Commission (1969-74), set up to pursue such agendas, itself became subject to dispute. Sections of Unionism saw it as the Catholic Relations Commission, one of the many shameful concessions to delusional Nationalist grievance, while Republicans tended to regard an analysis of the conflict in terms of inter-communal discord as a distraction from the root cause of British Imperialism.

2. Community / economic development:

since the earliest community relations attempts to encourage cross-community contact coincided with the outbreak of intense violence and related deepening segregation, it was decided to support practical socio-economic development within each side of the community. It was felt that over time this would both distract from sterile arguments about sovereignty and foster a common basis for collaboration. Cited in support of this early elevation of ‘single identity’ work over its cross-community alternative, was the experience in Europe, where a practical economic arrangement of a Common Market evolved over time into a closer European Union, making the prospect of armed conflict among its members unthinkable.

3. Security response: in a period, mainly though not exclusively from Maudling to Mason, there was an attempt to de-politicise the violence and treat it as a criminal conspiracy, for which there had to be a largely security response, that hopefully over time could be ‘Ulsterised’. This provoked very

different responses from each side: Unionists tending to complain that the response was insufficiently robust and relentless to subdue what they took to be largely a subversive insurrection; and their counterparts complaining that this revealed the true repressive nature of the British state, against which they were rightly resisting.

4. Internationalisation: of the main combatants, Republicans have been always more successful in 'globalising' their struggle, winning allies in the US and elsewhere, and linking their imagery of subjugation to that of the oppressed across the world. But, the value of internationalising the conflict was seen also by other political players and community interests, who believed that the very parochialism of the contest made its protagonists more intransigent. Locating it in a more global context offered comparative analysis of conflict-resolution elsewhere, and ultimately the legitimisation of 'foreign' involvement, particularly by Europe and the US, to open up a more productive discourse about an historic compromise.

5. Political resolution: the view here was that nothing short of a macro political settlement could deliver the basis for reconciliation, upon which could be built a durable peace on the ground. Thus, for some, the 'peace process' has been exclusively about the 'big table' negotiations before and after the Good Friday Agreement.

6. 'New community relations': this has seen much greater sophistication in thinking and practice; the development of the linked concepts of equity, diversity, and interdependence (EDI), and the arguments about how they should be pursued in an integrated way as part of a coherent strategy; the need to implant this perspective in every aspect of government; the intellectual embedding of this approach in social capital theory; the linking of peace & reconciliation to other key government measures around equality, human rights, policing, and good relations; and the advocacy of 'a shared future' over that contradiction in terms - the 'benign apartheid'.

In short, even outside the peace programmes, there has been substantial

experience in attempts to address conflict for three and a half decades, showing how complicated and long-term peace-building really is.

The Paradoxes of Peace-Building

In Northern Ireland, there has been much talk about, if not always sustained investment in, or robust evaluation of, the promotion of tolerance. The basic supposition of traditional anti-prejudice programmes is that the resonance generated through contact and communication across the divide can over time dilute the dissonance of bigotry and 'tribal' hostility. But, this faith in the power of 'mutual understanding' runs counter to evidence suggesting that the more common interests are proclaimed in these circumstances, the more significant becomes the marginal differences (Ignatieff, 1999). In other words, paradoxically, efforts to emphasise close similarity may inadvertently accentuate rather than ameliorate the defining division between protagonists, who feel more compelled to amplify those aspects which most place them apart. Thus, the plausible idea of replacing cultural distance and ethnic enmity with the relational empathy of a 'shared humanity' underestimates this tendency to 'marginal difference'. Given this complexity, it is unsurprising that one study comments that *'it is difficult to find macro*

“The plausible idea of replacing cultural distance and ethnic enmity with the relational empathy of a ‘shared humanity’ underestimates this tendency to ‘marginal difference’”

indicators of the impact of the PEACE Programmes on the overall attitudes and opinions of the Northern Ireland population. (Building on PEACE, 2005, 29)

Another approach is to replace the 'ethnic' nationalism that emphasises blood and kin, linguistic and cultural roots, and the mythical history that binds the collective tribe, with a 'civic' nationalism that recognises a multi-ethnic society built on citizenship, responsibilities, and the protection of

individual rights and liberties. Three main arguments can be advanced to illustrate the difficulties of this shift:

