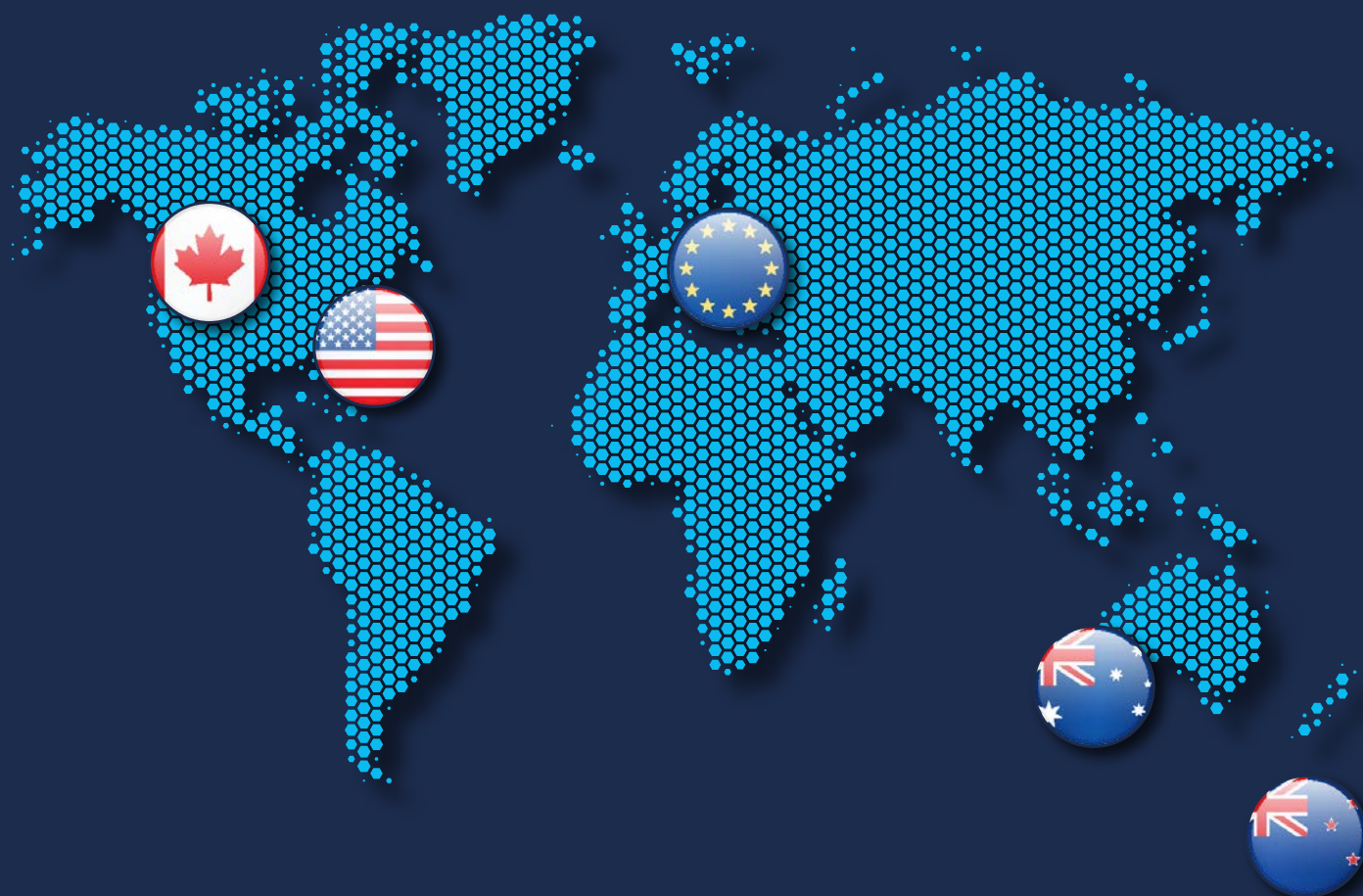


The International Fund for Ireland was established as an independent international organisation by the British and Irish governments in 1986. With contributions from the United States of America, the European Union, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the total resources committed by the IFI to date amount to £754m and €944m.



THE OBJECTIVES OF THE IFI ARE:

- To promote economic and social advance; and
- To encourage contact, dialogue and reconciliation between Unionists and Nationalists throughout Ireland.

* The Sterling/Euro conversion rate at 30 September 2021 is applied throughout this report

International Fund for Ireland

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The difference the Fund is making



INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

March 2022

Challenges

Significant progress has been made in areas across the island of Ireland, including removal of interfaces, addressing paramilitary activity, critical intervention in some of the hardest to reach communities and enhanced community relations.

