



INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

PEACE IMPACT PROGRAMME

CASE STUDIES

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Introduction

The Peace Impact Programme (PIP) aims to build sustainable peace and prosperity within communities of greatest economic and social deprivation, where there are low levels of engagement in peace building and limited benefits from the Peace Process. It commenced in early 2013 and supports projects in both Northern Ireland and the border counties targeting the most disadvantaged and disaffected areas that suffered high levels of conflict and which are still experiencing ongoing tension and violence. It invests in communities which have not benefited from the Peace Process and where people feel they are marginalised and excluded from both political and socio-economic processes. PIP delivers a range of interventions aimed at tackling the sectarian attitudes, fears and mistrust within and between communities, which continues to limit progress to a lasting peace and shared future.

The evaluation of the PIP programme took place over a one year period from June 2014 to May 2015 and the evaluation team was in a position to observe and assess the work of the projects over an extended period of time. The purpose of the evaluation included: the development of an independent story of the programme, assessing the impact of the programme and highlighting learning both from the projects and the overall programme. It was agreed that a case study methodology would be a useful element of the evaluation in order to capture the story of PIP and to get a more in-depth perspective and analysis of some of the unique and innovative approaches used by PIP projects.

The purpose of the case study component of the evaluation was to capture the work supported by PIP in five thematic areas and to extract the key learning points emerging from this work. The case studies describe how the PIP programme supported projects in these core areas and how this work has contributed to the overall PIP goal of “building sustainable peace and prosperity in those most disadvantaged communities that have benefited least from the Irish Peace Process”. Each of the case studies focus on a specific theme which is considered critical to the development of stable and cohesive communities and the ongoing process of reconciliation in Ireland. Each case study is based on the work of three or four projects which have a strong focus on this particular theme. They do not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of all the work carried out under PIP on these themes and in each case there are other examples of high quality work designed to address problems in these areas. A key element of the studies is identifying the challenges involved, reflecting on the strategies used to deal with these difficulties and the important learning for wider peace building in Ireland and in other conflict environments. The five themes are:

1. Engaging young people in peace building
2. Building a more inclusive Peace Process
3. Inter community engagement
4. Engagement of the Protestant community in the border counties
5. Strengthening the role of women in peace building

Case Study 1: Engaging young people in peace building

One of PIP's strategic objectives was to target the engagement and participation of disaffected young people. PIP supported approximately 20 projects with a primary focus on the engagement and participation of disaffected young people and a further 10 had a youth element.

*"Sectarianism, unemployment, suicide, isolation and disaffection are complex issues that deeply affect young people in all communities and on both sides of the border. Getting conversations about divisive issues on the table is crucial and could be pivotal in developing action at times of tension."*¹

This case study has a primary focus on four projects:

- **Drumgor Detached Youth Work Project (DDYWP)**, Craigavon, Co. Armagh, worked with young people from Meadowbrook and Drumbeg housing estates, engaging them in accredited training in Good Relations and Community Development and in the delivery of community projects. In Craigavon, some young people recruited to participate had been involved in recreational rioting and anti-social behaviour with some engaged with armed groupings in so called punishment beatings or mobilised on the streets during contentious issues or civil disorder.
- **Sligo Young Enterprise** promoted tolerance and understanding by bringing young people together from local communities and delivered an innovative youth training project in soccer coaching. The young people were drawn from different social housing estates in the town and were previously exposed to criminality and at risk of recruitment to local criminal gangs.
- **Inter Estates Partnership (IEP)**, Antrim worked with young people from PUL housing estates to tackle issues such as anti-social behaviour, isolation and intra/inter-community tensions and offered a range of practical employment-related training. These areas are characterised by ongoing tensions between different Loyalist paramilitary groups (UDA, UVF, and LVF) and high levels of unemployment and alienation. The young people were 'at risk' having come to the attention of both PSNI and paramilitary groups.
- **Strabane Access Youth Engagement (AYE) Project** provided training and support services (including mediation between young people and armed groups) to assist young people, their families and the wider community in order to address issues that negatively impact on society. These young people were unemployed, at risk, engaged in anti-social behaviour and some were under threat from armed groups.

Fostering social cohesion and trust through an inclusive and participatory peace building process during and after a transition or conflict is a challenging but necessary task. Many key stakeholders remain on the margins or are excluded (or self-exclude) from the political and peace processes. In particular, the potential contribution and inclusion of young people to effective peace building, is often ignored. The UN Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation highlight the importance of involving young people in peace building.

¹ Monina O'Prey, Programmes Manager, CFNI: Press Release from PIP Youth Conference

“a successful peace building process must be transformative and create space for a wider set of actors – including, but not limited to, representatives of women, young people, victims and marginalized communities; community and religious leaders; civil society actors; and refugees and internally displaced persons – to participate in public decision-making on all aspects of post-conflict governance and recovery.”²

Yet young people’s leadership and roles in preventing and resolving conflict, violence and extremism are rich resources essential to achieving sustainable peace. Young people are valuable innovators and agents of change, and their contributions should be actively supported, solicited and regarded as essential to building peaceful communities and supporting democratic governance and transition. Moreover, young people’s participation promotes civic engagement and active citizenship. Rather than simply acknowledging young people as victims or perpetrators of violence, it is vital to engage youths as social actors with their own views and contributions.

“Youth voices in peace building are present everywhere, but sometimes not recognised. The creation of spaces for youth to express their opinion to decision-makers and broader society ensures that they have the opportunity to be heard.”³

PIP response

The projects involved in this work faced a range of challenges, the primary ones relating to working with disaffected and disengaged young people with challenging behaviours, many of these attributed to their personal family circumstances, the community environment and their previous negative experiences of school, training, statutory agencies, policing, armed groups etc. Therefore, challenges often emerged through attendance, time-keeping, lack of self-esteem/confidence, misbehaviour, etc. Specific challenges within and across projects included: breaking the ways that people, communities and agencies have traditionally dealt with young people and issues such as punishment attacks and expulsions, dealing with the legacy of previous inter-community conflicts and paramilitary feuds and projects or individuals being perceived to be politically aligned.

Reflecting on practice across these PIP funded youth projects, there were similar approaches and methods used and work was underpinned by youth work principles and practices and was:

- Needs led and informed by listening to the young people and delivered at times and in locations which were accessible to young people and where they were at e.g. on the streets, at band parades, in the park where they were drinking, in gangs or large groups, etc.;
- Designed to challenge and address key issues within communities which were negatively impacting on young people and to challenge the young people’s negative behaviour (perceived or actual);

² The United Nations Secretary-General; 2012 report on ‘Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict’,

³ Manola De Vos Devex “6 ways to successfully engage youths in peace building

- Peer led with many projects identifying potential leaders and working with them to enable young people to become positive role models and active citizens within their communities;
- Owned by young people where they took control of/responsibility for aspects of the programme and their own destiny;
- With young people and communities and not 'to and on' the communities and youth;
- Intergenerational with a focus on building positive relations and breaking down stereotypes;
- Included residential activity as this provided more intensive opportunities to build relationships and undertake work away from the normal community environment;
- Delivered by people with relevant skills and knowledge, known to participants and the community and, in most cases, accepted by young people, the community and agencies;
- Based on an 'open-door policy' and positive regard for, and belief in, the young people when others had ignored, abandoned or written them off;

Change

PIP set out to make a difference at three different levels: personal, community and economic. Reflecting on the work of various youth projects the key changes to emerge were:

Personal Change: Projects worked to support young people to address issues they faced in their lives and difficulties they had within communities. As a result many young people, project staff and community representatives reported a range of 'personal stories of change' regarding how the project: made a difference, provided personal and social development opportunities, improved confidence and self-esteem, tested values and beliefs, created opportunities to learn about self and others and provided them with a more positive outlook for their future. For example:

- Strabane AYE supported young people with various aspects of their life: linking them with agencies and structures and reversing decisions of armed groups to execute or subject them to punishment style attacks and mediated in community issues for young people.
- In Sligo, the community Garda Officer spoke about two young people he'd been dealing with on the streets and how they had given up and drifted away from what they were good at: he felt that as a result of their involvement in this project they were back, involved again in the sport they loved, smiling and happy.
- In Antrim, personal transformation stories reflected the range of training and activities which were delivered through the

"The project has enabled re-skilling and up-skilling, raised confidence and self-esteem and that was important for people on the programme who were maybe long term unemployed, living in disadvantaged loyalist estates where people think there is nothing here for them: this project showed people that there are things for them, people interested in them and they have taken more pride / confidence / esteem in themselves and the areas"

IEP Antrim Focus Group

One of the police Land Rover's broke down in the estate and was there for 5 hours: during this time there was not a stone thrown or a bad word spoken to the police: the young people involved in this project are keeping the younger ones calm."

