



INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

Fund news

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International Fund for Ireland announces £5.9m/€7m to promote reconciliation and peace building

Following a meeting of the Board in Armagh on 25 February 2010, Fund Chairman Denis Rooney CBE emphasised the importance of bringing communities together in practical ways to promote reconciliation and build lasting peace, as he announced £5.9m/€7m to support a wide range of projects.

Among the beneficiaries of the latest funding package are eight cross-community partnerships between grassroots community organisations across Northern Ireland and the southern border counties. As participants in the Fund's ground-breaking

Integrating Community Organisations Programme, these eight partnerships will receive a total of £719,791/€863,749.

Launched in 2008, the Integrating Community Organisations Programme has had considerable success in facilitating and supporting meaningful, lasting partnerships between community organisations on a cross-community and sometimes cross-border basis.

Denis Rooney said: "The Integrating Community Organisations Programme is at the very heart of the Fund's work. The

courage of organisations and communities who are attempting to build relationships with those from the other tradition should not be underestimated.

"Just a few years ago, it would have been almost unthinkable for some of these communities to work together. Their achievements should give us real hope for the next generation."

Other major elements of the latest funding package can be found inside this edition of Fund News.

Board meets with local groups

Following its recent meeting in Armagh, the Board of the International Fund for Ireland visited SAVER/NAVER in Markethill, County Armagh.

The International Fund for Ireland has a long association with SAVER/NAVER, having provided assistance towards the extension of Bingham House and support for the organisation's ongoing work through the Fund's Community Bridges Programme. SAVER/NAVER has also benefited from participation in the Fund's AMBIT Programme.



Pictured (L-R) during the Board's visit to Markethill, County Armagh are: Reatha Hassan OBE, Chairperson, SAVER/NAVER; Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland; and Sabine McAllister, Director, SAVER/NAVER.

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Foreword

As I write this article, Northern Ireland is once again emerging from political crisis. Our politicians have spent weeks in negotiations to try to resolve the impasse over the devolution of policing and justice. While progress has now been made, the negotiation process made it clear that our society remains split on its traditional, partisan lines, and old wounds continue to cause tensions and divisions.

Against this background, the Fund continues to work to promote dialogue between Unionists and Nationalists in Northern Ireland and the southern border counties. As recent political debate has made clear, despite much progress, historical issues such as parading remain incredibly difficult. Many communities from both traditions remain isolated and suspicious of their neighbours. So the simple act of working with a community group from another tradition, or sharing a classroom with a peer from a school with a different religious affiliation can be a bold move – even now.

One of the Fund's most unique initiatives is its Integrating Community Organisations Programme. Since its launch in 2008, it has encouraged grassroots community groups to work in partnership on a cross-community and sometimes cross-border basis. Progress has sometimes been slow due to the ground-breaking nature of this work. However, the courage of participating groups in taking the first steps is to be applauded, not least for the hope and inspiration they provide for lasting peace on the island of Ireland.

Our recent Board meeting also highlighted our continuing commitment to providing opportunities for young people to learn together – vital to helping them live together in the future. We continue to be encouraged by the response to this element of our work. These are not easy social issues to address but we feel that we must do whatever we can to break down barriers and create a more integrated society to support long-term peace.

As we approach a new phase in the Fund's life, we will not be actively seeking any further international contributions after the end of 2010. Nevertheless, we remain focused on delivering interventions that will be sustainable long after the Fund ceases to exist.

The programmes and projects featured in this edition of Fund News demonstrate very positive outcomes in terms of underpinning peace-building and reconciliation and delivering a more stable society.

£5.9m/€7m to promote reconciliation and peace-building

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The International Fund for Ireland's announcement of £5.9m/€7m to promote reconciliation and peace-building included the following funding:

- £2.24m/€2.69m for three major projects supported through the Fund's Sharing in Education Programme, including: a cross-border and cross-community project for primary schools in counties Fermanagh, Tyrone, Down, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth; a three-year cross-community and community relations project involving primary and post-primary schools and teacher training in counties Londonderry/Derry, Tyrone, Fermanagh and Donegal; and a cross-community project for post-primary schools in Greater Belfast.
- £1.57m/€1.88m for four projects supported through the Fund's Community Based Economic and Social Regeneration Programme, including: a major arts based cross-border and cross-community reconciliation project; a cross-community shared space project; and assistance in developing community relations activities.
- £763,438/€916,126 for three projects supported through the Fund's Community Bridges Programme. These include: a project to provide leadership training for 120 young people on both sides of the border; funding to further support local communities in counties Donegal, Antrim, Fermanagh, Leitrim, Monaghan, Londonderry/Derry and Tyrone to develop peace-building plans; and an initiative to promote partnerships in interface areas in Belfast.
- £215,871 to extend the ground-breaking Gerry Rogan Initiative Trust (GRIT) Programme. GRIT assists disadvantaged young people in Northern Ireland to address the issues and barriers they face. This new phase of the Programme will focus on challenging attitudes and behaviours that negatively impact on cross-community relations.
- £358,795 to further support the regeneration of the Corrymeela Community site at Ballycastle, County Antrim.