1. From a post-modernist perspective, unitary and universalist concepts such as 'common rights' do not exist independent of diverse cultural interpretation and social contingency. Yet, a 'civic' society infers institutions and governance constructed around shared meaning and memory among citizenry. At its extreme, the post-modernist view disowns ideas like truth and meaning as, if not delusional or absolutist, then certainly

discourse between rival ethno-nationalist interests underestimates the paradox that such peace-building actually invites each side to demonstrate their power, since 'flexing their muscle' can lever negotiations in their favour. In short, peace processes are at once energising and dangerous because they can elevate levels of both hope and harm.

In addition, while progress out of violent conflict demands the creation of safe spaces for democratic dialogue, that engagement itself has to contend with contradictions within the liberal democratic framework offered for such conversation:

- On the one hand, it extols respect for cultural diversity and related special treatment of different groups, while on the other, it upholds universal principles about similar rights and equalities across the whole of society
- Its practice of equal opportunity is compromised by market and other inequities that structurally disadvantage groups around factors such as gender, class, race and ethnic identity.
- Behind the banner of universal franchise lies the reality of differential power based on these socio-economic disparities
- Its response to ethnic violence ---- even when based on a cross-community consensus ---- can risk a self-fulfilling cycle, whereby insurgent violence provokes state repression, itself prompting violent reaction that induces more repression, which in turn can be exploited to justify ever more aggressive resistance. Yet, if the state fails to offer appropriate security, it invites the formation of vigilante militias in the noble name of 'community defence', and this bind between being both delicate and decisive in dealing with armed conflict can be manipulated by those intent on accentuating it.

3. Appeals to respect diversity assume some core binding common identity that permits appreciation that those who are different from us are also in some important sense like us, and the concept of citizenship is often employed for this unifying purpose. Yet, it is problematic to use the idea of shared 'citizenship' in an environment lacking shared

“In short, peace processes are at once energising and dangerous because they can elevate levels of both hope and harm.”

conditional and temporal (Willard, 1994) Thus from this relativist position, the very assumption that divisions can be even commonly understood, never mind resolved, ignores the lack of an agreed moral compass to guide not only mediation and reconciliation, but also basic standards of 'civilised' behaviour. Moreover, while it is often advocated that contesting parties in the conflict should learn to behave 'reasonably', this appeal to reason again underestimates a post-modernist loss of faith in rationality, alongside a greater respect for 'multiple realities' and the emotive impulses of the human condition. Finally, this overall outlook does not fit easily with basic premises of peace programmes, such as 'the achievement of stability through consensus'. For instance, post-modernists contend that 'consensus has become an outmoded and suspect value' (Lyotard, 1984, 66). Instead, we are offered the instability of an endless discourse, in which denotative language is constantly subject to interrogation and dispute.

2. When unitary concepts like citizenship confront splintered realities like contested identity and territory, it highlights the importance of power inequalities in determining the outcomes of disputed definitions. Thus, the notion that a civic society can be built through collaborative

sovereignty, such as in Northern Ireland, where the fundamental contest is not over the nature of the state, but rather over its very existence. In such a situation, reformist agendas to improve equity and diversity can become confused with revolutionary agendas to fundamentally re-arrange constitutional authority.

An indication of the complexities of implementing a politics around equality and diversity is found in Cooper (2004), who illustrates the plasticity and ambiguity attached to these concepts. Thus, for instance, the principle of pluralism cannot entail the endorsement of all difference, since power relations of discrimination and subordination determine certain forms of social difference and identity. Further vexatious questions arise about an 'equality agenda': does it apply to preferences that are harmful, such as smoking? are its subjects individuals or groups? when does pluralism conflate with libertarianism? and does it go beyond a toleration to something positively celebrated? While peace programmes must grapple with these difficulties of definition, Cooper argues for a diversity anchored in a broader appreciation of human solidarity that facilitates choices and dissent. In short, diversity in Northern Ireland must be concerned not only with political and cultural options beyond the traditional divide, but also with encouraging scope for peaceful democratic difference and dispute within each main tradition.