DDYWP Focus Group

"It's changed the direction of what I want to do in the future – I got the internship and into something I wanted to do and now I've got the job for the future".

Sligo Participant

project. The project also included a successful cultural visit to Derry/Londonderry where they focussed on learning about history, culture and identity.

- DDYWP worked to steer young people through a range of community relations focussed programmes.

Community Change: Projects reported their communities were safer, there were better relations between young people and their community, less anti-social behaviour, improved community cohesion and people had developed more pride in their communities. In many cases projects were involved in a range of 'active citizenship' activities including, for example, community clean ups and family fun days. In Antrim those from inside and outside the project/estates reported on how issues around the management of bonfires and band parades had greatly improved as had relationships within and between neighbouring and interface estates. In some areas, relations with statutory agencies, including the police, had also improved and in Craigavon it was reported how NIE were now able to work in the area to conduct repairs whereas previously they would have been threatened by armed groups. All these developments were tempered with the fact people felt that these developments were only the tip of the iceberg and further work was required and further change was possible.

Economic Change: Most of the projects focussed on enabling young people to develop skills and knowledge, gain qualifications and participate in accredited training, all designed to enhance their employability or to assist / support them to gain full or part time employment or progress to further learning / education. For example:

- Strabane AYE provided access to recognised accredited training, qualifications and driving licences that enhanced the employability of 120 young people and also helped 20 participants secure either full time or part time employment.
- DDYWP reported that 24 young people had gained OCN accreditation which enabled them to gain qualifications and some progressed to employment.
- Inter Estates Partnership in Antrim reported that over 160 people received accredited training certificates and that 40 people had progressed to gain employment.
- Sligo Young Enterprises enabled young people with low educational attainment to gain certification in Kick Start Coaching, First Aid and Child Protection and some went on to become trained referees and gain employment opportunities.

Conclusion

A number of learning points have emerged from the work in these projects. Projects deployed effective methods and approaches (as outlined above) to their work with disaffected and disengaged young people who felt alienated from the Peace Process. These were focused on the needs of the actual individuals and were effective both in getting the initial engagement and in maintaining the involvement of these young people over the duration of the project. The methods and approaches which projects implemented to overcome challenges and difficulties had the desired effects on young people and communities with evidence of important change at personal, community and training/employment levels.

Projects worked to directly address the key personal and peace building issues and problems facing young people and the communities where they lived and these approaches are critical to building cohesion and stability in communities suffering from the legacy of the conflict with high levels of youth unemployment and low engagement in peace building. The financial, personnel and training investment was grounded in the community and outcomes and impacts stayed within these communities. There is a clear need to support longer-term interventions in communities that will engage with and impact a wider group of participants and those opposed to the Peace and Political Processes.

This investment through PIP to target the engagement and participation of disaffected young people also contributed to meeting other objectives, for example, increased dialogue and building cohesion within and between communities, greater understanding and acceptance of diversity and promoting economic prosperity through increasing skills. The projects delivered a range of interventions to tackle the sectarian attitudes, fears and mistrust within and between communities, which continue to limit progress towards a lasting peace and shared future and made an impact on the three desired PIP changes or transformations: personal, community and economic.

Manola De Vos highlighted six key elements to engaging young people in peace building: create space for young people to express their opinions and listen to them; enhance the peace building knowledge and skills of young people; build trust between young people and government; promote intergenerational exchange; strengthen monitoring and evaluation and support young people who are positively contributing to their community. It is clearly evident that PIP projects, including those which were the focus of this case study, made a positive contribution to these key elements.

Case Study 2: Building an inclusive Peace Process

Introduction

There is a growing concern that the lack of real progress on the political front and recurring periods of political instability combined with economic recession, increased levels of unemployment and a growing sense of alienation will create a fertile ground for those opposed to the Peace Process and provide opportunities for armed groups to build their profile and increase their influence in deprived communities. A key challenge in peace processes is to create and maintain an inclusive process where all groups feel a sense of ownership and are broadly committed to sustaining the process. This has also been a problem in NI from the outset and the problem has increased over the years with elements in both the PUL and CNR communities feeling increasingly marginalised from the mainstream political process. In CNR communities the “dissident” republican groups have been a focal point for those who are alienated or opposed to the current Peace Process and willing to maintain the use of violence. There are also an increasing number of people who are opposed to the political process but are not necessarily in favour of the use of violence / physical force or who are aligned with dissident republican groups. In PUL communities the lack of political leadership and the failure to develop real political representation has resulted in a growing sense of alienation from both the political process and the wider Peace Process.

One of the key challenges to the Peace Process is the increased sense of alienation among people (especially young people) in disadvantaged PUL and CNR communities and ongoing role and position of paramilitary and armed groups in this context. The influence of these groups (both so called dissident republican groups and loyalist groups) has been sustained and in some cases increased through a complex mix of both local issues and wider failures in the political process. At local level there are major issues relating to anti-social behaviour and drug abuse and a recognition that the PSNI is struggling to deal with these issues especially in communities where there is a longstanding resistance to policing. This creates a fertile ground for paramilitary and other armed groups to present themselves as a viable solution through punishment beatings, shootings and expulsion of those accused of anti-social or other negative behaviour.

In CNR communities there is a continuum or spectrum of people ranging from those who question aspects of the Peace Process, those who are opposed or feel excluded in some way from the political process and community activities to those who are willing to use violence in opposition to the political and peace processes. There is a risk in describing all those who are opposed or excluded from the current processes as “Dissidents” as this term is widely used to imply support for some form of armed struggle when in reality the majority of those who oppose or question the current processes are actually also opposed to “Armed Struggle”. Using such terminology further excludes sections of the community from the current political and peace processes. In many PUL communities Loyalist paramilitaries are still dominant and in control of communities, groups or activities. There is an identified need to change how these groups interact with the local community, to alter the power balance in these areas, and to open up community structures to the wider community.

In marginalised PUL communities there is a sense that the traditional structures (the Loyal Order, the Churches and political parties) have lost contact with the grassroots and ignored

the needs of these communities leading to a fracturing of the PUL community along class or other lines. There are also divisions between different bands and between those affiliated to different Loyalist paramilitaries or increasingly between factions connected to Loyalist paramilitaries, between the paramilitaries and the wider PUL community and between young and old. In the case of the Sperrin Cultural Awareness Association project there are major differences between some of the rural PUL communities and the more urban PUL communities that they work with in estates around towns such as Magherafelt and Randalstown. The sense of disaffection and alienation is particularly acute among young Protestant men and is exacerbated by unemployment levels that are much higher among this group in this area than among young Catholic men in the same location. County Derry / Londonderry only recently became a majority CNR county and this has also had an impact on the PUL psyche in that area.

PIP response

The Peace Impact Programme (PIP) programme was designed to fill a significant gap in both the Peace Process and the political process in Northern Ireland and the Southern Border Counties through the provision of targeted support to those communities where there has been limited or no engagement in peace building to date. There is a growing acknowledgment that the political settlement did not address some of the core issues at the heart of the conflict and that sizable sections of both the PUL and CNR communities were being excluded (or perceived themselves to be excluded) from both the Peace Process and mainstream political process creating a sense that they have been left behind and fuelling a growing sense of alienation. The PIP programme has been implemented at a time of increased tension on the streets and a lack of political progress.

