

Funding Peace

**A report on the funding of
Peace and Reconciliation
work in Northern Ireland
and Ireland 2007-2017**

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THE UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT TRUST

corrymeela 

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Foreword

The concept of a ‘Peace Dividend’ in Northern Ireland has been in circulation since the period of the ceasefires in 1994. There are a variety of understandings as to what this means in practice. In Northern Ireland this has included the potential for increased tourism, foreign direct investment and the rebalancing of the economy towards private enterprise. The prevailing notion is that peace brings investment. This study focuses on the inverse—what is the nature of investment required that builds and sustains a meaningful peace? What is the dividend *for* peace?

In late 2016 the partners involved in this research were becoming increasingly alarmed at the number of organisations involved in peace and reconciliation work who had either closed or were in a precarious position. Whilst it was clear this was not always down to a lack of funding, it seemed that the wider policy and funding environment was shifting and with it, shaking the foundations of many organisations who undertake reconciliation work. We therefore decided to engage in research that sought to capture the views and experiences of voluntary sector organisations across Northern Ireland and Ireland, as well as some of the bodies charged with distributing funds for such work.

From a personal perspective, I have worked in the voluntary sector for my entire working life. Engaging in reconciliation work has been a source of immense and at times difficult learning. I have often felt overwhelmed by the scale of the challenge and humbled by the deep personal commitment to the work embodied by colleagues and

organisations across the voluntary sector and beyond. I have felt the rush of excitement at the funding of a new initiative and the sense of loss when a programme comes to an end. I have seen and felt the impact of the work on participants and providers. For Corrymeela, the funding environment in the past decade has also been a challenging one. At times it has felt like sailing through stormy waters with no compass or map to guide us, or even a sense of where the final destination is. Probably an apt metaphor for the peace process more generally. And yet there has been a significant and welcome investment in peace work, particularly by international donors. Much has changed for the better, some things have stayed the same and other new challenges have emerged.

In writing this Foreword, I would like to extend my gratitude to all who contributed to the study. Participants freely gave their time, with many other demands. Thanks also to the funders, the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade for their support and feedback. A thank you to my colleagues Duncan Morrow and Lisa Faulkner-Byrne for their dedication in carrying out the research. Lastly, a thank you to the expert steering group, who critiqued and challenged our methods and assumptions. As is standard, we take responsibility for any shortcomings herein. Whilst it is not intended to be a definitive study, we hope it opens up wider debate and encourages more focused studies to be undertaken.

Sean Pettis
Programme Manager – Legacies of Conflict
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Executive Summary

1.0 Overview

The purpose of this research is to understand how changes in the political environment and the availability of financial resources, impacted on voluntary and community based peace and reconciliation activity in Northern Ireland and Ireland over the period 2007 -2017. Furthermore, we sought to understand what the consequences are of these changes for the range of stakeholders involved in such work. Other specific objectives included:

- To assess the experience of a number of peace and reconciliation groups or projects in relation to the financial and political environment in which they operate.
- To identify the consequences for learning and capacity, brought about by any changes in funding
- On the basis of evidence, to present findings and make recommendations for policy makers engaged in peace and reconciliation work across Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Given the scale of the research, the findings should be considered illuminative rather than definitive, with scope for more detailed studies emerging across a range of issues described in the report.

2.0 Methodology

The methodology included:

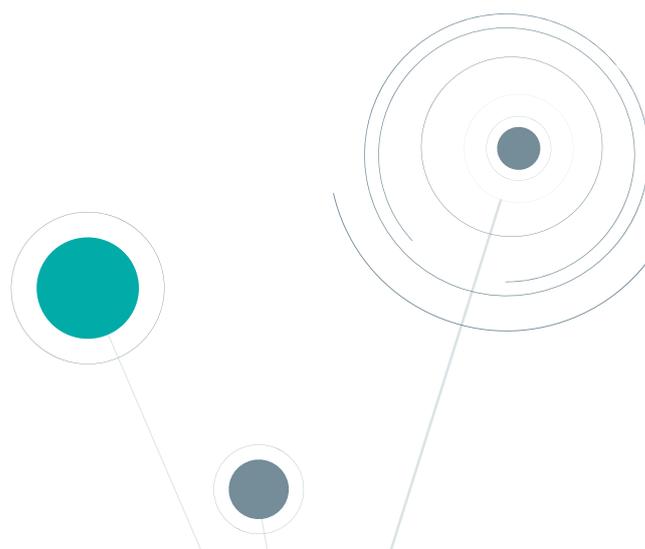
- A desk based analysis of policy and funding frameworks for peace and reconciliation;
- In-depth interviews with key voluntary and community sector practitioners in a variety of sectors;
- Focus groups held in different venues across Northern Ireland drawing together key practitioners in inter-community work; and
- An online survey of charitable organisations in Northern Ireland working on Peace and reconciliation.

3.0 Literature Review

The literature review considered the various frameworks for conceptualising peace and reconciliation, as well as providing an overview of the nature of funding and policy interventions that have been made in this area over the past 30 years. The reduction in investment of international donors was evident, although more detailed analysis of the exact levels of funding for peace and reconciliation should be a focus of further research. The literature evidenced that a critical factor is not just the amount of money available, but the nature of intervention it seeks to support and how the funding is distributed.

4.0 Survey Analysis

Survey analysis showed a considerable body of practice has emerged in relation to peace and reconciliation work across voluntary sector bodies. The majority of activity is delivered on a cross community basis. Geographically more work was evident in urban areas, with response rates indicating less activity in the rural areas of Eastern Ulster. A majority of responses (51%) indicated a decrease in the amount of funding for peace and reconciliation work within their organisations. Respondents highlighted the negative impact that reductions have had on their provision and organisational structure, with 40% indicating that reduction had negatively impacted on their beneficiaries/target groups. Concerns emerged around how the impact of work was evaluated, with respondents referring to specific project achievements rather than wider societal goals at 'population' level.



5.0 Summary of main findings

- No clear and shared understanding or definition of reconciliation exists across policy and practice. This has led to a conflation between ‘traditional’ community development and work with a specific reconciliatory focus.
- A consistent concern amongst practitioners was that a premature reduction in funding before innovative approaches have been mainstreamed, could lead to a significant loss of learning.
- Many practitioners expressed concern at the current T:BUC policy and associated NI Executive funding streams with regards to their ability to affect the necessary change.
- A lack of clarity between funders and practitioners exists about the scale of impact that can be achieved by voluntary sector agencies in relation to population wide social change. Practitioners tended to reflect on learning and change within the scope of their projects, whilst acknowledging that a joined up approach would be necessary to deliver significant change on some of the most difficult challenges. Some funders felt the current investment in the voluntary sector had not provided a return relative to the investment.
- There was a shared consensus that at present no suitable framework exists for evaluating projects and supporting learning to be mainstreamed and taken to scale. This added to the vulnerability of voluntary sector bodies to provide evidence that they are contributing to broader social change.
- A reduction in overall funding was not necessarily the main challenge. Some respondents felt that how resources are targeted and the administrative requirements of some funders were of more significant concern. For some organisations, reductions had led to creative and collaborative ventures that had generated significant added value to their practice.
- The future for reconciliation work was seen as bleak for many, with a sense that the precarious nature

of the sector would put off the engagement of new generations, alongside the danger of considerable loss of learning. There was a consistent belief across practitioners that at a political level there was no room for constructive criticism of current policy. At best this was explained as political ignorance of the value and skills inherent in the sector and at worst as some politicians viewing the sector as a hostile force with no mandate.