Some of the above tensions can be seen in the way that a peace programme designed to address the contested nature of our society becomes itself bound up in that very contest. The controversy over the differential funding allocated to each side of the community provides one stark reflection of this. Clearly, in a situation where there are socio-economic inequalities, parity of treatment is not the same thing as uniformity of treatment. Thus, as shown by the Trutz Haase study on community uptake of programme funds by mid 2003 (June 2003), the Catholic community's share was just under 56%, though it accounts for 43% of the population. Part of the explanation for this lies in the correlation between disadvantage and religious community profile:

The 10% most affluent Enumeration Districts (EDs) are predominantly (78%) Protestant whilst the 10% most deprived EDs are 80% Catholic. Given the SSPPR's commitment to targeting social need, a disproportionate uptake in relatively disadvantaged areas where the Catholic community is in the majority might therefore be expected (p.ii)

But, 'the main factor accounting for the larger Catholic share of approved funding' (ibid. p. 37) is the differential propensity to apply. Mostly, Catholic areas made a larger number of applications, which on average were for larger amounts of funding. While different explanations have been offered for this pattern - the predominant one being the alleged weaker community infrastructure in Protestant areas - this still suggests that proactive steps need to be taken to equalise it. This challenge puts the focus again on funding bodies, which according to Trutz Haase, 'appear to have had a small but positive influence on the distribution of funds in that they improved targeting towards the most disadvantaged areas...However, (they) had little effect on the distribution of funds between the two communities' (ibid. p.37). In this way, a programme designed to improve equity can itself inadvertently become a channel for potential inequities.

“The more fundamental problem is that the peace programmes have struggled for clarity about what ‘peace and reconciliation’ mean in the Northern Ireland context.”

But, the more fundamental problem is that the peace programmes have struggled for clarity about what 'peace and reconciliation' mean in the Northern Ireland context. The Belfast Agreement may have set a framework for settling the core constitutional question through a democratic politics based on consent. But, it has yet to generate a vision of a shared future that encompasses responsibilities as well as rights. In moving to such an agenda, a central mission should be to counter the inherent suppression of honest

discussion about difference that arises from *...totalistic identities engaged in implacable struggles against those differences that threaten their hegemony or exclusivity. Such culture wars do not reflect too much diversity, difference or variety: they express contending demands to control the exclusive form the nation, state or community must assume* (Connolly, 1995, xxi)

Conclusion

The Peace programmes assumed a peace process. Yet, recent times have witnessed the repeated suspension of the Regional

“Some people exclaim ‘some peace process!’ Others, more sanguine, proclaim the inevitability of such trials in the march from waging ‘the long war’ to staging the ‘strong peace’.”

Executive; persistent violence, even if its nature and intensity have been re-composed; deepening sectarian spatial segregation in some areas; and gridlocked negotiations, amid the electoral pre-eminence of both Provisional republicanism and Paisleyite unionism. Some people exclaim ‘some peace process!’ Others, more sanguine, proclaim the inevitability of such trends and trials in the march from waging ‘the long war’ to staging the ‘strong peace’. This uncharted journey, they remind us, demands painful reconciliation between intimate enemies rather than pleasant platitudes between converted friends. Still others acclaim the accumulative impact of the single steps being taken by many to build a civic society legitimated through a politics of persuasion and consent. Finally, there are those who reclaim their earlier counsel that tribal political projects, however masked through a peace process, remain intent on absolutisms and separatisms that can only balkanise the conflict further. But, whatever the shifting vision ahead, between cloud or rainbow, the central conundrum remains: how can a pluralist society for a pluralist people be built when the very foundation of that society is subject to a very singular dispute?