“At the level of political leadership, the 2011 election returned stable administration intent on a wide-range of agreed programmes; that promise, however, went unfulfilled. A high level political dispute about (ironically) a conflict resolution on the Maze/Long Kesh site, plus others over education, health, teacher training, a Bill of Rights, welfare reform and an Irish language act began to silt up the political process even prior to severe budgetary cutbacks. Although it came after a period of significant and symbolic progress in community relations, the flag protest from the end of 2012 was the moment at which forward movement at the ground level also faltered.”⁴

The Queens report highlighted the close interaction between the overall political context and the situation on the streets of Northern Ireland

“The flag protest called into question the ability of Northern Ireland’s politicians to resolve political issues within the democratic chambers that are available to them. It also demonstrated that when politicians fail to find agreement the issues do not go away; rather power leeches out into the streets and the issues re-appear in the form of street protests and public disorder”

⁴ The Flag Dispute: Anatomy of a Protest: Institute for Conflict Transformation and Social Justice, Queens University (December 2014)

PIP has endeavoured to address these challenges through a targeted approach which prioritised deprived areas that have experienced high levels of violence both during the conflict itself and more recently as a result of dissident or other paramilitary activity, intra community conflict and tension and ongoing sectarian violence at interfaces and around contested parades. PIP also targeted a number of both PUL and CNR communities where there are high levels of paramilitary or armed group influence and control and where there are significant legacy issues from the conflict. The four projects in this case study are working to address the problems associated with these political failures and the deteriorating socio-economic situation in many PUL and CNR communities. The areas where these projects are operating share a number of characteristics: they suffered high levels of violence during the conflict, they are still experiencing relatively high levels of violence with armed and paramilitary elements having a lot of power and influence combined with a strong feeling that their area /community has not benefited from the Peace Process.

The Time2Choose Project (T2C) in Derry / Londonderry operates mainly in the Creggan / Bogside and Rosemount areas of the city, these are all CNR areas which experience high levels of multiple deprivation and are ranked in the top 10% NINIS statistics. Each of these areas experienced a growth in dissident republican activity, with both on-going recruitment of young people and an increased number of armed attacks, punishment beatings and expulsions. These factors have created a sense of fear among these communities with increased internal tension and division between people of varying republican and other views and positions. In this context it is difficult for the local communities to take risks by engaging in peace building initiatives. The T2C project offers a comprehensive support system to those young people (and their families) directly affected including a range of support services, counselling, training, mediation work with the armed groups as well as developing a wider community engagement process to discuss these issues and develop appropriate community based responses. The project also works to address the interlinked issues of recruitment of young people by the armed groups and the attitudes of sections of the community towards the activities of those deemed to be dissidents. The aim of the T2C project is to deal with the full complexity of the problem, the behaviour of the young people, the actions of the armed groups and the fact that a sizable section of the community agree with and “give permission” for punishment and other attacks.

The Conflict Resolution Services Ireland (CRSI) project is working in the Ardoyne area of Belfast, a CNR community which is recognised as one of the most deprived in NI with high levels of unemployment, drug abuse, suicide and anti-social behaviour. This area was also among the worst affected areas during the conflict being located within what was known as the ‘North Belfast Murder Triangle’ and having the highest recorded rate of conflict related deaths in NI. The level of conflict has remained high with both internal tension and intra-community conflict related to contested spaces and interfaces amongst other issues. Ardoyne has also seen a rise in activity within armed and other groups linked to dissident republicanism in all its shades, ongoing recruitment of young people into such groups and problems related to policing, “community justice” punishment attacks and expulsions. This combination of factors has led to a particularly challenging environment with a fragmented community, increased fear and division and an overall deterioration in community cohesion and well-being.

CRSI has worked to engage both young people and adults with a particular focus on those who are outside of the Peace Process, disaffected youth, young people who are victims of punishment or other attacks or at risk from such attacks and more recently they have engaged with Republican ex-prisoners who are outside the mainstream ex-prisoner groups. The project is also working with community groups who condone so called “community justice” and support dissident Republican elements responsible for punishment and other attacks. CRSI initiated a community dialogue and planning exercise with the aim of engaging those who are not currently engaged in development and peace building or were actively opposed to the Peace Process. The aim is to engage these people in dialogue identify and agree the conflict resolution needs in the area and develop a community engagement strategy. Through this, CRSI aims to challenge people / groups and develop alternative solutions to conflict in the area and in particular they aim to try to deal with the contentious issue of “community justice” which has led to numerous punishment beatings and other attacks and has further increased tension and division in the area.

The Sperrin Cultural Awareness Association (SCAA) is a grassroots community group based in Magherafelt which works with the PUL community in County Derry/Londonderry and South West Antrim (including areas such as Garvagh, Castledawson, Tobermore, Randalstown, Maghera, Magherafelt and Upperlands). The project is involved in a range of activity aimed at building confidence and cohesion within the PUL communities and facilitating internal dialogue around contentious and difficult community and peace building issues. It engages with all stakeholders including churches, bands, community and cultural groups, ex-prisoners and those linked to paramilitary groups and young people who are marginalised, engaged in sectarianism and anti-social behaviour and at risk from both paramilitaries and police. The project works with both isolated rural PUL communities and PUL communities in estates around towns such as Magherafelt and Randalstown where there are strong paramilitary and gate keeping influences and issues resulting in punishment attacks and other negative methods of control. The primary focus of the work is to help people in the PUL community to understand their identity, history and culture, to become more engaged in their communities and to move closer to the political and Peace Process. A key element of this is to create a more cohesive community by bringing together disparate groups and institutions from within the PUL community. The PUL community has multiple fractures, factions and divisions which present challenges to those trying to build a more cohesive community with the capacity to deal with internal tension and division and to engage constructively in cross community initiatives or to deal with intra-community issues.

The Mourneview project operates across the several PUL housing estates in South Lurgan (Mourneview, Grey and Hospital Estates). These areas rank within the top 10% of areas of multiple deprivation in NI with high levels of unemployment, poor health and low educational attainment levels. These areas have traditionally had a strong paramilitary presence and influence which permeates all community activity in the area. Lurgan is a contested and segregated town with on-going violent incidents and limited cross community interaction. There is a risk of instability in both PUL and CNR communities and the influence of Loyalist paramilitaries and dissident Republican factions have further polarized communities in the area.

Common themes and approaches

The four projects included in this case study are located in very different contexts in both PUL and CNR communities across NI. While there are significant differences between these communities there are some common challenges and the projects have applied broadly similar approaches in an effort to address these challenges. The core issues in these areas are a growing sense of dissatisfaction and increased levels of alienation from the political and peace processes combined with high levels of unemployment and poverty and increased levels of anti-social behaviour. These underlying issues are drivers of both internal conflict and of sectarian tension and violence creating a potentially dangerous context where paramilitary and other armed groups can increase their power and influence. The four projects are working to engage with those who are politically, socially and economically excluded and marginalised and they are further attempting to break this cycle of disaffection and violence. The core approach is focused on building internal cohesion and increasing community confidence and capacity. These projects are working at two levels: dealing with the immediate issues on the ground and working at a more strategic level to address some of the critical issues which are undermining and destabilising the Peace Process locally.

The Queens Study identified the “mobilising factors” which contributed to the flags protests and set out six broad drivers of mobilisation that were significant:

- Social: arising from generational and gender differences
- Emotive: arising from a sense of alienation and disempowerment
- Ideological: arising from opposition to the Agreement
- Cultural: arising from a desire to ‘defend’ traditions and identity
- Political: arising from dissatisfaction with political institutions
- Economic: arising from material and socioeconomic disadvantage

Both the Sperrin Cultural Awareness project and the Mourneview project are attempting to deal with this complex set of factors in their respective communities.

In the two CNR communities of Derry and Ardoyne there are a similar set of social, ideological, political and economic factors driving internal tension / division and conflict which undermines efforts to build a peaceful society. On the one hand the two PUL and the two CNR communities are poles apart and at different ends of the political spectrum. However when we analyse the drivers of tension, alienation and conflict we can see that there are some common threads and issues. There are also some similarities in how these four projects approached these issues and the types of interventions used. The central element of the work of these projects is the inclusive approach and the creation of alternatives for those who feel excluded.

Providing alternatives

The projects are providing alternatives at several levels:

- Alternatives to the political exclusion in both PUL and CNR communities which is reinforcing the power of the paramilitaries and armed groups. They are allowing and enabling people to voice their concerns and issues in a constructive manner

including concerns about the political and peace processes and the failure of mainstream political parties to deal with these concerns within the PUL and CNR communities. There is a growing view that “politics doesn’t work” and these projects are endeavouring to create space for alternative politics or community based structures, and to demonstrate that people voices can be heard.