6.0 Indicative Recommendations

- A shared definition of reconciliation should be developed, possibly based on the work of Hamber and Kelly (2004). This should be accompanied by the development of clear priorities and a commitment to long term resourcing and planning.
- A joined up and equitable funding system should be developed. This could include an ad hoc funders’ forum across sectors and the adoption of reconciliation criteria into all public funding. The consequences of ongoing reductions in international funding support should be investigated further.
- Alongside an agreed definition of reconciliation, a values based approach could support a range of interventions and enhance evaluation and monitoring processes. The Equity, Diversity and Interdependence framework may provide an appropriate starting point.
- Shared accountability and measurement processes should be adopted. This could include independent provision of a ‘Peace Monitoring Report’ to be formally responded to at the political level. This could also include a clearer pathway for project level learning to be adopted into mainstream practice. Valuing risk taking and broad based participation in reconciliation activity should be central.
- A review of the current T:BUC policy should be considered. The development of an ombudsman to monitor the fair and transparent distribution of funding should also be considered.

1 Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Introduction

In January 2017, Corrymeela, in partnership with Understanding Conflict Trust and the support of Prof. Duncan Morrow of Ulster University was awarded a six-month research initiative to address a single core question:

How have changes in the political environment and the changing availability of financial resources, impacted on voluntary and community based peace and reconciliation activity in Northern Ireland and Ireland over the past decade - and what are the consequences?

Beyond this general aim, the project also had a number of specific objectives:

- To assess the experience of a number of peace and reconciliation groups or projects in relation to the financial and political environment in which they operate.
- To identify the consequences for learning and capacity, brought about by any changes in funding
- On the basis of evidence, to present findings and make recommendations for policy makers engaged in peace and reconciliation work across Northern Ireland and Ireland.

In sum, the research was designed to engage and encourage discussion on the current funding and policy environment for peace and reconciliation activities within the voluntary and community sector, in Northern Ireland and the border regions. By capturing the perceptions and concerns of key actors within the sector, the aim was to make the findings available to policymakers and funders with responsibility for shaping funding on peace and reconciliation themes. The research was supervised by Prof. Duncan Morrow of Ulster University, Understanding Conflict Trust and a member of the Corrymeela Community. Within Corrymeela, Sean Pettis (Programme Manager – Legacies of Conflict) acted as Project Manager. Dr. Lisa Faulkner-Byrne undertook much of the fieldwork associated with the project. As part of the dissemination process, the main findings of the study will be presented to a range of key stakeholders in 2018.

1.2 Methodology

We applied four distinct approaches to this research. Extending the number of lenses gave us the opportunity to identify different aspects of the experience of peace and reconciliation work in recent years and to test the implications of change:

1. Desk-based analysis of policy and funding frameworks relating to peace and reconciliation.

Given the short timeframe of this study, the literature review was inevitably indicative rather than definitive. It entailed a short overview of key academic literature and policy developments on peace and reconciliation as it developed in Northern Ireland and the border regions over a number of decades. The review drew on academic and non-academic literature, government policy and other relevant reports. It served to contextualize the empirical evidence by considering the general context of division, conflict and violence in the region; the definitions of peacebuilding and reconciliation and its application; the funding environment for peace building and its associated activities; and the broad nature of approaches adopted within the voluntary and community sector.

2. In-depth interviews with key voluntary and community sector practitioners in a variety of sectors. Semi-structured interviewing enables researchers to ask general questions, whilst having additional latitude to ask further questions in response to what were viewed as significant replies.¹ After consideration the project team decided to focus on a number of strategic interviews with key practitioners each of whom had wide professional and personal experience of working for peace and reconciliation in a specific area of activity. In total, 15 face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted between March and May 2017. The interviewees were chosen because of their specific knowledge of the subject matter and their experience of funding, designing and/or implementing peace and reconciliation approaches /programmes.

1 Bryman, A (2004) Social Research Methods, Second Edition, Oxford University Press.

They reflected a broad range of different experiences including:

- Geographical spread across Northern Ireland and the Border Region
- Target groups including young people, women's organisations and church based projects
- Cross-community Organisations and groups working in PUL and CNR communities on a separate basis; and
- Groups with and without a primary focus on peace and reconciliation work.

Five core research questions guided the conversations;

- **How has your organisation approached the themes of peace and reconciliation?**
- **How have you navigated the funding environment?**
- **What are the main issues within the current operating environment?**
- **What are the remaining issues in terms of peace and reconciliation?**
- **What, if any, consequences do you see if targeted funding for peace and reconciliation is reduced in the future?**

Interview notes were transcribed immediately after the interview and verbatim extracts are used within the report. To enable open discussion, these interviews were conducted on the basis of non-attribution, and no personal names are used within this report.

3. Focus groups held in different venues across Northern Ireland drawing together key practitioners in inter-community work.

Following the interviews, three focus groups were conducted in order to bring together key practitioners in the field of inter-community work. The groups were designed to reflect some of the

range of activities included within the broad range of peace and reconciliation funding. This included geographical spread, rural and urban divisions and community divisions, work with young people and in local communities, cross-border activity and work in relation to the past. All groups were introduced to the background of the research and to the focus group methodology. The groups were conducted on the basis of the Chatham House Rule, preventing the identification of any speaker and the process of producing a report was agreed.

Workshops were held in Belfast (with a focus on youth and young people), Dungannon (with a focus on community development and inter-community relations) and Derry/Londonderry (with a focus on cross-border work and efforts to address the legacy of the past).

4. An online survey of charitable organisations in Northern Ireland working on Peace and reconciliation.

An online survey² was conducted which involved a number of open and closed questions, designed to capture the views and opinions of individuals from organisations engaged in peace and reconciliation activities across Northern Ireland and the border regions. Given the complexities and ambiguity around the key terms of peace and reconciliation, this survey afforded respondents the opportunity to self-define their organisation, approaches, responses and general work in this area.

The survey was issued via Corrymeela mailing lists and related networks, and remained open for a 4-week period during April-May 2017. In total, 113 responses were received.

The project also benefitted from the advice and guidance of senior figures with experience of funding and development in the field of peace and reconciliation in Ireland who offered their own analytical perspectives.

² The survey utilised www.surveymonkey.com see appendix 1 for an overview.

2 Policy and Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This short overview of key academic literature and policy developments on peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border regions includes sections on:

- The general context of division and conflict in the region;
- Definitions of peacebuilding and reconciliation;
- The funding environment for peace building and its associated activities, and
- The nature of peace and reconciliation as it has developed within the voluntary and community sector.

2.1.1 The Northern Ireland Context

Protracted violence in Northern Ireland was one of relatively few examples of active and systemic violent conflict in Western Europe in the second half of the twentieth century. After Ireland was partitioned in 1921, political, economic and social tensions escalated into violence in the late 1960s, involving both the state and a number of 'non-state actors' for whom violence was understood as 'political' in both motivation and justification. Between 1969 and 1998, this state of perpetual unrest (variously referred to as 'the Troubles', the Conflict' or 'the War') claimed the lives of 3,600 people, whilst thousands more were maimed, injured or displaced (Mesev, et.al, 2009). The 'peace process' which brought this period to a close was similarly drawn out over many years. After years of strenuous negotiations and peace talks, the British and Irish governments and the majority of Northern Ireland political parties reached an Agreement on April 10, 1998, which was endorsed by 72% of the voting population in Northern Ireland in a referendum in May.