In turn, this relates to the central paradoxes of peace programmes. They need to do something practical and immediate. Yet, they

address a protracted problem that invites the hesitations and uncertainties that attend complex analysis. Such conflicts call for risk. Indeed, how do you provoke real change without being really provocative? Yet, brave words and deeds, in a highly partisan society, risk being cast as partisan. To survive such accusation, advocates of change and renewal need to build relationships of trust across the borders of division. Yet, such relationships cannot be purchased at the price of surrendering pluralist values in the face of narrow ethnic interest. So, these three Rs of **risk, renewal** and **relationship** form the inescapable landscape of peace-building. In negotiating this tricky terrain, appealing to people’s needs may be more productive than appealing to their good nature. In this respect, we might start from some simple propositions:

Unionists need to trust themselves rather than the UK government to protect their long term interests. Thus, Unionists need devolution. Devolution needs power-sharing. Thus, Unionists need power-sharing. Republicans need the consent of most people in the island. That consent needs an end to their paramilitarism. Thus, Republicans need to abandon the paramilitary dead end, and the recent de-commissioning may genuinely augur a move in that desirable direction. In this new dispensation, Republicans need to convince at least a section of Unionists that their best long-term future lies in a United Ireland, and given the substantial socio-economic transformation in the South and the accompanying secularisation, this prospect appears more feasible now than some decades ago. But, it depends on Republicans discarding the narrow definition of Irishness and forsaking for good their militant traditions. Similarly, Unionists need to convince a section of Nationalists that they can experience a real belonging within, and benefit from, a stable Northern Ireland. Again, such a political ambition is credible, but only if a secular Unionism confronts the narrow menacing vision of a Protestant Loyalist Ulster, that can never appeal to Northern Nationalists. If both main political projects became converts to democratic persuasion over tribal declaration, a new politics could emerge, not one that would see the dissolution of the ancient debate about the relationships within and

between these islands, but rather its re-shaping toward an anti-sectarian, peaceful and creative discourse.

More contentiously, since the world does not owe either part of Ireland a living, both parts need less dependency. Less dependency needs more use of independent native know how and enterprise. The economics of critical mass demand that this operates within a system of sharing and exchange. Such a system demands some form of strategic collaboration across the island, and between it and Scotland, Wales and England, and the wider European Union. Moreover, the three main imperatives of global care - environmental respect, tackling under-development and related inequities, and responding effectively to various fundamentalisms and enmities that give rise to armed conflict --- demand that we become less self-absorbed and indulgent and look to our wider human responsibilities. Such logics of 'smart pluralism' provide the framework within which peace-building in Northern Ireland has to proceed --- though with the perennial proviso about the limits of rationality and 'enlightened' self interest. On this basis, the following 22 suggestions are offered to connect some key lessons learned from the Peace Programmes and other related efforts, such as those of the Community Relations Council, into the wider peace-building and policy making process:

1. Many 'truths' about peace activity have been drawn from previous interventions. While many of these seem to be beyond dispute --- that quick fixes should not be confused with long term solutions; that peace needs to be built around the streets of small neighbourhoods as well as around the big political table; that difference doesn't have to mean division; that peace involves not the elusive search for an end to human conflict, but rather an end to armed conflict, etc. - all 'truths' need to remain open to continual reflection, refinement and possible re-definition. But, a central problem is that some core terms remain ill-defined. For instance, Peace II refers to the objective of 'paving the way to reconciliation'. It is not clear what exactly this means, and given that it is the second programme, greater clarity is to be expected. This dilemma about the ambiguity

of 'peace & reconciliation' and how to measure progress has been identified in many evaluations of the peace programmes. For example, the Deloitte MCS stage 1 report on the LSPs noted: *'The absence of a clear cause and effect impact model for the peace and reconciliation process provides some monitoring difficulties for LSPs (and other implementing bodies) in terms of definitively proving that their projects are having tangible peace and reconciliation impacts on the ground'*. (1)

2. The main divide in Northern Ireland is not between Unionists and Republicans. Rather, it is between those who use or support violence for political change and those who propose alternatives to violence as a means of resolving conflict through persuasion and consent, and, if needs be, legal redress. No society is perfectible. But, all societies are improvable. Northern Ireland remains in need of much improvement, with its inequities, grievances and alienations that have not been resolved yet through public policy or peace programmes. But, none of these conditions justifies, or benefits from, the use of violence, whether in a Downtown bar or outside Holy Cross school, or anywhere else.