- Alternatives to the ongoing problem of punishment attacks and expulsions which are seriously damaging individuals, families and social cohesion in these areas. All four projects have dealt with these issues and worked with the key stakeholders, the victims of the attacks, the armed groups involved in the attacks, the families and the wider community – many within the wider community have shown support for such attacks. For example T2C has worked with over 200 cases of people who were under threat from such attacks (punishment beatings, shootings, expulsion etc.).
- Alternatives to the sense of social and cultural alienation which underlies much of the disaffection especially in PUL communities. The Sperrin and Mourneview projects recognise the need to inform their communities about their own and other cultural identities, to build confidence in this and to shift people towards a more constructive expression of their own identity so that it means more than “simply sticking a flag on a lamp post”. They have created links between the bands and other young people, organised history talks and other debates, undertaken visits and created opportunities for these communities to formulate and engage in a range of models enabling more positive forms of community commemoration and celebration.
- Alternatives to some of the economic problems facing these communities through training, learning and mentoring support. All four projects (and the majority of PIP projects in general) are providing support and advice to unemployed people, linking them into statutory services and support structures and providing training courses as many of the target group of young people will not engage with other existing providers / programmes or statutory agencies.

Mediation and dialogue

A core element of the work involved in a number of PIP projects is mediation – working to address the many issues which emerge along the fractures (both intra and inter community) in these communities, between the communities and statutory agencies and on a cross community basis. As outlined above there are numerous internal fractures in both PUL and CNR communities and one of the legacies of the conflict is the tendency of people to resort to violence when issues emerge or re-emerge. The projects have acted as a third party in these issues and used a range of mediation approaches to resolve issues in a peaceful or non-threatening way, creating new models of community resolution. One example is the use of mediation to prevent punishment attacks and to reintegrate the person under threat back into the community that has rejected them. Another example is the facilitation of internal dialogue and providing opportunities for different groups in these communities to openly express their views. In all cases there are poor relationships with the PSNI and a need for dialogue at different times to prevent situations from deteriorating and to ensure there is some level of co-operation around policing, difficult issues and instances of contested parades, etc.

Inclusivity

In all cases working inclusively and maintaining an open door policy has been a key successful factor in the work. The people that the projects are trying to work with may feel excluded, are often considered “hard to reach” or are seen as “risky” due to their connections to armed groups and groups who use or condone violence. Working with people who are linked to violent groups is central to inclusive peace building but it is still seen as the key challenge and particularly so in NI where there is thought to be an established Peace Process running alongside a political process. In different ways these projects have demonstrated a willingness to work with both individuals and groups who are excluded. The CRSI project is one of a number of groups that has been supporting a group of republican ex-prisoners who are not linked to or feel alienated from the more mainstream republican ex-prisoner community and structures. The SCAA project invested a lot of time at the start of the project to engage with the many different strands within the PUL community (many of which who would not previously have engaged with each other) including those at one end who are affiliated to paramilitaries and those at the other end who have been accused of anti-social behaviour. Time2Choose has invested a lot of effort in working with young people who have history of anti-social behaviour and who are under threat as well as building structures to engage with armed elements who have been directly involved in such attacks.

Credibility and trust

A central component of the work of all PIP projects is the level of trust and the credibility of the PIP Programme and the organisation and /or the individuals involved in the work. Given the complexity of the situation in the four areas (and in most areas PIP projects work in) and the level of suspicion and mistrust within these communities, it is vital that PIP groups have the necessary ability, desire, respect, credibility and impartiality to work with different sections of the community and to also engage with other local groups and relevant agencies including the PSNI. This is particularly true where the projects are challenging existing power structures, working to reduce the influence of gate keepers and attempting to move the communities in new directions. There are risks involved in the work and evidence proves that these projects are willing to take risks in order to stabilise their communities and build more cohesion.

Leadership

One of the challenges in these communities which limit community development and peace building efforts is the weaknesses in leadership and the fact that existing structures are often dominated by gate keepers and in some cases heavily influenced by political parties or paramilitary groups. In this scenario it is difficult for people to voice their opinions and for new leaders to emerge. These four projects (in common with all PIP projects) are creating opportunities and a safe space for people to engage on important issues and through this process new leaders may emerge. The projects have particularly provided space for both young people and women to engage more actively and to express their views. Both these groups would have been previously under-represented in terms of leadership and peace building.

The Mourneview project highlighted the progress that had been made in “learning how to be a community association, learning the values of community work and being responsive to the community rather than personal /political agendas”. This has changed the perception of the community association which is now seen as a positive player in the community and this in turn has generated wider engagement between the community and the association. At a practical level, for example, this has led the group to set up a community house with some basic facilities including laptops for computer training. Another example of this is the support provided by the project for the establishment of a new women’s group in the Mourneview area. The establishment of a Youth Forum by Sperrin CAA and consultative processes in the Ardoyne and Sperrin CAA areas has also allowed new people to come forward and take on new leadership roles.

Flexibility and responsiveness

The project works in changing and dynamic environments where both internal issues and outside events can create a crisis and set back the work. Therefore the projects need to have some form of flexibility to be able to respond to these crisis situations and to intervene where necessary and as appropriate in a timely manner before issues become difficult to resolve or tackle. PIP has allowed projects the space to engage in this work where there often are no clear or immediately measurable outcomes and where projects need to have the scope to respond rapidly and creatively to emerging issues on the ground.

Conclusion

The work of these four projects has highlighted a number of important learning points

- While young people are most likely to be alienated and excluded there are also men and women and ex-prisoners who are excluded or feel that they are being excluded from the peace and political processes - this points to the need for more holistic approaches which work with wider sections of the community.
- There is a need for more long term interventions which apply more holistic community development approaches (rather than project based approaches) and which address the full spectrum of issues affecting these communities such as equality, social justice and human rights.
- The gap between the political structures and the communities must be addressed with a sustained effort to bridge this gap and to open up alternative avenues where people can engage and voice their concerns.
- The importance of internal cohesion and stability before communities can fully engage in sustained cross community peace building or deal with inter-community issues.
- The importance of working from the inside and using people and structures with the credibility to work with their communities and with the capacity to challenge the gate keepers. The need for funders and other agencies to take risk and to work with local actors in a partnership approach which creates both challenge and flexibility to support local approaches to local need.

Case Study 3: Inter Community Engagement

PIP supported approximately 15 projects with an expressed aim of developing inter-community relationships (i.e. with people across the traditional religious, cultural and community divides) and a further 15 which had an element of building inter-community relations.

This case study focuses on three projects:

- **Springboard Opportunities Limited:** worked with Carrick Hill Residents Association (inner North Belfast CNR community) and Lagan Village Youth and Community Group (inner East Belfast PUL community). Springboard developed and delivered a project entitled 'Communities and Youth Together' (CYT), an intergenerational cross community project. These two communities in North and East Belfast have recently been to the forefront of inter-communal violence and difficulties associated with 'parade and protest' disputes. Paramilitary recruitment has been rife in both areas with Loyalist groups engaging young people in violence over the 'flags protest' and other issues. Both Loyalist and Republicans have used the parade and protest issue to manipulate and recruit young people and increase tension.
- **The Roe Valley Residents Association (RVRA):** delivered a multi-faceted peace building programme in Limavady that developed partnerships between community groups and young people in each of the social housing areas across the town. It aimed to build a partnership between people and groups across four areas: Roe Valley (PUL), The Glens (CNR), Coolestan (CNR) and Bovalley (PUL) to help build relationships and sustainability for future inter-area co-operation. The primary focus was to engage disaffected young people (male and female), families and the wider community in order to address a range of issues, primarily territorialism, sectarianism, inter-community tension and building relationships between people from different areas to reduce fear, tension and violence. The project involved those most at need in the area and young people most vulnerable to criminal activity, paramilitary involvement or attack and likely to engage in sectarian and anti-social activity.
- **Donegal Youth Service** developed a 14 month 'Activ8' programme of peace and reconciliation activities to educate, articulate and promote active citizenship among groups of young people drawn from urban and rural areas of Donegal and Tyrone. The project focussed on the hard to reach, disengaged, and disenfranchised young people from both PUL and CNR communities (and the adults around them) of the two bordering counties of Donegal and Tyrone. They targeted areas in urban Donegal and Tyrone (Letterkenny, Lifford and estates in Strabane town) and rural areas across the two counties.