In addition to radically new constitutional and citizenship arrangements, the resulting Belfast Agreement (widely known as the Good Friday Agreement) contained

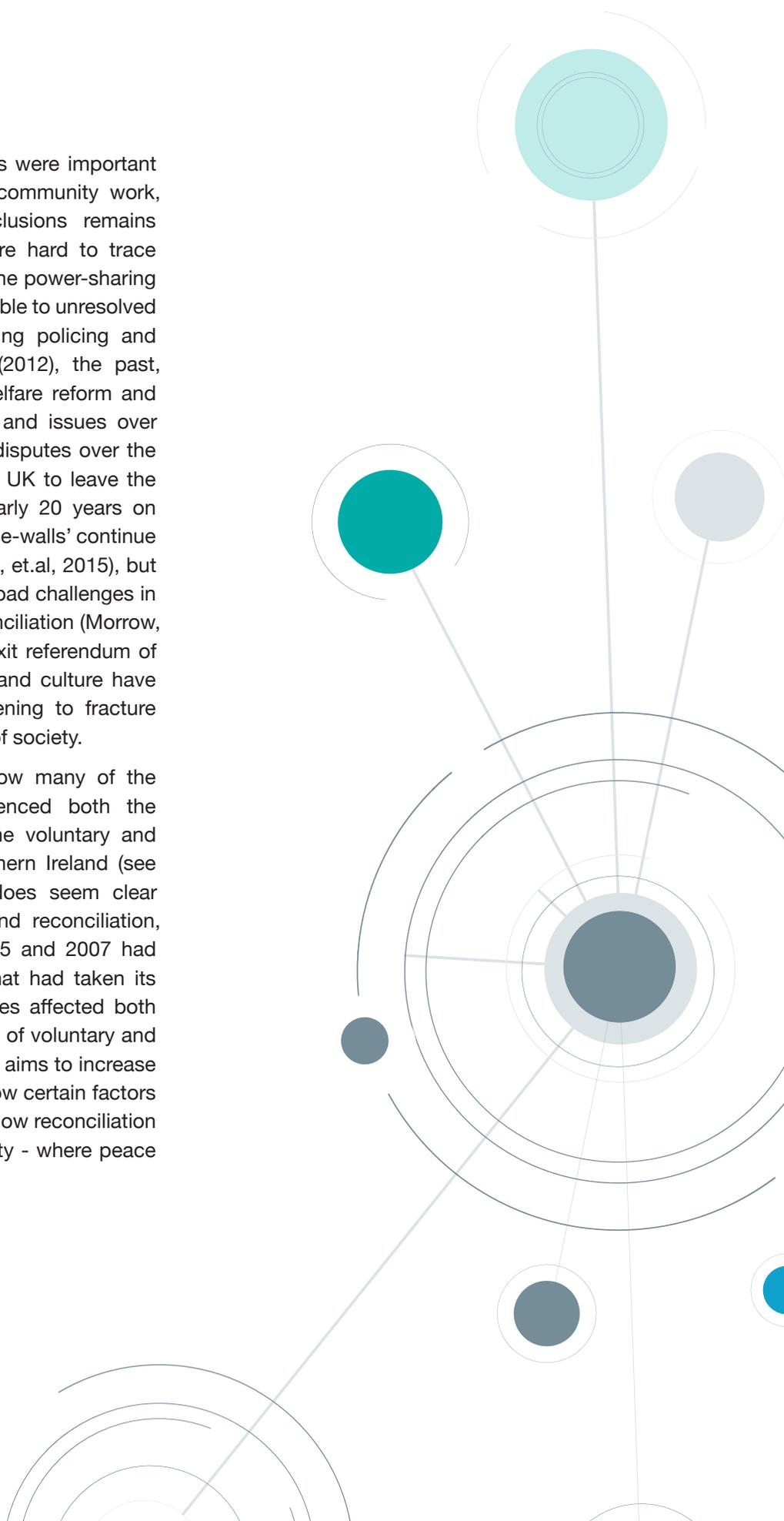
provisions on a variety of critical important issues including arrangements for decommissioning weapons, changes in the status of prisoners convicted of 'crimes related to the affairs of Northern Ireland', equality and human rights. (Archick, 2017). Apparent progress on many of these issues since 1998 meant that the 'Northern Ireland model' of peacemaking and peacebuilding was widely held up as one of the most successful recent examples of global peacebuilding. At the same time, however, it was evident that the Agreement 'did not address the more amorphous problems of trust and the creation of an agreed vision of society, which continue to frustrate the post-agreement landscape" (SEUPB, page 5), nor did it, by itself, establish systemic policy for addressing the ongoing consequences and legacy of violence.

Since 2007, systematic violence has radically reduced. The centrality of local political interests in making decisions on policy and resource priorities contributed to an international sense that Northern Ireland was 'sorted' and therefore not an acute priority. This was particularly true following the huge impact of the global financial crisis and subsequent austerity. Devolution was hardly establishing, when the international financial crisis broke, with serious impact on both the UK and the Republic of Ireland, and therefore on Northern Ireland. Following the financial crisis which struck the advanced economies in 2008, both the British and Irish governments introduced stringent cuts in public spending. The balance of fiscal policy moved to reducing spending programmes rather than increasing tax revenue. The 'austerity' measures are often found in fiscal or structural adjustment programmes which typically will include the following provisions:

- Cuts to the public sector and services;
- Cuts to social security;
- Privatisation of state assets;
- Cuts to the taxes of companies and the wealthy; (Equality Coalition, 2015)

Both the political and economic factors were important in changing the climate around inter-community work, although drawing strict causal conclusions remains complicated. Impact and outcomes are hard to trace precisely. Nonetheless, the stability of the power-sharing Executive has been shown to be vulnerable to unresolved issues of cultural competition, including policing and parades (2010), flags and emblems (2012), the past, flags/emblems and parades (2013), welfare reform and the past (2014), paramilitarism (2015) and issues over corruption and accountability, cultural disputes over the Irish language and the decision by the UK to leave the European Union (2017). Therefore, nearly 20 years on from the peace accord not only do 'peace-walls' continue to define the physical landscape (Byrne, et.al, 2015), but society as a whole continues to face broad challenges in sustaining peace and establishing reconciliation (Morrow, 2017: Archick, 2017). Following the Brexit referendum of June 2016, issues of national identity and culture have been thrust to the fore again, threatening to fracture relationships and progress at all levels of society.

Some commentators have outlined how many of the factors discussed above have influenced both the delivery structures and priorities of the voluntary and community sector as a whole in Northern Ireland (see Acheson, 2010 for example). What does seem clear is that the central focus on peace and reconciliation, as defined in the period between 1985 and 2007 had changed without precise clarity on what had taken its place. The financial and political issues affected both the delivery structures and the priorities of voluntary and community organisations. This research aims to increase our knowledge and understanding of how certain factors impact on the sector, whilst identifying how reconciliation is now understood in a changing society - where peace remains fragile.



2.1.2 Peace and Reconciliation

“In reality, building peace and transforming a conflict is always a process rather than an event. It will be messy, complex and uncertain. It will rarely be a simple trajectory but rather will oscillate between periods of stable peace and periods of tension and disorder and even a return to violence”

(Jarman,2016)

“Reconciliation is a theme with deep psychological, sociological, theological, philosophical, and profoundly human roots – and nobody really knows how to successfully achieve it”

(Galtung, 2001:4)

“In the face of violence, there are three main impulses. The first is an immediate one – to stop it. The second is a medium-term one – to deal with the wounds resulting from it. The third, finally, is a long-term one – to change the underlying conditions that have led, and may lead again, to violence.”

(Austin, et.al, 2012:22)

2.1.3 The Complexity of Peace

Despite continuing conflict throughout the world, the concept of ‘peace-building’ has developed in scale and scope since the early 1990s. What was initially carried out by a disparate group of scholars, diplomats and nongovernmental organisations, developed into an independent field of practice, policy and study (Zelizer, 2013). Yet from the outset, the peacebuilding field has however lacked an consensus over terminology; meaning that terms such as peacebuilding, conflict resolution and conflict transformation are used interchangeably for a variety of different activities.