3. A stable peace demands more than a cessation of violence, but the continuation of

“Whatever the convenience for the political mood music at particular times, this violence and its perpetrators should be consistently highlighted in all their anti-democratic regressive character.”

even periodic violence polarises the community further, and obstructs the task of attaining the inclusive society that is at once diverse and cohesive. Whatever the convenience for the political mood music at particular times, this violence and its perpetrators should be consistently highlighted in all their anti-democratic regressive character. Accusations from perpetrators and their supporters that this amounts to 'hollow condemnation' should be countered by insisting that condemnation is

better than explanation that leads inexorably to ambivalence or even legitimation.

4. Sectarianism -- the fuel that drives the fear and suspicions underpinning the conflict - is not the preserve of any one side of the community. Rather, it is deeply embedded throughout this society. Thus, it needs to be the key target for peace-building. Beyond committing public agencies to promote 'good relations', public policy needs to more proactively undertake a 'sectarian audit' of the impact of all public intervention: does it add to, or subtract from, the divisions that

“We cannot keep doing the same things, expecting that next time will produce a better result. But, risk and innovation, while they can be ‘managed’, are incompatible with fear of failure.”

sunder community relations? Importantly, this focus is not restricted to those working class areas that have endured the worst violence. As noted by one study of the peace programmes: *‘Inter-communal discord is more visible in deprived areas but this does not mean that distrust and animosity do not exist in more affluent communities. There has been a failure to recognise that atavistic ethno-sectarian attitudes are present outside of highly segregated and deprived places’* (Building PEACE, 2005, 187).

5. Peace work has to be contextualised within wider societal shifts affecting home, family and community, such as: the changing role of women; the new economy and its critics; the reshaping of welfare; the demographic transformation, including the rising share of elderly; and the growing presence of people from diverse ethnic origin.

6. Good participative inter-disciplinary action-research is vital to inform effective intervention, complemented by a comparative perspective gained through awareness about other contested societies. Research without action is observation. Action without research is blind faith. By the same token, rigorous evaluation of peace-building initiatives is essential. In all of this, anti-intellectualism has to be challenged. As indicated earlier, peace-building is riddled with complexity,

contradiction and difficult choices, and these need to be debated at the highest possible level of knowledge and ideas.

7. Peace & Reconciliation networks need to be fostered not only for mutual support and learning, but also for collective influence --- not only at community level, but also in the workplace and classroom, and learning materials about anti-sectarianism, equality and good relations need to be systematically organised, funded and disseminated.

8. While cross-community work is not always feasible in the most acutely polarised conditions, financial support for single-identity work should be subject to greater reservation, and conditional on its planned progress toward reaching across the divide. The problem is that 'single identity' work can be justified never endingly in terms of 'people aren't ready yet. They need still more bonding capital'. But, by the end of a second peace programme, it is reasonable to look for progress in this regard, even allowing for the negative influence of a faltering macro peace process.

9. At the same time, cross-community work itself has to be more than proclamation of bridge-building, or a flag of convenience to secure funding, or even a process measured in the amount of inter-communal contact and communication. Rather, its value relates to its depth, significance, long lasting influence, 'beacon' effect to others, and its transformative impact over time. Most of all, it is about making the difference rather than splitting the difference.

10. Safe spaces for honest dialogue need to be fostered, extending out over time from participants that feel comfortable with the challenge of change into the wider political and public arenas.

11. We cannot keep doing the same things, expecting that next time will produce a better result. But, risk and innovation, while they can be 'managed', are incompatible with fear of failure.

12. Monitoring and auditing procedures around 'peace funding' have to include the opportunity costs of doing nothing and the

benefits accrued through learning from failure as well as success.

13. Just as sectarianism has been pervasive in the old society, peace-building is central to every aspect of creating a new society, and not containable in special programmes or government units.

14. But, this does not invalidate ring-fenced resources being targeted to support initiatives and agencies directly addressing the division.

15. Building productive and respectful relationships among adversaries is clearly critical. But, other kinds of 'relationship' are also important. For instance, the relationship among the present, past and future demands a facilitation of 'remembrance', not for recrimination about the past, but rather for change toward a better future.