There are indications of a continuing decline in how people perceive the state of community relations. Results from the 2013 Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey show the proportion of respondents who believe that relations between Protestants and Catholics are better now than five years ago has fallen to 45 per cent from 52 per cent: this represents a

drop of seven percentage points on the 2012 figure. When looking towards the future, respondents are also less optimistic about community relations than in previous years. While nearly two thirds of respondents in 2007 (64%) felt that relations between Protestants and Catholics will be better in five years' time, this figure fell to 48 per cent in 2012 and 40 per cent in 2013.

The levels of alienation and disaffection among young people present particular challenges to policy makers and those involved in efforts to promote peace and reconciliation. There are increasing levels of polarisation among young people across the board with particularly sharp divisions in more socially deprived areas. The most recent evidence from the NILT survey suggests that the 'flags dispute' has heightened the temperature with a sharp drop in Protestants and Catholics expressing a preference for mixed religion workplaces and neighbourhoods, particularly among young people. In her commentary on the survey findings Grainne Kelly concluded that:

"The NILT survey results for community relations since 2013 do not make for easy reading. The deterioration in respondents' optimism for the future of relations between Catholics and Protestants is cause for serious concern. While unwise to make direct correlations between attitudes and events, it appears clear that the impact of the motion passed at Belfast City Council, and the subsequent flag protests and widespread unrest, has had a negative impact far beyond people's attitudes to, and tolerance of, markers of identity of the 'other' community."⁵

Considerable work has been carried out in recent years to improve community relations in the southern border counties and there have been significant improvements with a breaking down of barriers and a move away from the "culture of silence" which had pervaded the region for generations. However divisions remain and the Protestant community is still somewhat isolated in the border region with religious segregation remaining in areas such as education. Sporadic (but sustained) attacks on Orange Halls continue to damage relationships as they are seen as not just an attack on the building but on a community.

PIP Response

PIP delivers a range of interventions aimed at tackling the sectarian attitudes, fears and mistrust within and between communities, which continues to limit progress towards a lasting peace and shared future. These interventions were characterised by a number of common approaches which were often underpinned by strong community development and /or good relations working practices including:

- Deployment of single identity work prior / leading to cross-community engagement: the former to generate understanding and awareness of people's own identity, culture, history and traditions and to challenge perceptions and stereotypes and the latter a continuation of this challenge function as well as generating understanding and acceptance of diversity, increased contact / dialogue and cohesion between

⁵ Flying the Flag? An update on attitudes to markers of identity in public space: Grainne Kelly ARK Research Update June 2014

communities and promoting innovative approaches to dealing with contentious issues and economic prosperity;

- Needs led and informed by listening to communities and young people and delivered with communities and young people and not 'to and on' them;
- Designed to challenge and address key issues, divisive and shared, within and between communities which were negatively impacting these areas (when people met and engaged in dialogue, many projects noted people / their communities faced similar issues);
- Delivered by people with relevant skills and knowledge, known to participants and the community and accepted by young people, the community and agencies involved;
- A focus on up-skilling and re-skilling people given the focus on disengaged, disaffected communities with high levels of socio-economic deprivation and poverty;
- A focus on the development of leadership capacity of adults and young people to enable them to take on positive leadership roles within and between communities;

Change

PIP set out to make a difference at three different levels: personal, community and economic. The main changes to emerge from the various inter-community projects were:

Personal Change: Projects worked to support young people and adults to address issues they faced in their lives and difficulties they had within and between their communities. As a result, projects reported a range of 'personal stories of change' regarding how they: made a difference, provided personal and social development opportunities, improved confidence and self-esteem and challenged stereotypes and perceptions. These projects also created opportunities to learn about self and others, generated understanding of and respect for diversity within society and built friendships across the divide.

The CYT Project delivered a range of Open College Network (OCNNI) Level 1 accredited training on relevant issues e.g. Personal Relationships and Diversity Within Society, Community Mapping and Identity & Heritage and Diversity Education. These, and the community projects undertaken, provided personal change opportunities and led to attitudinal change as the people learned to get along with each other and broke down the perceptions they had of 'the other community'.

The RVRA project delivered the MATCH programme (Mutual Appreciation of Tradition, Culture & History). Through this and other activities people made friendships across the Limavady town area and there is now a willingness to go into other estates which did not previously exist.

The Activ8 Project in Donegal visited two Orange Halls in the area (one of which had been recently destroyed in an arson attack). Those young people who participated in these visits spoke about the benefits of the programme: *“it opened my mind to different people and different places in the community”* and it developed respect for others. **Community Change:** Projects reported how relationships had improved on a number of levels: within and between communities, between young people and the communities and, in some areas, between communities and statutory agencies, including the police. These improved relationships led to a number of marked differences: increased intra and inter-community cohesion, community pride, increased youth engagement / participation and understanding of ‘other communities’ and reduced community tensions and sectarian incidents.

The RVRA Project recorded how good links were developed between the four areas / estates and there were people and groups working together where previously this was non-existent or limited. They highlighted how the project was a great opportunity to bring together the volunteers, committee and staff from different community backgrounds and created more collaborative working between community leaders and not just a narrower focus on young people. They reported on how the area had calmed down a lot over the July marching period in 2014 and how a lot of people from the Glens Estate were able to come to Roe Valley estate and participate in a range of cultural activities. The programme also afforded people the opportunity to engage with the council and other agencies and this in turn improved a range of local relationships.

The Activ8 Project built a ‘community project’ into the work with each of the 4 groups (Lifford; Strabane; Letterkenny; St Johnston/Raphoe). The young people talked about how the community projects were an important part of the programme and had enabled them to work on their new ideas to make a contribution to their communities.

Participants in the **CYT project** delivered a mini-service project: a community garden in Carrick Hill and a Family Fun Day in East Belfast which helped to break down the perceptions the community had of young people in each area.

Economic Change: These projects also had a focus on enabling adults and / or young people to develop skills and knowledge, gain qualifications and participate in accredited training all designed to

“Within the area of Carrick Hill the majority of the male participants taking part in the project would have been at the forefront of, and often the ring leaders of, local riots and trouble in the area, particularly as parades pass by. There has been a dramatic and noticeable decrease in the engagement in rioting since the participants began engaging in the project and it has been stated by the partner in Carrick Hill that during times of heightened tensions these particular young people have not become involved in or engaged with anyone participating in riotous behaviour.”

Springboard Progress Report

“Many of the young people were ‘anti-education’ – through taking part in accredited programmes this has given them a little bit more of a thirst for training and a push towards them being able to access mainstream training.”

DYS Programme Manager

“It’s turned my life around. I’ve gained qualifications and training and it’s made me think more positively than negatively about my life. I’ve learnt so much and had so many opportunities like the different courses, the trip to Scotland, learnt how to Ceili dance, glass painting and all. It’s all been good and something which will shape my future.”

RVRA Participant

enhance their employability and / or create opportunities to progress to further education / training.

The **CYT project** provided participants with an opportunity to gain a range of vocational and personal skills training including Teamwork, Personal Confidence & Self-Esteem.

The **RVRA Project** enabled participants to become involved in a range of programmes and accredited training which have benefited participants: for example, one continued in education to become a youth and community worker, a mother was returning to finish an educational course due to her success on the STEPS programme, several completed essential skills courses in Communication, Numeracy and IT and one male completed an Access course for University.