In the last year alone, the IFI has diverted more than 3,000 young people away from paramilitary recruitment, with more than 3,200 young people achieving a range of accreditations and a further 528 in further education and training.

While this progress is significant, how we navigate the complexities around the NI Protocol and Covid-19 as well as a range of other challenges will play a vital role in how local communities continue to prosper.

Civil unrest across Northern Ireland in April 2021 threatened to undo much of the positive relations built between communities in these areas. However, thanks to interventions by many of our project leaders, who were among the first responders to the violent breakouts and were on the ground throughout the period, an end to the turmoil was achieved through their diversionary work.

Paramilitary organisations continue to gain support from vulnerable communities who feel they have been let down by the Peace Process. This is exacerbated by political instability as well as post-Brexit measures such as the NI Protocol, the Irish Sea border and calls for a Border Poll which continue to gain momentum.

Add to this the ongoing effects of intergenerational trauma felt across communities because of the Troubles, and we can see that all these factors reinforce the need to strengthen the relationships and break the cycle of mistrust and violence. This approach will play a key role in empowering the next generation who live in these communities to work towards a shared society.

The continued political instability in Northern Ireland, which culminated in the recent resignation of Northern Ireland's First Minister (and as a result deputy First Minister) coupled with the upcoming Assembly elections will surely add to the already heightened anxiety amongst communities. We are likely to see further pressure on our groups struggling to keep a lid on community frustrations linked to Brexit, the NI Protocol, Covid, economic recovery, culture, and identity.

It is also very important to acknowledge that many people continue to experience trauma that is caused by the violent conflict of the past. This trauma, which manifests itself intergenerationally, threatens to dominate the lives of future generations unless we, as a society, can address this issue. We cannot afford to allow for a "second silence" causing future lives to be ruined by further violence which will continue the cycle.

The IFI is working against an incredibly challenging backdrop of volatility and many simply feel alienated and that the Peace Process has left them behind.

The next phase of the IFI's work will be carried out through our new strategy entitled 'Connecting Communities'. It will build on progress made and work with others to ensure no community or individual is left behind, particularly given the challenges we face going forward. There will be a clear emphasis on the importance of partnership and collaboration – we urge more partners and donors to come together to empower these communities – give them the tools to make their lives and futures better. We believe it is time to break this cycle of instability and violence, so that further trauma stemming from the Troubles cannot be passed on to future generations.



Political Uncertainty



FEBRUARY 2022
Resignation of Northern Ireland's First Minister leads to uncertain political future



Long term **SUSTAINABILITY** of local institutions under threat¹



Soaring energy bills due to **COST OF LIVING** crisis²



Polling has shown that a **NATIONALIST FIRST MINISTER** is predicted for the first time³



Unionist parties have **REFUSED TO CONFIRM** whether they would govern under Sinn Féin First Minister⁴



37% support **BORDER POLL** within the next 5 years⁵

Brexit and the NI Protocol



PROTESTS over Irish Sea Border in towns across Northern Ireland⁶



67% OF THOSE IN NI thought Brexit had made Irish reunification in the foreseeable future more likely⁷



Since 2016 **18,000 EU** workers have left Northern Ireland⁸



More than 50% of people in NI believe the issue of the NI Protocol is **THREATENING PEACE**⁹



57% believe the Irish Sea border risks SPARKING VIOLENCE in Northern Ireland¹⁰



RIOTING at interface areas in protest of the NI Protocol¹¹

¹ <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/will-the-stormont-assembly-fall-before-elections-in-may-1.4771056>

² <https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2022-01-13/devolved-governments-unite-to-demand-urgent-action-over-cost-of-living-crisis>

³ <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/sinn-f%C3%A9in-on-course-to-become-largest-party-in-stormont-assembly-poll-1.4783655>

⁴ <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/unionism-must-confirm-it-would-serve-with-a-sinn-fein-first-minister-says-mary-lou-mcdonald-41269947.html>

⁵ <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/sunday-life/latest-poll-reveals-49-back-northern-ireland-remaining-in-united-kingdom-40797566.html>

⁶ <https://www.politico.eu/article/northern-ireland-bus-torched-in-protest-against-brexit-sea-border/>

⁷ <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/majority-of-people-in-north-would-vote-to-remain-in-uk-in-referendum-survey-1.4753475>

⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-59182117>

⁹ <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/sunday-life/news/ni-protocol-threatens-peace-process-pro-brexit-think-tank-poll-reveals-fears-40638222.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/sunday-life/news/ni-protocol-threatens-peace-process-pro-brexit-think-tank-poll-reveals-fears-40638222.html>

¹¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-59158328>

Social and Economic



JULY – SEPT 21 – Estimated 23,000 young people aged 16 to 24 years in NI were not in education, employment or training (NEET)¹²