Johan Galtung, arguably the founding father of modern peace studies (1975), established the concept of peacebuilding as one of three broad approaches to conflict intervention corresponding with the stages of conflict (see Zelizer, 2013). He later argued that peacebuilding ‘has a structure different from, perhaps over and above, peacekeeping and ad hoc peacemaking’ (Galtung, 1976:297). Distinguishing between negative peace (the absence of violence) and positive peace (the absence of structural violence and the conditions for war), Galtung underlined the importance of local knowledge and participation in sustainable relationship-building.³ Through this understanding of peacebuilding, Galtung sought to project positive peace as a higher ideal than negative peace, arguing that peace research should not focus merely on the narrower vision of ending violence at the direct or structural level, but that it should seek to identify drivers and address root causes of conflict

and violence. Following Galtung, peacebuilding is widely understood as the process of addressing underlying causes of direct, structural and cultural violence in order to transform conflicts and achieve positive peace (Galtung, 1996, 2007); extended explicitly by Lederach (1995, 1997) to include, building trustworthy relationships between members of that community in order to promote lasting peace.

As conflicts have taken place within societies, the importance of rooting peacebuilding within local communities has been more and more widely adopted (Reich, 2006). For Lederach (1997) peacebuilding is more than post-accord reconstruction, rather it is an ‘ongoing process of change from negative to positive relations, behaviour, attitudes and structures’ (1997: 20). In Lederach’s three-tiered approach to building peace he notes that unlike the elite, “grassroots leaders witness first-hand the deep-rooted hatred and animosity on a daily basis” (cited in Kelly and Braniff, 2016:447), and as such, these leaders have a key role to play in delivering on the tasks of relationship-building and reconciliation. For Lederach, these tasks can be situated under the broadly based model of conflict transformation – a concept which he introduced. In general terms, conflict transformation is not only a complex process of constructively changing relationships, attitudes and behaviours, but it also addresses the underlying conditions that encourage and fuel violent political and social conflict (Austin et.al, 2012).

³ Reich (2006) elaborates on the fact that the importance of local actors has been increasingly acknowledged since the mid 1990s, with peacebuilding activities being more and more conceptualised not as a top-down process, but as a form of engagement involving the entire society.

“There is no handy roadmap for reconciliation. There is no short cut or simple prescription for healing the wounds and divisions of a society in the aftermath of sustained violence. Creating trust and understanding between former enemies is a supremely difficult challenge. It is, however, an essential one to address in the process of building a lasting peace. Examining the painful past, acknowledging it and understanding it, and above all transcending it together, is the best way to guarantee that it does not – and cannot – happen again.”

Desmond Tutu

2.1.4 The Complexity of Reconciliation

“Reconciliation is first and last about people and their relationships”

(Lederach, 2001, 842).

The use of the term ‘reconciliation’ is not without its dangers in politics. Indeed, it has a long association with faith-based approaches to peace, which inevitably requires attention to emotive questions of injury and injustice, structural change and rituals for co-operation. This raises complex issues of forgiveness and punishment, which make it an uneasy element of every politically-driven attempt to create peace. Subsequently, some charge that the questions raised by reconciliation are too complex to be resolved and set too high a bar for change.

In his efforts to clarify reconciliation, Bloomfield points out that there is no single working definition, although “eminent scholars have worked hard to develop definitions and understandings of the dynamics involved” (2006:5). ‘Reconciliation’ is also subject to huge suspicion and anxiety. For instance, those within the broader political arena invested in existing structures, may formally commit to reconciliation while treating it in effect as a smokescreen. Alternatively, some victims of violence may view the term as a code word for simply forgetting (Bloomfield, et.al, 2003). At the same time, victims and perpetrators of violence may find themselves at the heart of all reconciliation activities, which requires a level of trust and empathy to develop at the interpersonal level.

Nonetheless, a number of common themes around the concept of reconciliation, as it has developed in the Northern Ireland context, can be identified. Since the 1990s, the language of reconciliation was adopted by secular political actors. It is a central element of the Belfast Agreement and was built into the community support strategies of the British and Irish governments, the European Union and the International Fund for Ireland. Drawing on that experience, Bloomfield and associates (2003) defined reconciliation as:

- Finding a way to live that permits a vision of the future;
- The (re)building of relationships;
- Coming to terms with past acts and enemies;
- A society-wide, long-term process of deep change;
- A process of acknowledging, remembering, and learning from the past.

They also pointed out however, that reconciliation at this level could not be enforced or imposed and was by its nature, voluntary.

At around the same time, Hamber and Kelly (2004) used a series of interviews to identify the core themes underlying the concept of reconciliation in practice in Ireland. Their working definition was based on the premise that ‘relationships require attention to build peace,’ and that reconciliation is ‘the process of addressing fractured relationships through a range of activities.’ Hamber and Kelly (2004) concluded that reconciliation was intuitively understood as a complex interaction between five interwoven and related strands, which are:

1. Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society: The development of a vision of a shared future requiring the involvement of the whole society, at all levels. Although individuals may have different opinions or political beliefs, the articulation of a common vision of an interdependent, just, equitable, open and diverse society is a critical part of any reconciliation process.



2. Acknowledging and dealing with the past: Acknowledging the hurt, losses, truths and suffering of the past. Providing the mechanisms for justice, healing, restitution or reparation, and restoration (including apologies if necessary and steps aimed at redress). To build reconciliation, individuals and institutions need to acknowledge their own role in the conflicts of the past, accepting and learning from it in a constructive way so as to guarantee non-repetition.
3. Building positive relationships: Relationship building or renewal following violent conflict addressing issues of trust, prejudice, intolerance in this process, resulting in accepting commonalities and differences, and embracing and engaging with those who are different to us.
4. Significant cultural and attitudinal change: Changes in how people relate to, and their attitudes towards, one another. The culture of suspicion, fear, mistrust and violence is broken down and opportunities and space opened up in which people can hear and be heard. A culture of respect for human rights and human difference is developed creating a context where each citizen becomes an active participant in society and feels a sense of belonging.
5. Substantial social, economic and political change: The social, economic and political structures which gave rise to the conflict and estrangement are identified, reconstructed or addressed, and transformed.

(Hamber and Kelly, 2005, pages 3-5).

Although reconciliation is identified as vital in many official documents, building relationships has proved to be both difficult and subject to painful reverse. Reconciliation raises significant debates around impunity, forgiveness and its relationship to politics, social change and justice which go to the heart of transformation. The need for flexibility of practice in the face of clarity about values, tends to make it particularly complicated to translate while retaining consistency. In some post conflict societies, notably South Africa, reconciliation was directly connected to truth-telling, embodied in the South

African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in the 1990s.⁴ Whilst looking to the future is a key component of reconciliation, seeking accuracy about the past is also understood as a vital step in the process. At the same time, it was evident both in Northern Ireland and South Africa that neither 'truth' nor 'justice' can guarantee reconciliation (Bloomfield, et al. 2003).

2.1.5 Agreements and Frameworks - Promoting Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland

Since the 1980s, enormous political effort has been expended attempting to establish peace and end violence, while normalising community relationships in Northern Ireland. Among the key inter-governmental landmarks were; the Anglo Irish Agreement (1985), the Brook-Mayhew talks (1992), the Downing Street Declaration (1993), Framework Documents (1994), the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement (1998), Leeds Castle Talks (2001), the St Andrews Agreement (2006), the Hillsborough Agreement (2010), the Stormont House Agreement (2014) and A Fresh Start: the Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan (2015). Over time, the so-called 'three strands' became established as the core structure for constitutional accommodation, together with the need to promote social and economic development, while building and sustaining dialogue, engagement and reconciliation across communities. In addition there have been numerous interventions to promote peace-building through NGO work and support for transforming economic and social activity. 'A Shared Future' was introduced by the Westminster government in 2005, at a time when the Northern Ireland Assembly was suspended. However, it was never fully implemented and the re-established Assembly showed little appetite to prioritise policy development. Following this, a Programme for 'Cohesion, Sharing and Integration' was issued for public consultation in 2010 and then withdrawn, with the responsible department taking another three years to issue a revised policy strategy (Together: Building a

⁴ The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) played a vital role in embedding new and peaceful patterns of interaction in that previously deeply divided society.