In the **Activ8 Project** youth workers and young people highlighted how the Community Development qualifications gained were a positive addition to CV's, UCAS applications or for a job reference. This was significant given **Project Responses to Challenges Faced** Inter-community projects faced a range of challenges, the primary ones relating to: the capacity of disadvantaged and disaffected communities to deliver programmes and engage in peace building activity, working with in-grained sectarian attitudes and intra / inter community tensions. The Projects were also dealing with local 'gate keepers' and working against a backdrop of communities either influenced or controlled by paramilitary and armed groups, attempting to work across volatile community and interface divides and operating within both a changeable and moving political environment and Peace Process. In these circumstances, projects had to adapt, alter and change programmes to suit the presenting needs. Each project adopted a range of different approaches and methods to overcome these challenges:

- Building relationships with individuals in the community and with statutory agencies;
- Working to address the divisive issues and those which led to community tensions;
- Providing support to individual participants to work through their personal dilemmas or issues which were negatively impacting on their lives;
- Building capacity and leadership skills within and between communities to ensure the skills and knowledge gained remained when project funding / activity ended;
- Engaging young people as active citizens and in positive community activity and promoting the positive contribution they made to community life;
- Ensuring those engaged with the project had a positive standing and relationship with the young people, the community and statutory agencies;
- Ensuring organisational and community buy-in and support for staff and the project and working with a broad range of stakeholders to achieve outcomes;
- The supportive relationship and flexible approach from CFNI/IFI personnel: some projects reported CFNI/IFI were 'both really part of the process and this was helpful';
- Working to secure funding from other sources and linking in with statutory agencies in an attempt to move the work forward and to sustain this for the future.

Conclusion

PIP set out to support projects with an expressed inter-community purpose and others to engage on a single identity basis with the plan to develop / deliver some cross-community

interventions. Following in-depth review of a number of these projects, the following learning evolved:

- Projects deployed effective methods and approaches to their inter-community work with communities and young people alienated from the political and peace processes;
- The methods and approaches implemented to overcome challenges and difficulties appeared to have the desired effects on communities and young people;
- Some projects engaged 'freelancers' whereas others re-deployed existing or employed staff to work on these projects: some organisations reported the former was more effective as it engaged people from outside the community with an element of 'independence' whereas others felt the latter approach was preferable for management / delivery purposes;
- Projects reported the importance of working '*where communities were at and going at their pace*'. For example, for many this was their first interaction on a cross community basis so some moved gently with fun based, single identity and shared themes prior to engagement on a cross community basis and tackling divisive, peace building issues and problems facing the communities and young people;
- There is a clear need to support longer-term interventions in communities that will engage with and impact a wider group of participants and those opposed to the Peace Process.

Some of PIP's strategic objectives were to: increase contact/dialogue; promote innovative approaches to dealing with contentious issues; build cohesion between communities; promote understanding and acceptance of diversity and economic prosperity. The inter-community projects delivered a range of interventions to achieve these objectives and to tackle the sectarian attitudes, fears and mistrust within and between communities and made an impact on the three desired changes or outcomes, personal, community and economic.

Feedback from the projects highlighted that these interventions were probably only a starting point, the beginning of a process or a stepping stone on the journey for participants, organisations and communities. The projects formed a solid foundation from which to build further community development, engagement, leadership and intra / inter-community relations. It is important for funding agencies, with relatively short investment windows, to support groups to develop their exit strategy and sustainability options.

Case study 4: Inclusion of the Protestant Community in the Border Region

While there has been significant progress around the engagement of the Protestant community in both peace building and community activity, there are still some gaps and areas where the Protestant community is isolated and either excluded or feels excluded due to a lack of capacity and confidence. This problem is present on both sides of the border and is exacerbated by internal divisions and tensions within the Protestant community itself. The isolated nature of some of these communities, weak community infrastructure and the long tradition of keeping to themselves and not attracting attention has continued to prevent Protestant communities in the Southern Border Counties (SBCs) from fully engaging in community life and activities. This is particularly true in the case of members of the Loyal Orders in Leitrim, Monaghan and Donegal who want to maintain their culture and identity but are concerned about how the Orange Order, in particular, is perceived by the Catholic community and by some members of their own community. There are still some concerns around sectarianism and the ongoing random attacks on Orange halls have kept this fear alive despite the major improvements in community relations in the SBCs in recent years. On the Northern side of the border the PUL community face a range of challenges particularly in smaller rural communities, relating to the legacy of the conflict and ongoing disputes around territory, flags and parades. The situation is complicated by increasing division within the Protestant community and the emergence of fractures along class background, age and factional political allegiance. Working class communities, younger people, those aligned to paramilitary groups and ex-prisoners are increasingly disconnected from the more traditional and often middle class Unionist structures which dominate the political agenda (the political parties, Churches and increasingly the Loyal Orders). This is leading to a growing sense of alienation among younger working class members of these PUL communities who feel excluded from their own local community and wider traditional support networks in urban areas.

While a growing number of these Protestants communities recognise the need to get involved in cross community work, stronger members of the community have sometimes acted as gate keepers, blocking those who might want to get involved, resulting in large sections of the community remaining insular and isolated.

The PIP programme has supported a number of projects which are working to engage the Protestant community on both sides of the (physical) border. This case study will focus on the work of four projects which address this theme – The Co. Leitrim Grand Orange Lodge (LGOL), Drum Community Association (DCA) Monaghan, Tyrone Derry Donegal Action (TDDA) and the Fermanagh Sports and Cultural Awareness Association (FSCAA). While the context in which these projects are being implemented is different there are some common features and threads and the overall purpose of all four projects is to increase the level of engagement of these communities and to strengthen and sustain the Peace Process in the border region.

The Co. Leitrim Grand Orange Lodge has had limited and tentative involvement in peacebuilding to date and is a “minority within a minority”. The Protestant community is concentrated on the Leitrim / Cavan border and is a small minority in an area that has had a very strong republican tradition. Leitrim GOL feels a lack of connection the wider Protestant community in the area and has experienced some opposition locally leading to an increased

sense of isolation for its members. The group is now at a point where it wishes to increase its sense of belonging in the local Protestant community, to dispel any negative local perceptions that persist and to promote a more positive image of the Orange Order.

The Tyrone Derry Donegal Partnership is supporting Protestant Communities on both sides of the Tyrone / Derry / Donegal border and works to promote greater levels of engagement in peace building and development. This region experienced particularly high levels of violence during the conflict and these Protestant communities are still affected by this legacy and residual sectarian violence. Protestant communities, particularly those on the Donegal side of the border, have been isolated and there has been a traditional reluctance to engage in peace building and community initiatives. While there have been significant improvements there is still a level of isolation and some communities have only recently begun to engage in cross community programmes.

The Drum project is a partnership initiative between three local Protestant groups in the Drum area of Co. Monaghan: Drum Village Development Association, Drum Accordion Band and Mullaghboy Accordion Band. Drum is a small village located in East Monaghan with a strong "Protestant / Orange" tradition and two marching bands, one based in Drum Hall and one in the nearby Mullaghboy Hall. There has been some engagement in peace building in recent years but this project is the first time many members of the local community have engaged in a project of this nature.

Fermanagh Sports and Cultural Awareness Association is a relatively new group working across the PUL community in Fermanagh focusing on smaller rural communities. It is based in Ballinamallard and caters for PUL communities in areas such as Lisbellaw, Kesh, Brookeborough and Magheraveely as well as supporting former combatants and ex-prisoners aligned with the UVF who are isolated from the support of ex-prisoner groups based in urban areas. Fermanagh has a majority CNR population and tensions continue to exist, as witnessed in the recent Westminster election in the area when the PUL community put forward a single agreed candidate to secure the Parliamentary seat that was previously held by Sinn Fein on a very small majority.

The role of PIP

The central focus in the work of these four projects is to build confidence and create opportunities in these communities and to facilitate the engagement of new people in peace building. PIP specifically targeted these groups to create opportunities for increased internal dialogue on these issues with the aim of eventually developing more sustained approaches to peace building and cross community / cross border work. A common issue in all areas is still the lack of confidence which prevents people in the PUL community from taking a leadership role and promoting stronger relations with neighbouring communities. The fact that there is some internal resistance and questions over peace building makes it more difficult for those who are willing to engage. Some in these communities see community relations or peace building work as a threat to their culture and identity and even as a betrayal ('Sash before Cash' being a common cry amongst those most opposed to engagement). On the other hand there are some who are reluctant to engage with the Orange Order and see these institutions as outdated and promoting a more overt and hard-line sense of identity. Conversely, in other border areas the Orange Order is reluctant to engage with former combatants for similar reasons. There are also traditional difficulties

between Presbyterianism / Anglicanism and other Protestant denominations. These different views on Protestantism and the Orange tradition present a range of dilemmas for those who now want to move forward and engage more constructively with their neighbours while protecting their Protestant / Orange heritage and identities.

Important themes in these projects

There are a number of themes and threads which run through these projects and which demonstrate the value of the approach used by PIP: promoting internal dialogue, building confidence and allowing the groups to promote a more positive image of their culture and identity.