The Board of the International Fund for Ireland are from left: Dr Adrian Johnston, Mary Southwell, Winston Patterson, Rose-Mary Farrell, Chairman Denis Rooney CBE, David Graham OBE, and Anne Henderson.



Armagh groups in community development programme

Attended by over 60 community groups and a number of local MLAs and Councillors in the County Armagh area, the official launch of the Collaborative Future Social Regeneration Project marked the beginning of a new phase of work by the County Armagh Grand Orange Lodge Community Development Committee (CACD).

The International Fund for Ireland provided assistance of £409,000 towards the Project, which aims to build on CACD's success to date in supporting emerging community groups in County Armagh who use Orange Halls as community venues. This next phase of the Project will also provide on-the-ground support in the urban areas of Portadown and Lurgan, where persistent sectarian tension has often been a barrier to community development.

Since 2005, the number of participating community groups has increased from six to 60, with the help of the advice, training and networking support provided by CACD.

Speaking at the launch, Anne Henderson, Board Member of the International Fund for Ireland said: "To date, CACD has made

considerable strides in supporting emerging community groups in the County Armagh area to establish themselves and promote the activities they offer to the wider community. We believe that confident, capable communities are much more able to engage with the rest of society and that leads to greater stability."

Celebrating the launch of the Collaborative Future Social Regeneration Project at Brownlow House are (L-R): Anne Henderson, International Fund for Ireland; and David McMullen and William Moorcroft, County Armagh Grand Orange Lodge Community Development Committee.



Minister hosts Board dinner

Fund Chairman Denis Rooney is pictured with Mary Hanafin, T.D., Minister for Social and Family Affairs, who recently hosted a dinner for the Board of the International Fund for Ireland on behalf of Micheál Martin, T.D., Minister for Foreign Affairs. At the dinner, Minister Hanafin extended the thanks of the Government of Ireland to the members of the Board for their commitment and contribution to peace-building and reconciliation throughout the island of Ireland.





An interview with An Teach Bán

Fund News (FN) caught up with Tracey McCrory, An Teach Bán (TM) and Co-ordinator of the Pass it On Project which has received funding under the International Fund for Ireland's Community Bridges Programme. An Teach Bán provides a dedicated Centre for Peace Building, based in Downings, County Donegal.

FN: When was An Teach Bán established and why?

TM: An Teach Bán was bought as a community initiative in 1989 to provide respite from the stress of the troubles for the people of the North West.

FN: What is the organisation's primary focus today?

TM: The role changed with the peace process and since 2002 it has been a designated Centre for Peace Building. Its core residential peace building function has been enhanced with a comprehensive outreach programme supported by the Fund and an extensive role

in research and training with the Irish Peace Centre and partners Co-operation Ireland, Corrymeela and Glenree.

FN: Please elaborate on the nature and key objectives of the Pass it On Project.

TM: The Pass it On Project was conceived out of the collective wisdom of participants in our original Community Bridges Programme and our work under Peace II. An ambitious project, it seeks to work with 15 communities over three years to move reconciliation forward in a modern context. Already identified communities are in Londonderry/Derry, Inishowen and the Donegal Gaeltacht.

FN: What progress has already taken place?

TM: We have started working on three fronts: with young people, older generation groups and our mentoring group. We are getting ready to advertise our launch and our community conference: "Communities living out of their imagination". The title says it all. This work goes beyond textbooks and standard

programmes and looks to our participants to co-create the future as they imagine it.

FN: What insights on group interactions could you share with us at this stage?

TM: Part of the ethos of An Teach Bán is that of storytelling and shared journeys. Changed family structures have left the younger generation bereft of the wisdom and comfort of the older generation and have also isolated older people to a place where ignorance of new ways translates to fear and hostility. We believe this will be overcome through knowledge by both generations and humanising of one another. In a sense, we are applying the lessons learned from the troubles to today's conflict.

FN: In your view, what would be a key measure of the success of the Pass it On Project?

TM: A key measure will be increased and improved intergenerational relationships, both within and between the communities we work with and ownership of a future plan to build on this.

First official shared neighbourhood in Northern Ireland

Lissize Estate in Rathfriland, County Down has become the first existing social housing area in Northern Ireland to be officially designated with shared neighbourhood status.

The official designation was marked by the unveiling of a plaque at the entrance to the estate on 9 December 2009.

Lissize is one of 16 housing areas participating in the International Fund for Ireland's Shared Neighbourhood Programme, designed to support and encourage shared neighbourhoods across Northern Ireland. Launched in 2008, the Programme works with existing communities and aims to create 30 shared neighbourhoods over a three-year period. It is managed on the Fund's behalf by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Sandy Smith, Joint Director General of the International Fund for Ireland said: "What makes the Shared Neighbourhood Programme special is that it focuses on the strengths, successes and lessons

acquired by communities such as Lissize who have been quietly working to bring about change and to build shared neighbourhoods where everyone is accepted and respected."



Pictured (L-R) at the official event designating Lissize Estate in Rathfriland with shared neighbourhood status are: Councillor Elizabeth Ingram, Banbridge District Council; Sandy Smith, International Fund for Ireland; Aengus Hannaway, Northern Ireland Housing Executive; and Maxi Beale, Lissize Community Association.