United Community (TBUC, 2013). In their survey of all of these initiatives, Kelly and Braniff charged that the policy frameworks to address inter-communal division as detailed in Table 1, have largely failed (Kelly and Braniff, 2016).

Table 1: Policy Frameworks to Address Intercommunal Division

POLICY AND FUNDING INITIATIVES	YEAR
International Fund for Ireland (IFI)	1985-
UK/NI Government Community Relations Policy	1987-
Irish Government DFA Reconciliation Fund	1987-
EU PEACE Programme	1994-
Shared Future	2005
St Andrews Agreement	2006
Cohesion, Sharing and Integration	2010
Together: Building a United Community	2013-
Stormont House Agreement	2014
A Fresh Start: The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan	2015

At the same time, the persistent challenges to the stability of the political structures have remained. Since 2007, the Assembly has seen challenges over parades, flags, policing, welfare reform, paramilitarism, the past and language. This has led some to comment that “the disappointing and inconsistent efforts of the political elites to implement public policy on this issue have hampered bottom-up efforts to affect the types of changes anticipated and pledged” (Kelly and Braniff, 2016:450).

2.2 Funding

Since 1987 “an estimated four billion dollars in peace-focused grant aid has been invested in Northern Ireland, the majority of which has been directed towards the regions civil society and local government actors” (Kelly and Braniff, 2016:449). Critically, however, a huge amount of the money directly invested in programmes specifically aimed at peace and reconciliation, originated outside Northern Ireland. The largest single programmes were sponsored through the European Union (PEACE I- IV), the inter-governmental International Fund for Ireland (IFI) and the independent foundation, The Atlantic Philanthropies. The UK and Irish government also provided financial support. In many cases some of the money was spent through local foundations such as the Community Relations Council and the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (Kelly and Braniff, 2016:449).

Between 1995 and 2013, the EU invested an average of over £76m per annum into the area of benefit through the PEACE programmes. The International Fund for Ireland, drawing resources from Europe, the USA and the Commonwealth spent over £27m per annum between 1987 and 2010. In contrast the direct community relations budget of the Northern Ireland government between 1987 and 2011 was around £8.5m per annum, distributed across the voluntary sector, local government and youth and education services. The Atlantic Philanthropies, spent over £120m in Ireland and Northern Ireland over 25 years after 1990.

“Between 1995 and 2007, over 21,000 applications for funding were approved by the European Union Peace and Reconciliation Fund.”

“From 1986 to 2010, the International Fund for Ireland has supported over 6,200 individual projects”

“In 2012-2013 alone, the NICRC provided grant aid of 2.79 million pounds to support 279 ‘community relations’ projects”

(Kelly and Braniff, 2016)

Estimating with precision how much money has been invested in programmes directly related to peace and reconciliation in Ireland is a complex task. In the first instance, the areas of benefit vary in each programme from Northern Ireland (NI and UK government programmes), Northern Ireland and the Border Counties (EU Peace programme/IFI) and the island of Ireland (Ireland Funds, IFI, Irish Government). Overall, the lion's share of spending

on peace and reconciliation was spent in Northern Ireland.

Secondly the areas and issues funded by programmes have changed over time and varied by programmes. Unpublished research by Morrow identified a variety of themes supported by funders before 2016. Table 2 below highlights that funders adopted a variety of different approaches to supporting peace including economic, social and explicitly inter-community vehicles.

Table 2: General themes/approaches supported by funders before 2016 (source: various)

THEMES EXPLICIT IN THE FUNDING PROGRAMME								
Funder	Geographical eligibility	Reconciliation as an explicit objective	Inter-community contact	Economic Development	Social Inclusion	Int. links	Victims	Human Rights
CCRU-OFMDFM	NI	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
DE	NI	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO/CRED
Victims-OFMDFM	NI	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
IFI pre 2006	Ireland	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
IFI post 2006	Ireland	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
EU PEACE I	NI and 6 border cos	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
EU PEACE II	NI and 6 border cos	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
EU PEACE III	NI and 6 border cos	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
Irish Government	Ireland, focus on NI and cross-border	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
Atlantic Ph.	2 separate programmes for NI and Rol	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES

Prior to 2007, a quantitative analysis of resources indicates strong support for economic regeneration within Peace and Reconciliation funding, particularly from EU and IFI sources. The range of different types of work included within the different funds is prior to 2007 evident in an analysis of the work supported under the PEACE II programme from 2000-2007 (Figure1).

According to Creary and Byrne (2014) the European Union (EU), the USA, and the Irish and British governments advocated that economic aid, loosely modelled on the Marshall Plan for reconstruction, was a key ingredient to deescalate conflict and build the peace dividend in Northern Ireland and the Border Region. This approach was also supported, amongst others, by Lederach (1995) who identified economic aid to empower local communities as an important component of peacebuilding. A similar analysis of IFI funding until 2002 also illustrates the variety of approaches undertaken (Figure 2)

Since then, especially in the context of the advent of a number of more disadvantaged countries to the European Union in 2004, inter-community reconciliation became a more explicit objective for all funders. Much of this funding was directed to capital and revenue projects through civil society organisations and local government. (Kelly and Braniff, 2016:449.

Changes in the level and target of the programmes can be illustrated in an examination of the EU PEACE programmes and the International Fund for Ireland, the two largest investments in peace and reconciliation since 2007. Under the EU PEACE III programme 2007-2013, the priorities were recalibrated to focus on inter-community and cross-border activity: Reconciling Communities, which aimed to challenge attitudes towards sectarianism and racism and to support conflict resolution and mediation in the local community; and Contributing to a Shared Society, which focused on regeneration, transformation of segregated space into shared space and developing the capacity of key institutions to deliver services in a manner that contribute to a shared society within Northern Ireland and on a cross-border basis. The direct target areas of the programme were identified as sectarian interfaces, disadvantaged areas, areas with high levels of sectarian/racial crime, communities in decline and areas where development has been inhibited by conflict. The PEACE IV programme of 2014-2020 is more directly aligned with the Northern Ireland Executive's

Figure 1: Distribution of PEACE II Funds
(source SEUPB: PEACE II)

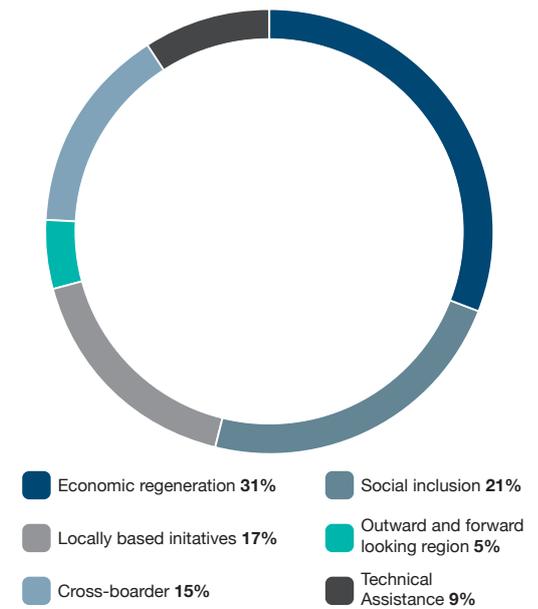
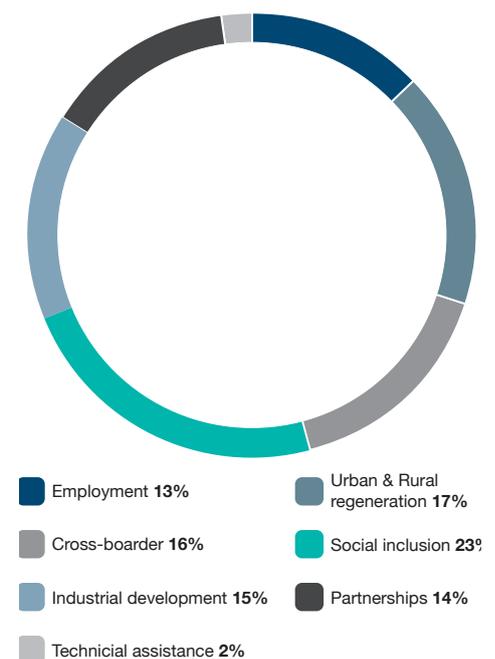