An important aspect of the PIP intervention has been the **internal dialogue** which has developed and the creation of opportunities for new voices to contribute and be heard. This will have a positive and long term impact as it will strengthen those who want to move forward and develop new leadership in these communities. The FSCAA has held extensive consultations with all stakeholders in the PUL communities in Fermanagh (the Orange Order, the churches and the ex-prisoner community) and through this process has created awareness of the group, gained confidence in its own agenda and built important relationships. Some of the dialogues on contentious issues were, and remain, difficult and will be ongoing but the key point is that the group has opened up these lines of communication and been part of a dialogue which can help to shift attitudes and strengthen peace building. FSCAA are now seen as an important constituency within the PUL community in Fermanagh, and like other PIP groups have now made strong connections with other programmes, opportunities and funders.

The Drum project is also involved in a process of internal dialogue as it includes three separate groups drawn from one small area: Drum Village Development Association, Drum Accordion Band and Mullaghboy Accordion Band. These groups have not worked together previously, despite being so close physically. The process of developing the application, getting “Buy in” from the three groups and engaging some new young people in the planning process, has provided this community with an opportunity to discuss important issues on the way forward.

PIP funding enabled the FSCAA group to open a new office in Ballinamallard with a drop in / information centre – this was a very big and public step for a new group which was still developing its own identity and creating connections with the wider PUL community. The opening of this office was a public demonstration of the confidence of the group, the acceptance of need within the PUL constituency and their willingness to engage with the wider community.

Building confidence: Leitrim GOL promoted and organised a public meeting to get ideas from local people. An important achievement has been running a series of classes in the two local Orange halls and in other local venues such as the Library in Ballinamore and the Focus Resource Centre in Killeshandra. This was a significant step for the membership as it was bringing the membership from behind the closed doors of the Orange halls into the open, engaging with the wider community and bringing new people into their own premises. The classes were a big success with approximately 200 people attending different courses and a high level of participation from both communities. The most significant impact has been a

new sense of confidence within Leitrim GOL that this approach was effective and good for the community.

A central issue for Protestant communities is how to be more open and engaged while still **maintaining, safeguarding and promoting their culture and identity**. The PIP intervention has allowed these communities to take small steps and to start to do this. Leitrim Grand Orange Lodge created a leaflet on the two Orange Halls and has carried out research on WW1 with plans to launch a book on this subject focusing on those from the Cavan/Leitrim area who served in the war. They have also approached local schools and plan to raise awareness of the Loyal Orders among young people in both communities.

Conclusion

PIP has shown the importance and benefit of recognising difference in communities and **creating space for internal dialogue**. While small rural communities may appear cohesive and united there are often internal divisions and diverse views, particularly around difficult issues such as the Peace Process, developing cross-community relations and contested issues such as flags and parades. Indeed these differences may be more difficult to address openly due to the close knit nature of the communities and the risk that any division would have on family and neighbourhood relationships.

There is great value of working internally with key people who have the credibility and insights to influence the wider community and open up discussion on the difficult issues. These projects have encouraged new leaders to come forward and allowed them to develop and negotiate new and challenging activities with and within their communities.

The importance of **working at the pace of the community** is invaluable and being there at the right time. For isolated Protestant communities on both sides of the border the process of engaging in peace building has been slow and incremental. The PIP programme has been delivered at a time that was right for these communities and the pace of the programme has given them time to have the necessary internal discussions and develop a plan of action. The scale of the funding, the application process and reporting systems and the built in flexibility were appropriate to the type of work needed and do not put unnecessary pressure on small and often inexperienced groups. This is a key supporting element of PIP that almost all groups commented on.

PIP has shown that **communities need to be nurtured and facilitated** in order to engage in new peacebuilding processes. The level of support provided by PIP to facilitate groups, both at the application stage and throughout their ongoing programmes with additional support and mentoring was one of the main keys to the success of the programme. These communities traditionally lack confidence and some have been excluded from other sources of funding by the complexity of the application process and the onerous reporting requirements. Both the IFI Development staff and CFNI have invested in these projects and worked with them to ensure that they received the necessary support and were able to implement the planned programme of activities with relative administrative ease, allowing for challenge to focus on project need and delivery. The CFNI Development Officers have also created structures for PIP groups to interact and support each other and to promote their own “cluster type” activity. A good example of this is the mentoring support which FSCAA has received from a similar PIP project, the Sperrin Cultural Awareness Association.

Case study 5: Strengthening the role of women in peace building

There is growing awareness at a global level that women have the potential to play a much more significant role in peace building and that strategies need to be developed to facilitate this process and to overcome the barriers which often limit their participation. Women in Northern Ireland and the Southern Border Counties have experienced many of the same problems and challenges that women in other post conflict contexts around the world have endured and many women in Northern Ireland still feel excluded from the Peace Process. There is a strong sense that the role and contribution of women to maintaining cohesion during the conflict has been ignored and that they have not been given the opportunity to play a more central role in dealing with the legacy of the past and developing a more peaceful and stable society. The levels of exclusion are more serious in marginalised PUL and CNR communities where there is still ongoing paramilitary influence and control with the result that women in these areas are afraid to speak out and are excluded and silenced. The reality of this is captured in 2013 paper “Excluded and Silenced: Women in Northern Ireland after the Peace Process”⁶ which draws on a consultation process with women across NI. This paper noted that “essentially paramilitary organisations (men) control significant numbers of communities in disadvantaged areas” and highlighted a range of problems for women in these contexts including: high levels of control (through fear and intimidation), women being unable to speak up due to threat to property and personal security and the fact that women often do not have ‘safe spaces’ to discuss issues. This consultation process also drew attention to another serious issue for women who lived through the conflict – the hidden legacy of trauma and the fact that many women experience mental health problems and has become addicted to alcohol and prescription drugs.

“Northern Ireland is a society in transition from conflict rather than a peaceful society. Violence continues to be a feature of Northern Ireland society and there are deep rooted sectarian divisions. The impact of the conflict on women lives has not been adequately addressed or indeed sufficiently researched and understood.”⁷

The voice of women is also missing on the political front with low levels of representation in decision making including important discussions around the Peace Process and the future direction of society.

“Only 19% of the elected Assembly representatives are women and just 23% of councillors are women. Women are underrepresented in the senior civil service and absent from the higher levels of the judiciary. The delegation of 33 members which discussed parading in Cardiff in Spring 2013 had only three women participants and the Board of the Maze Long Kesh Development Corporation had only one woman in ten members with a man occupying the chair⁸”.

Northern Ireland has not yet implemented UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the absence of a strategy on this issue has been identified as a major policy gap. UNSCR1325 recognises the important role played by women in the “prevention and resolution of

⁶ Margaret Ward: Excluded and Silenced: Women in Northern Ireland after the Peace Process. Open Democracy. June 2013

⁷ Women’s Aid Federation Northern Ireland: Response to the Ireland’s Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Aug 2014

⁸ Ibid

conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction”

PIP Response

As frustration with the Peace Process grows in some communities and people feel increasingly alienated from the political and peace processes, there is an increasing recognition of the need for more sustained engagement by women. PIP has placed a specific focus on the inclusion of women in the programme and has funded a number of projects which facilitate the engagement of women and strengthen the role of women in peace building. A range of projects are working to engage women, and especially young women, in peace building and one of the PIP cluster events focused on the engagement of women with over 120 women from projects on both sides of the border attending.

This case study focuses on three projects which have each addressed the issues connected to women in peace building and provided opportunities for new women to engage in community relations work and to have their voices heard on issues which affect their lives.

Queenspark Women’s Group (QPWG) is based in Glengormley in North Belfast, a contested area with ongoing sectarian tension. The QPWG project had a dual focus, working with women in the area to enable them to contribute to good relations and a youth project targeting young people engaging in anti-social behaviour and sectarian violence at the interface. The project operates in two estates: Queenspark, a PUL community and Elmfield, a CNR community and in both areas there is ongoing paramilitary control with young people vulnerable to paramilitary recruitment and regularly engaged in interface violence.