IN A SURVEY OF OVER 2,500 people in NI: 30% suffer from anxiety, 33% suffer from depression and 20% have Covid related PTSD¹³



39% IN NI experienced some sort of traumatic event during the conflict¹⁴



NORTHERN IRELAND SCHOOLS STILL DIVIDED despite £1bn spent on tackling issue¹⁵



93% OF CHILDREN in NI are still attending schools segregated along religious/ethnic lines¹⁶



351 OF THE 17,614 registered deaths in 2020 were due to alcohol-specific causes¹⁷

Violence



PARAMILITARISM remains a clear and present danger



Between **NOVEMBER 2020 – OCTOBER 2021**:¹⁹

- 8 bombing incidents in NI
- 32 shooting incidents
- 43 casualties of paramilitary style assaults
- 18 casualties of paramilitary style shootings



DURING 2020/2021 – 256 individuals or families forced to flee their home in the last 12 months because of intimidation²⁰



2020/21 – 934 sectarian incidents recorded by the PSNI – +46 in last 12 months²¹

¹² <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/young-people-not-in-education-employment-training-NI-2020>

¹³ <https://www.qub.ac.uk/News/Allnews/2020/QueenssurveyrevealshighratesofmentalillhealthinNl amidstcurrentCOVID-19pandemic.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.derryjournal.com/news/troubles-related-mental-illness-may-be-passed-next-generation-240455>

¹⁵ <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/education/northern-ireland-schools-still-divided-despite-1bn-spent-on-tackling-issue-41080024.html>

¹⁶ https://www.salesforce.com/uk/blog/2022/01/small-business-trends-2021.html?d=7013y000002EKXqAAO&utm_source=inskin&utm_medium=display&utm_campaign=gb_esmblobaw&utm_content=_7013y000002EKXqAAO&soc=Inskin-small-business-trends-2021&dclid=CMDEo9nT7fUCFUbOGwodr2wCdg

¹⁷ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/cause-death/alcohol-deaths>

¹⁸ <https://www.psnipolice.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/security-situation-statistics/2021/october/security-situation-statistics-to-october-2021.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.psnipolice.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/security-situation-statistics/2021/october/security-situation-statistics-to-october-2021.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.communitiesni.gov.uk/publications/northernirelandhousingbulletinjanuarymarch2021>

²¹ <https://www.psnipolice.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics/documents/police-recorded-crime-in-northern-ireland-1998-99-to-2019-20.pdf>

Communities In Partnership Programme (CIPP)

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

Further uncertainty around the NI Protocol and post Covid-19 recovery for border communities will undoubtedly have a serious impact on vulnerable communities in the coming years. While very different in nature, these challenges contain the risk that individuals and communities will become isolated and alienated.

The IFI will work with cross-border communities that have lived and operated under a significant level of distrust of their neighbours. A key aim of this programme is to encourage cross-border co-operation between these communities, aimed at building resilience in the face of uncertainty and friction, supporting the development of local leadership.

A key challenge for CIPP will be to address the clear mistrust felt between some border communities.



Peace Impact Programme (PIP)

The Peace Impact Programme (PIP) is designed to deliver real and positive community transformation through sensitive interventions in communities that have not previously, or have only partially, participated in peace building and reconciliation activities.

The Peace Impact Programme has expanded and intensified its efforts to build sustainable peace and prosperity in areas through increased contact and dialogue, within and between communities, to build cohesion and improve relationships.

A key challenge for PIP groups will be to manage growing frustrations in local communities across a range of contentious issues whilst continuing vital quiet diplomacy and diversionary work.



“

We have three women's groups of different ages. Our oldest is 60-83 years and some of them will have come down south because they were burnt out of their homes in the North during the early part of the Troubles.

John Connolly, Ait na Daoine
Peace Impact Programme

”

“

Brexit is another area of concern and there is a fear that post COVID-19 deeply divisive and political arguments could return and communities will regress into the age old green and orange divides.

Winston Irvine, Intercomm Project
Peace Impact Programme

”

7441
NI people involved in capacity building, events and training

1238
NI intra / inter cross-border relationships

1882
NI core and general events and activities

236
NI accreditations and qualifications received

Peace Barriers Programme (PBP)

Peace Walls are the most visual remaining symbols of division in Northern Ireland. Today, more than 100 barriers remain mostly in Belfast stretching a distance of 21km.

The Peace Barriers Programme (formerly known as Peace Walls Programme) focuses on helping interface communities to bring about the conditions that can allow for the removal of Peace Walls. It provides a range of confidence and relationship building initiatives within and between interface communities to help residents arrive at a position where they feel it is safe and appropriate to discuss and consider the removal of Peace Walls in their area.