Figure 2: IFI Funding Priorities 1986-2002
(FI Annual Reports)



T:BUC priorities, including: shared education projects; youth initiatives to increase the interaction between children and young people from all backgrounds; the creation of new shared services and spaces such as interventions for victims and survivors of the conflict; and local sports, arts and culture projects that build mutual trust and understanding. Another important element has been the evolution of mechanisms to allocate funding. The PEACE I, II and III – Extension Programmes that operated from 1995 -2008 had a complex and varied delivery structure. This included a range of intermediary funding bodies, including public sector bodies, larger scale NGOs and local council boundary aligned partnership groups. From Peace III onwards, there has been an enhanced role for the SEUPB as well as new local structures, as district councils developed local action plans based on identified local need. The model of grant aiding has also shifted to incorporate the tendering out of specific services as well as generic calls based on themed criteria. In short, the Programmes have moved towards an enhanced role for public sector bodies in the distribution of funds as well as in the delivery of services.

In its early years the International Fund for Ireland focused on investment companies, business enterprise science and technology and tourism. Although it also invested in international links through the Wider Horizons Programme and invested in community relations and disadvantaged areas, the emphasis was on economic regeneration. From the Early 2000s, the priority switched to inter-community relations and support for a shared future. The Community Bridges Programme and Communities in Transition became major priorities and the Fund developed programmes on policing, housing and education. Since 2010, the Fund has focused its work on its four remaining priorities through the Peace Walls Programme, the Peace Impact Programme, Youth Development and Shared Education initiatives.

There are multiple examples within both the IFI and the EU Peace Funds of numerous projects in historically deprived urban and rural communities (McCall and O’Dowd, 2008). Indeed, it has often been argued that over the last decade the resources from both funds have encouraged the growth of a community development and peacebuilding industry (O’Dowd and McCall, 2008; Skarlato et al, 2015).

Nonetheless, since their inception in 1995 following the IRA and loyalist ceasefires, the PEACE programmes have, according to Buchanan, “opened up the debate on conflict transformation to a much wider audience in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties” (2008:393). Border counties are inextricably linked to the peacebuilding process and have had different experiences of the conflict (see Byrne, et al. 2009). In their examination of the impact of IFI and the European Union Peace III Programme, in nurturing sustainable peace in Northern Ireland and the border regions, Khan and Byrne argued that:

“As long as external economic aid agencies do not restrict policy-making at the local level, it can be beneficial to Northern Ireland’s economy, at least in the short term. Moreover, if external economic aid is geared towards developing the capacities of the target populace rather than ‘doling’ out cheques, it can be of valuable assistance towards forging a more peaceful society”

(2016:1021).

Much can be learned from the work of organisations who are committed to promoting good relations in Northern Ireland and the Border Regions. Funding grassroots projects aimed at ‘social inclusion’ and inter-community reconciliation became an integral component of multi-track diplomacy in Northern Ireland. However, the debate about how to best support the complex process of consolidating peace and promoting reconciliation remains contested with some suggesting that balance is required between the funder’s bureaucratic control over resources and the level of creative input that recipients have within their projects (Byrne, et.al, 2009). Some

studies on the impact of funding have suggested that recording and dissemination of the lessons from their practice has at times been inconsistent and even ad hoc. Where documentation and evaluation have been relatively inaccessible or have been overlooked, “valuable learning is lost and opportunities for growth and development of the field may well have been stymied” (Kelly and Brannif, 2016:461).

Of course there are also critics. Above all many have indicated a risk that recipients of public funding become engaged in peacebuilding activity, primarily to access financial support (Karari, et al). As a result, “purely cosmetic cross-community contacts may result without a real commitment to local grassroots peace-building” (Karari, et. al, 2012:600).

Overall, the international donors have now reduced their investment in Northern Ireland peace programmes, from the very high levels seen in the early 2000s. This is evidenced in Table 3 below. Calculating the exact level of domestic funding available for peace and reconciliation work fell beyond the scope of this study. This would require the disaggregation of specific peace and reconciliation expenditure from wider public funding programmes as well as adjustments for inflation. However based on an indicative analysis of existing programmes, the reduction in international financial aid does not seem to have been accompanied by any notable increase in domestic support.

Table 3: International Donor Expenditure on peace and reconciliation related projects

ORGANISATION	2006/7	2011	2016
International Fund for Ireland	£16.96m approved projects (= €25.01m)	£27.47m approved projects (= €31.57m)	£4.99m approved projects (= €5.79m)
EU	PEACE II extension: ca. €80m pa	PEACE III:ca. €47.5m pa	PEACE IV: ca. €38.6m pa

2.2.2 Developments since 2007: Devolution and Austerity

The landscape of both peace-building and community development changed markedly between 2007 and 2009. In 2007, devolved government returned to Northern Ireland, this time on a revised basis following the St Andrews Agreement. Nonetheless, the unexpected sight of life-long enemies working together, at the very point when Tony Blair left office after ten years as Prime Minister of the UK, presented an image that peace in Northern Ireland had been achieved. Both the British and Irish governments were invested in this narrative and gave strong support to the new Executive.

Responsibility for developing peacebuilding policy was also devolved. From 2007, primary responsibility for the

direction and content of reconciliation in Northern Ireland fell to the Office of First and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM), and was therefore inevitably dependent on the governing parties reaching a new consensus. In practice, this proved extremely difficult to achieve, and peacebuilding and community relations policy languished for some time. Indeed, it was only in 2013, after serious rioting over the decision of Belfast City Council to introduce a policy of ‘Designated Days’ in relation to flying the Union Flag on the City Hall, that a new policy was agreed. Subsequently, relationships between the parties of government have gone through many phases and it is not yet clear that this is a sustained priority of government attention.

3 Research Findings

3.1 Survey Analysis

The survey comprised a series of open and closed questions, designed to capture the views and opinions of individuals from organisations who are engaged in peace and reconciliation activities across Northern Ireland and the border regions (see Appendix 1). Given the complexities and ambiguity around the precise meaning of peace and reconciliation, the survey afforded respondents the opportunity to self-define their organisation, approaches, responses and general work in this area. The survey was issued via Corrymeela to registered Charities involved in Reconciliation and Education,⁵ and remained open for a 4 week period during April-May 2017. In total, 113 responses were received. The following sections presents the main findings to emerge from the survey.

Overall, respondents welcomed this survey, given what they defined as a ‘critical juncture in our peace and political processes’. Others also used the opportunity to convey some of their frustrations;

“Thank you for taking the time to construct this survey. Please do everything in your power to ensure that its conclusions are used to enable more effective peace-building especially as there is no government”.

“Please look at the comments, don’t just put them into another file, or once again, I will have wasted my time”.

“It’s time to challenge those who use peace and reconciliation as a front to get funding. There is a need to provide more support for the genuine organisations that deliver the work.”

3.1.1 Who is involved in Peace and Reconciliation Work?

Respondents were initially asked to categorise their organisation and the main focus of its current work. Results are set out in Table 4 below:

Table 4: General Classification of Respondent Organisations

CATEGORY	% OF RESPONDING ORGANISATIONS
Community Development	20
Education/training	9
Health and wellbeing	3
Children (0-5 years)	5
Young people (14-25 years)	6
Community relations	9
Older people	2
Arts	5
Religious/faith based organisation	4
Parents/ families	3
Advocacy/policy	1
Support	3
Victims and survivors	3
Political Ex-Prisoners	9
Sport	3
Women	8
Peace-building	6
Other	6

⁵ Taken from the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland’s website, the categories invited to participate included: The advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation or the promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality and diversity; The advancement of education; and The advancement of citizenship or community development.