Unheard Voices is based in Creggan, a large disadvantaged CNR estate in Derry/ Londonderry which is one of the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland with high levels of unemployment and poverty and low levels of educational attainment. The area has experienced increased dissident republican activity and also has problems with anti-social behaviour. Unheard Voices targets women who have not been engaged in or disposed to peace building, those who have been involved in or affected by the conflict and those who are excluded from the political and Peace Process. The project has enabled these women to explore a range of issues on both a single identity and cross-community basis and to engage with the wider community and the political establishment.

Grace Women’s Group (GWG) is located in the Ardoyne area of Belfast, a deprived CNR community which has suffered extensively during the conflict and which still experiences ongoing sectarian violence. The area has also seen increased activity by so called dissident groups with ongoing recruitment of young people. The PIP project involved a cross community partnership between GWG and two women’s projects in the neighbouring

“A lot of women have preconceptions of the other community. We have finally managed to break down barriers and see each other as women. There’s a real acceptance and real friendships are forming – women are more willing to go into each other’s areas.”

Unheard voices participant

“I am who I am – I’m not going to change, but my beliefs are changing.”

Unheard voices participant

Women from the other side using our centre. We’re based on the interface at Ardoyne Rd/Glenbryn on the Unionist/Protestant side. Prior to our collaborative working only local residents from the Unionist community would use the centre

Most Significant Change - Grace Women’s Dev & NBWSP)

PUL community of Glenbryn: the Glenbryn Women's Group and the North Belfast Women's Initiative Support Project and is also building links with the nearby Twaddel area. These areas have suffered considerably during the conflict and have been under the influence of Loyalist paramilitaries with some opposition to cross community initiatives and increased tension due to the flags protest and the Twaddel protest camp.

Personal Change

The range of activities organised by the three projects has resulted in a significant personal change among the women particularly in the levels of confidence among the participants. The three projects had aimed to engage new women who had not previously participated in peace building activities and who lacked the confidence to engage. By working through local community activists, the projects were able to bring in these women and enable them to firstly engage with other women in their own community and then progress on to cross community initiatives. The women involved have taken these steps despite internal division and tensions in their own communities, their own fears about cross community work and concerns about possible paramilitary opposition. Despite these concerns, core groups of women in the three areas have been able to bring in new women and facilitate a more ongoing and public process of engagement with women from the "other" community. Women in the three projects have taken part in joint classes and workshops, and undertaken study visits to different places of interest and these activities have built relationships and created a good level of trust among the participants. This increased confidence is reflected in the willingness of the women to engage with each other, and to begin to meet and interact outside the project activities. The projects have provided course in Leadership and Civic Participation which have encouraged and facilitated the participants to engage in lobbying for change and more active civic engagement. For example, 11 women undertook an OCN Level 2 Civic Leadership course with GWG and two of these gained employment during the course. The Queenspark Group has delivered essential skills training and as a result of the various courses 30 young people have progressed into employment or further education and two went on to university.

Community Change

The work of these women's projects is having a direct impact on the local community in several ways. It has opened up opportunities for more long term relationships between women in the communities where there has been a history of conflict and ongoing sectarian tension. The work of the Queenspark and GWG projects with young people has been particularly important in reducing the levels of anti-social behaviour and interface violence in North Belfast. The women in Queenspark organised nightly patrols of the area to talk to young people at risk of engaging in violence and encouraged them to look at alternatives. The group then opened a centre with a drop in facility which is used by young people, including those who had previously engaged in sectarian rioting and violence. The group organised diversionary activities around the time of contentious parades and kept the centre open to encourage young people away from potential flashpoints and violence. This range of interventions, combined with other skills training, has been very successful and reduced the level of anti-social behaviour and interface violence despite the increased tension in the area due to the flags protest.

The young people in the Ardoyne targeted by GWG experience multiple risks: the risk of engaging in sectarian violence, the risk of recruitment by paramilitary groups or coming under threat of punishment attacks or expulsion by these groups. An example of the interventions by the GWG was a Personal Development and Community Relations programme (OCN Level 2) for 18 participants from the area. The work of GWG with these young people has been effective in moving them away from these risks and has provided alternatives to them at a critical period when tension was high in the area due to contested parades and the flags protest which has led to the establishment of a Loyalist protest camp at Twadell.

Giving women a voice and an opportunity to discuss issues of importance and to contribute to the development of their communities is a key element of the work of these projects. Women in disadvantaged PUL and CNR communities feel excluded and there is a growing frustration among many working class women across the sectarian divide that there is no space for their voice to be articulated and no role for them in peace building or community development and a perception that only 'politically aligned' women have a voice. Giving these women a voice was a central element in the Unheard Voices project and has also been an important aspect of both the Queenspark and GWG projects. Unheard Voices has implemented an oral history programme for women from both PUL and CNR communities and many women have come forward to tell their stories for the first time. The process is facilitated by a former journalist and there are counselling services available for those who need support. This has been a powerful programme and has enabled a whole new cohort of women from both communities to openly discuss the impact of the conflict on their lives and the lives of their families and to begin to deal constructively with the legacy of the past.

The GWG project has initiated a joint action research project with Twadell with the support of the Housing Executive. This research will look at needs in the area and the process of women from across the divide working together to identify and develop strategies to address the many social problems in the area: this will be a powerful tool for empowering these women and giving them a real voice in the future development of their area. It will also build on the other work undertaken by the group with women and young people and strengthen relationships across one of the most contested interface areas in Belfast.

Common Themes and approaches

These three projects have been working in difficult and complex contexts with both internal tensions within these communities and ongoing sectarian tension and violence along the interfaces. There are a number of common approaches across the three projects.

Engaging new women in cross-community activities

All three projects have a strong cross-community component and have built good relationships across the divide despite the tension in these areas over the period that the PIP project was implemented. The work of the GWG has been particularly important given the depth of division in North Belfast and the potential for increased violence in the area. The project has delivered a range of training programmes for women from both communities and this has been very effective in encouraging women to cross over and visit the other community. The project has noted that this type of work is now becoming more visible and women are more willing to openly engage in the programme.

Unheard Voices has also worked to build relationships between the women from Creggan and women from the PUL community in the Waterside. Joint training and workshops were used to address key issues relevant to the women and at the same time build these relationships: an example of this was a workshop on Human Rights which had a big impact on participants from both PUL and CNR communities and one on internet safety which involved young women. The programme has been effective with women from the two communities meeting socially and crossing to the other side for shopping. Social activities and trips were important in building these relationships and creating trust.

Giving voice to women

A common feature in all these communities is the fact that women feel excluded and have no voice in relation to anti-social behaviour, paramilitarism, community safety and peace building. In some cases this situation can be exacerbated because women or their partners/families are considered to be aligned to groups who are opposed to the political and Peace Process. These projects provide the space and the necessary support and encouragement for the women to have their voice heard in relation to community development, peace building work and paramilitary actions/power. The projects have engaged these women in a structured process of awareness raising and capacity building both on a single identity and cross-community basis.

Conclusion and key learning points

In PUL and CNR communities where there are high levels of exclusion and marginalisation, women are likely to be even more excluded from decision-making and from playing an active role in peace building. These projects have highlighted the need to include women who have been excluded so far and demonstrated the important benefits of this to the women themselves, to their families and the wider community as well the huge potential these women have to contribute to the overall Peace Process.

Many women in the communities where these projects were delivered have experienced trauma during the conflict and in some cases have not yet told these stories to their own families or had any opportunity to deal with this legacy and, as a result, there are serious mental health problems and a dependence on alcohol and prescribed drugs among many women in these communities. As evidenced by these projects, having an opportunity to tell their stories in a safe setting and to openly discuss these issues in mixed groups is very important for the women themselves and an important building block in the process of dealing with the past and building more cohesive and peaceful communities.

The work of the PIP projects which were the subject of this study have demonstrated that, given the necessary support and confidence, women can play an important bridging role and build relationships in deeply divided communities even at times of heightened tension. These projects have also shown that women's groups can play an important role in working with disaffected youth and can successfully intervene to engage young people and reduce the levels of sectarian and interface violence.

It is critical that working class women in marginalised PUL and CNR communities have avenues to contribute to peace building and to address the key issues impacting on their lives and the lives of their families. These opportunities must: start from where the women

are at, be based on a genuine bottom up approach, build capacity and ownership and provide real opportunities for the women to be heard and to be engaged as equals with other stakeholders in these areas.