16. Those impediments that prevent building on best practice need to be tackled, including the weak institutional memory within government, whereby constantly changing personnel take with them their experience and expertise, allowing for an endless series of short-term programmes and pilot schemes rather than the mainstreaming of what has been shown to work.

17. With this in mind, the return on investment in new governance, such as represented by the Local Strategy Partnerships, should be tapped beyond PEACE II. This is an example of where one of the key outcomes of the programme can be adapted into the reshaping of local government remitted under the Public Administration Review.

18. While it is important to continually improve the structure for joined-up governance, it is even more crucial to promote the culture of collaboration, with financial and other incentives allocated to those who embrace such practice, and who seek to reduce the diseconomies of conflict. The latter include the segmented labour and housing markets caused by sectarian 'chill factors'; and the duplication involved in locating public resources separately in each community.

19. Long-term support is needed at community level to ensure inclusive local

democracy, and inter-communal equity of regeneration and reconciliation capacity. But, no sector in the partnerships needed to advance this work has the monopoly of virtue and legitimacy. Given the significant 'community' role, care has to be taken about what is meant by a 'community leader'. The peace programmes have rightly invested in community empowerment, building on sterling work over many decades, and, in general, the community sector contributes significant value to development. But, in a divided society, it is important to distinguish between local leadership that is trying to operate in an open and measured manner for the common good, and that which is locked in a sectarian mindset, geared to the partisan interests of the tribe over its rival. In such circumstances, exclusive forms of ethnic capital should not be confused with inclusive forms of social capital.

20. This sensitive problem is not restricted to the concept of 'community'. Rather, it is one of the hallmarks of protracted conflicts that core concepts such as 'human rights', 'justice', 'victim', and indeed 'peace' itself can be interpreted in many contradictory ways. For instance, some believe that those who died or suffered injury in the perpetration of violence are not the same kind of 'victim' as those who endured the same fate when violence was imposed upon them. Others

“Just as sectarianism has been pervasive in the old society, peace-building is central to every aspect of creating a new society.”

insist that such a 'hierarchy of victims' is both mistaken and unhelpful. But, sustainable peace-building cannot avoid an open discourse about the implications of such diverse perspectives. In short, peace-building is unavoidably controversial. This suggests yet another paradox: sometimes, peace-building has to disturb the 'peace' of accepted wisdom and those convenient conventions that many may feel are too contentious to re-appraise.

21. The final paradox to be addressed here is that often combatants in armed conflicts can

benefit from the clarity, not to say simplicity, of their ideology. This lends them a formidable focus, energy and persistence. By contrast, those engaged in dealing with conflict through non-violent means are often be-set by doubt and qualification. Even though this tentative disposition can be debilitating, it remains right to regularly admit 'This is my best call on this. But, I could be wrong'. But, while infallibility is incompatible with 'smart pluralism', peace-builders should not disown the need for core values, which can provide a consistent guide to the 'principled opportunism' needed for reflexive action.

“Those engaged in dealing with conflict through non-violent means are often be-set by doubt and qualification.”

22. Ultimately, the challenge is to create a society at home with multiplicity, diversity, and hybridity in a new globalising world where the alien and unfamiliar are coming to a neighbourhood near you. Responses to such a world can be (a) attempted withdrawal into a dark enclave of exclusivity and absolutism, an isolation that will be far from splendid; (b) a minimalist 'live and let live' approach, involving a form of respectful indifference to difference, managing co-existence in shared space with little real intercultural engagement; (c) acceptance of a sensitive democratic politics of identity and belonging, whereby a series of temporary settlements derive from a process of constant negotiation and accommodation, involving dialogue that will be often discordant; and (d) a more ambitious acknowledgement that no one culture or belief system has total purchase on the complications and horizons of humanity, but that perhaps a positive interaction and mutual enrichment can add value to each tradition for reciprocal benefit (Sennet, 1994; Donald, 1999; Parekh, 2000; Amin, 2002; Sandercock, 2003). An effective peace process has to involve an open discussion about such options.