Respondents were then asked to assess the extent to which peace and reconciliation work was a focus of their organisation. The results, showing that respondents worked for organisations where peace and reconciliation played a variety of roles in their work, are presented in Figure 3 opposite.

3.1.2 What is Peace and Reconciliation work?

In defining ‘peace and reconciliation’ work, respondents noted a range of programmes, activities and objectives, including a range of efforts to reduce violence, promote social and economic investment in people and communities, as well as attempts to change or challenge attitudes, perceptions and policy with regards to various issues. The most common approaches cited by respondents were:

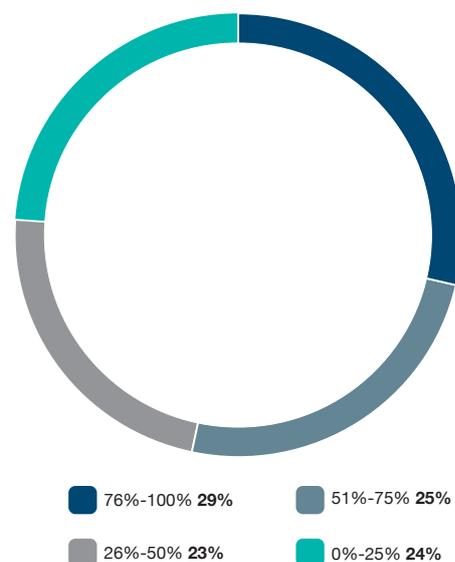
- inter-community activities/events and broader inter-community relations programmes
- conflict resolution, mediation, dialogue and transformation processes
- relationship-building
- community consultation, engagement and advocacy
- engagement and liaison with decision makers
- community cohesion and economic development
- interface issues
- reintegrating ex-prisoners

Respondents were also invited to describe their work in their own words. Their comments demonstrated that there is a wide range of activities and approaches from, “addressing the legacy of the past” to “dealing with debt and deprivation,” which are regarded by them as connected to peace and reconciliation work:

“Addressing the legacy of the past through the delivery of an Irish history course, as well as work around flags, bonfires and parades.”
(Addressing contentious issues in the past)

Figure 3: Percentage of work focused on peace and reconciliation

What percentage of your organisation’s work is currently focused on peace and reconciliation work?



“Welcoming people regardless of their cultural background, providing advice and signposting to meet their needs.” (Providing basic services on an inter-community basis)

“Everyday ‘normalisation’ of addressing needs in a deprived area where political representation has been absent for decades due to the divide. Building pride in where we live – shared pride and shared respect.” (Building inter-community relationships)

“Work with school children, elderly and other groups across the community divide” (Multi-generational work in support of reconciliation)

“Pastoral care of families and lobbying for shared social housing” (Shared Services)

“Completing benefit forms, trying to help communities to get their income maximized. Dealing with debt and deprivation in general” (Shared services)

“Good relations and peace building projects, gender promotion and feminist projects.” (Relationship building and Gendered Approaches)

“All of our work could be described as peace and reconciliation because we totally ignore differences.” (Neutral space)

Among respondents, 44% stated that their organisation has become increasingly involved in peace and reconciliation work over the past ten years (2007-2017). For some, this is due to an advanced understanding of this work as relationships have been forged, whereas others revealed a widespread perception that there is a greater need/demand for this work in the current climate:

“The organisation has gained the confidence and respect of its constituency over the years which has enhanced the peace and reconciliation programme of work”.

“Developing friendships and attending conferences are key, over the past 10 years friendships have been developed which has created trust, we have progressed albeit at a slow but steady pace”.

“In the period from 1998 to 2007, there was a greater spirit of generosity around, and a sense of relief at moving away from violence. Now there is more polarisation, particularly around legacy which appears to be apportioning blame”.

“It is becoming increasingly important to address the impact of paramilitarism in our communities

given the recent emphasis emanating from the Stormont House Agreement.”

“The loyalist community has become stronger to engage in this work.”

Respondents were asked to list the 3 main achievements of their peace and reconciliation work over the past ten years, including specific examples of what their organisations had achieved or expected to achieve:

“Developing relationships north and south”

“Temporary opening of a peace wall”

“Creating a bands forum to address parading issues”

“Somewhere in the region of 10,000 largely marginalised people participating in critical issues dialogue”

“Some modest progress in removing the barriers that prevent former prisoners from resuming full citizenship rights”

“Over 1000 young people have gained OCN accredited certificates on how to use sport to promote diversity and build positive relations”

“The winter school had a very mixed audience”

“Hosting individuals and groups, local and international, to discuss the factors that fuel conflict and the steps needed to create the conditions for peace”

“We instil in our children and families that peace and reconciliation does work, we do this by joint workshops inclusive of both sides of the community and providing resources and activities for our children”

“Converting a parish hall into a vibrant community centre”

“better understanding of immigration issues in local communities”

“classical music concerts for everyone”

“Plans for a sanctuary break for Syrian refugees are underway”

The responses indicate that the ‘project output’ of funded voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland has been considerable. What is less clear is how this connects to ‘population level’ outcomes on the scale of peace and reconciliation. In general, project achievements were either specific products - research, toolkits or programmes of work varying from summer schemes, residential events, lengthy training programmes, historical programmes, leadership and development programmes – or sustained community frameworks for ensuring that engagement and collaboration took place on an inter-community basis or took issues of hostility, peace and reconciliation into account. The most common examples of this kind of contribution was impressively wide-ranging including;

- Creating dedicated space and opportunity for dialogue and interaction across community boundaries
- Breaking down community mistrust through shared projects on shared themes
- Building or strengthening relationships with statutory agencies such as NIHE or PSNI
- Supporting and facilitating peaceful events such as parades and centenary celebrations
- Giving voice to women and/or other marginalised groups in political and social space
- Programmes aimed at greater understanding and increased respect for others and their traditions
- Dedicated efforts to face and deal with the past
- Increasing participation among people previously suspicious of inter-community settings (hard to reach)
- Gaining employment for a small number
- Enabling and normalising friendships

3.1.3 Where is peace and reconciliation work?

Perhaps unsurprisingly, over 50% of respondents worked on an inter-community basis across traditional divides. A further 30% stated that their work had now extended to include other groups. Interestingly single-identity peace and reconciliation work focused more on the PUL community (12%) than on the CNR community (4%) as outlined in Figure 4.

There was notable geographic variation in response, in terms of the distribution of peace and reconciliation work. Table 5 indicates that most of the voluntary and community responses came from urban areas and response rates were weakest in the rural areas of Eastern Ulster.