It is well documented that communities living in the shadows of Peace Barriers suffer from multiple and overlapping issues in relation to socio-economic disadvantage, educational under-attainment, access to services, and poorer levels of mental and physical health and well-being.

A key challenge for the PBP will be to deliver long term sustainable solutions to interface areas that secures vital aftercare packages for local communities. A major element of this is collaboration and partnership with delivery partners.



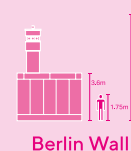
“

It's 44 years since the wall was built, my family were some of the first residents, if the wall hadn't been up then it would have been rough.

The Peace Wall separated us from people in the Fountain, we didn't know anything about them, but they were the same as us in there.

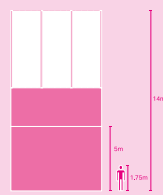
'Women, Words and Walls'
– Video documenting the experiences of women living with interfaces 'Bogside and Brandywell Initiative (BBI)'
Peace Barriers Programme

”



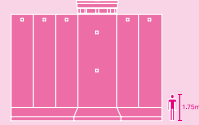
Berlin Wall

31 YEARS



Cupar Way, Belfast

52 YEARS



Palestine Wall

21 YEARS

3453
residents have been involved in discussions

77%
were in favour of Peace Barrier removal or reduction

6
PROJECTS

49%
of the target group engaged in discussions focussed on Peace Barrier removal, reduction or change in 2020/21

Personal Youth Development Programme (PYDP)

The Personal Youth Development Programme (PYDP) aims to help young people who are at risk build and develop life skills that foster good relations, build confidence and resilience, and make them more employable. The programme is unique in the way it engages and sustains contact with participants.

The PYDP engages young people who are vulnerable to polarisation/recruitment by or into organisations opposed to the Peace Process and who face barriers to participation in mainstream provision.

A key challenge for the PYDP will be to maintain peace during potential periods of tension in local communities over the next twelve months. Diverting young people away from potential violent or criminal behaviour and engaging them in programmes and initiatives aimed at bettering their futures.

1533
taken good relations training

1752
taken employment related training

34
have secured apprenticeships

738
have secured employment



“

Youngsters clashing in these estates are very much encouraged by elements in their communities to participate in the rioting. We did outreach in both estates working with local community centres to identify the young people most at risk and set up a special programme for them. They came into the programme initially with their hoods up and full of fear and our first challenge was to get them to engage and talk to each other.

Michelle Simpson, IgnYte Project
Personal Youth Development Programme
(during a period of tensions created by the NI Protocol boiled over into street violence in April 2021)

”

“

Cross-border work isn't easy, it requires patience and understanding and a willingness to engage with the 'other'. The staff worked through this with participants and enabled mutual understanding and respect to develop and grow. In recent years, our work has moved also to focus on engaging with new communities and towards accepting diversity.

Charlene Logue, Donegal Youth Services (DYS)
Personal Youth Development Programme

”

AMBIT

AMBIT is the IFI's annual outreach and capacity building programme in the United States. It has been running a successful initiative for 20 years and is facilitated by the US consulate in Belfast and coordinated by the Washington Ireland Program (WIP).



More than
200
participants

have benefitted from the once in a lifetime experience to date, knowledge sharing with one another and their Peers in the US



Many participants involved with AMBIT work with
young people at-risk
and in communities that live with the
legacy of the Troubles

“

As a peace builder, the programme allowed me to see how others address inequality, environmental injustice, poverty, segregation and racism. This inspired me for my own peace building/community development work back home.

Community development is a hard job. It can sometimes seem like you are fighting a losing battle, particularly in peace building where goals are few and far between due to the nature of the issue. This is especially so during the Covid period. AMBIT connects you with others who are doing such work and allows you to share problems, resources and opportunities.

Kyra Reynolds, Peace Barriers Project BBI in Londonderry/ Derry

”



Looking Ahead

The IFI's projects have continued to work throughout the pandemic, and it is now becoming clear that many societal issues are emerging because of the crisis and pose even further challenges to peace and stability. Problems such as mental health, food poverty and an economic downturn alongside existing legacy issues are significant challenges that require our urgent attention.



Add to this the ongoing effects of intergenerational trauma felt across communities because of the Troubles, there is an urgent need to strengthen the relationships and break the cycle of mistrust and violence. This approach will play a key role in empowering the next generation who live in these communities to work towards a shared society.

As we enter an election year in Northern Ireland, continued tension around key issues such as legacy, Covid Recovery, Brexit, and the NI Protocol with further pressure on projects to manage these frustrations on the ground. There is a growing need for the independent support delivered by the IFI, especially in the many hard to reach communities witnessing rising tensions, there is also an increased urgency for collaboration with partners and statutory agencies if we are to continue to deliver sustainable peace.