Bibliography

Amin, A. (2002), *Ethnicity and the Multi-cultural City: Living With Diversity*, Report for the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, Durham: The University of Durham

Building on PEACE: Supporting Peace & Reconciliation After 2006 (not dated; assumed 2005), a review sponsored by Special EU Programme Body; The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland; Co-operation Ireland; and Area Development Management, Belfast.

CFNI (The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland) (June 2002) *Taking 'Calculated' Risks for Peace II*, Belfast: The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

Community Relations Council (2002) *Guidance Notes for Community Relations Council Peace 11 Funding: Part B*, Belfast, CRC.

Connolly, W. (1995), *The Ethos of Pluralization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Cooper, C. (2004), *Challenging Diversity: Rethinking equality & the value of difference*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Deloitte MCS Ltd (September 2004), *Mid-Term Evaluation of Local Strategy Partnerships. Stage 1 Report*, Belfast: Deloitte MCS Ltd.

Deloitte MCS Ltd. (January 2005), *Mid-Term Evaluation of Local Strategy Partnerships. Stage 2 Report*, Belfast: Deloitte MCS Ltd.

Donald, J. (1999), *Imagining the Modern City*, London: The Athlone Press

Harvey, B. (May 2003), *Review of the Peace II Programme*, York, Joseph Rowntree Trust

Ignatieff, M. (1999), *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*, London: Vintage

Lytard, J-F (1984), *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, tr. by Benington, G. and Massumi, B., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

NICVA Research Unit (November 2004), *PEACE II: Geographical Research: an Assessment of the Impact of PEACE 11 Funding in Strabane, East Belfast and Cavan*, a NICVA Research Unit Report for the Distinctiveness Working Group, Special European Programme Body, Belfast: NICVA.

Parekh, B. (2000), *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, London: Macmillan

PriceWaterhouseCooper (PWC) (November 2003), *Ex-Post Evaluation of Peace 1 and Mid-Term Evaluation of Peace 11: Final Report*, Belfast: Special EU Programmes Body

Sandercock, L. (2003), *Cosmopolis 11: Mongrel Cities in the 21st Century*, London & New York: Continuum

Sennett, R. (1994), *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilisation*, New York: Norton

Special EU Programme Body (2000), *Operational Programme: EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland: 2000-2004*, Special EU Programme Body, Belfast

Trutz Haase, in assoc. with Pratschke, J. (June 2003), *Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation: An Estimate of Community Uptake*, Dublin: Trutz Haase

Willard, D. (1994), 'The Unhinging of the American Mind: Derrida as Pretext' in Smith, B. (ed.), *European Philosophy and the American Academy*, La Salle, Illinois: The Hegeler Institute, The Monist Library of Philosophy.



Shaping and Delivering Peace at Local Level?

Learning from the Experience of Peace II

Learning From Peace II

Other publications in this series include:

**'Beyond Sectarianism?
The Churches and Ten Years of the Peace Process'**

**'Prosperity - A Part of Peace?
Learning from the Economic Experience of Peace II'**

For further information on the work of the Community Relations Council contact:

Community Relations Council
6 Murray Street
Belfast
BT1 6DN

Tel +44 (0)28 90227500
Fax +44 (0)28 90227551
Website www.nicrc.org.uk
Email info@nicrc.org.uk



Community Relations Council



Learning from Peace II Project

Over the last nine years the European Union has made a tremendous commitment to N.I and the Border Region of Ireland. The Peace II Programme, through its support to over 5,000 projects, is delivering real benefits to local communities. Whilst the Programme has achieved much, both in economic and social terms, the reality is that the process of building a peaceful society is a long-term one. No matter what the political difficulties have been, the PEACE Programme has enabled local communities to remain engaged in the process of building a better future for themselves.

The Learning from Peace II Project has been initiated to critically evaluate the impact and implementation of the PEACE II Programme on peace-building and reconciliation in Ireland (north and south), to ensure that the lessons learnt can be disseminated to funded groups, funders, policy makers, Commission representatives, Government Departments and the general public.

This publication, 'Shaping and Delivering Peace at Local Level?: Learning from the Experience of Peace II', seeks to draw out the learning from the range of practices and procedures that contributed to make Peace II a programme with a local focus and to provide learning that can both support current initiatives and shape future funding programmes.