Figure 4: Communities of Focus

Thinking about specific peace and reconciliation work within your organisation, is it mainly focused on:

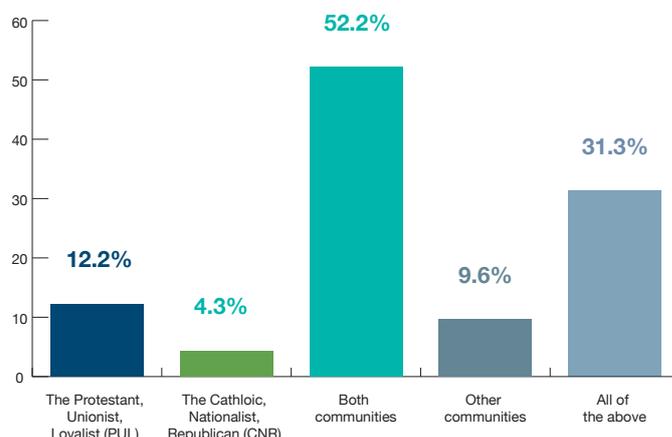
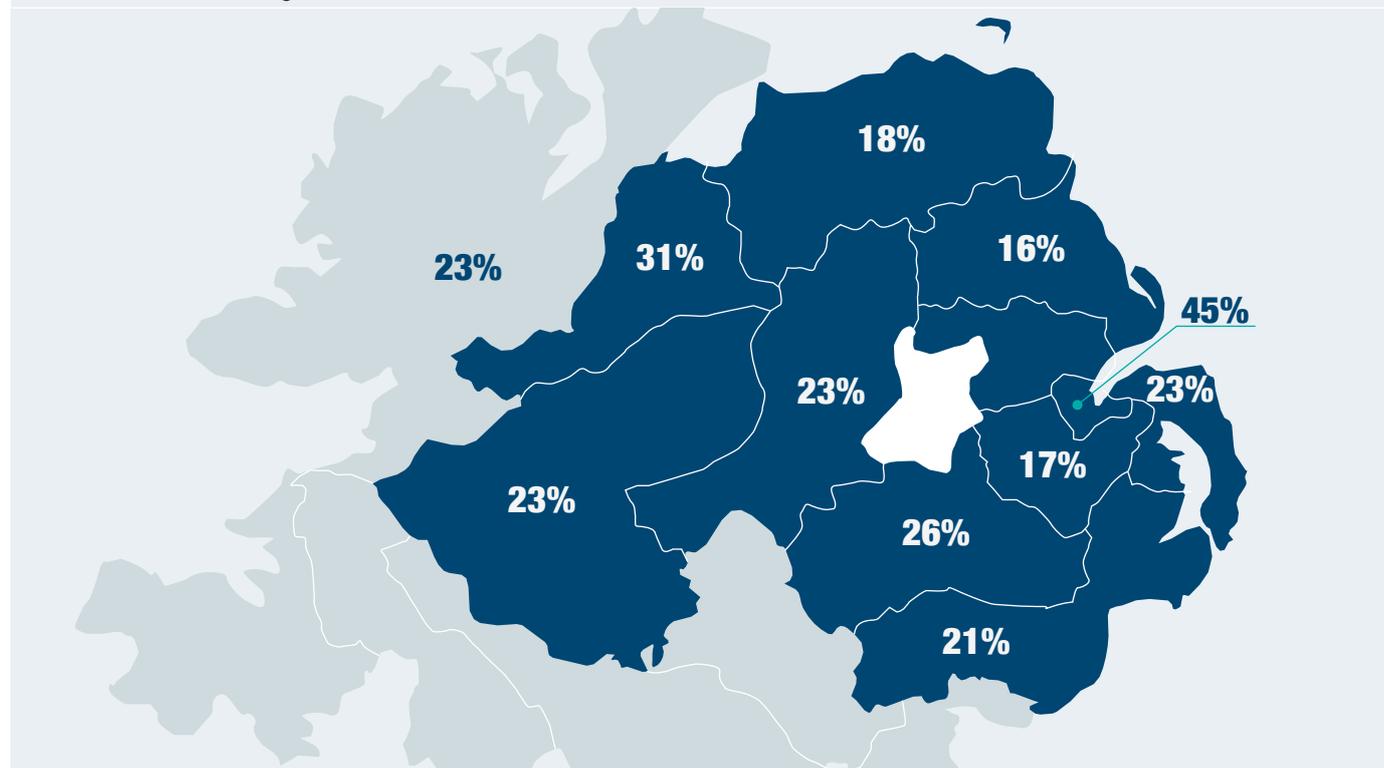


Table 5: Distribution of Peace and Reconciliation work

Thinking specifically about peace and reconciliation work, which council areas has this included?

THINKING SPECIFICALLY ABOUT PEACE AND RECONCILIATION WORK, WHICH COUNCIL AREAS HAS THIS INCLUDED?	% OF RESPONDENTS
Belfast City Council	45%
Derry City and Strabane District Council	31%
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council	26%
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council	24%
Ards and North Down Borough Council	23%
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council	23%
Mid Ulster District Council - Dungannon	23%
Border counties	23%
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	21%
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council	18%
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	17%
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	16%



3.1.4 Relationships with funders

Respondents were provided with a general list of key organisations and donors who have played a role in funding peace and reconciliation activities in Northern Ireland and the border regions. Table 6 below indicates that respondents have accessed funding most typically from District/City Councils over the period (2007-2017). This suggests that repeated small grant interactions, usually for activities rather than staff costs, continue to be important in inter-community activity.

Table 6: Main Funders of Peace and Reconciliation work

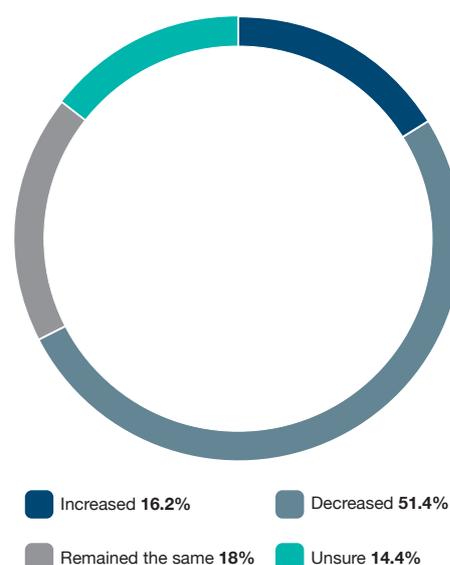
WHO HAS FUNDED THE PEACE AND RECONCILIATION WORK WITHIN YOUR ORGANISATION OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS?	% OF RESPONDENTS
District / City Councils	60
EU Peace Programmes	47
NI Executive (including CRC)	45
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	32
International Fund for Ireland (IFI)	20
Trusts	25
Philanthropic Organisations	18

It is worth noting that a few respondents pointed out that they have never been recipients of peace and reconciliation funding, mainly as they are “not a peacebuilding organisation per se.” Rather, their peace and reconciliation activities have been supported by “individual fund raising,” “donations” or “through the hard work and dedication of volunteers.” A small number also stated that they have received small grants or programme costs from Heritage Lottery Fund, the Big Lottery and Children in Need.

Among respondents to this survey, 52% stated that the amount of funding for peace and reconciliation work within their organisation has decreased over the past ten years (2007-2017). Only 16% stating that funding within their organisation had increased as detailed in Figure 5 opposite.

Figure 5: General Trends in the Funding Environment

Over the period 2007-2017 has the amount of funding for peace and reconciliation work within your organisation:



There was a prevailing consensus that the funding environment has become increasingly difficult to navigate since 2007, whilst at the same time, the value placed on such work is somewhat diminishing. These sentiments are best captured in the following statements;

“Many funders assume that 19 years after the Good Friday Agreement that the job of work is finished”.

“Austerity measures have impacted on this work”.

“It has become harder to meet the criteria for funding as some organisations and government departments want the focus to be solely on conflict issues, namely parades, walls, flags, identity issues etc. Women have the potential to build peace but there is no desire to build

their capacity to allow them to engage across communities and divides”.

“The paperwork and systems in place for applying for grants is too burdensome for a small organisation – the whole process is over complicated.”

We also explored changes in peace and reconciliation work over the last ten years (Table 7). This shows a high rate of turnover among projects, with almost half having come to an end. Some 17% of organisations in the survey no longer carry out peace and reconciliation work. Table 7 also suggests that both collaboration and innovation in the sector has increased, while at the same time issues of staff morale continue to create challenges.

Table 7: Understanding the Impact of the Changing Funding Environment

HAS YOUR ORGANISATION BEEN AFFECTED IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS BY CHANGES TO THE FUNDING AROUND PEACE AND RECONCILIATION WORK?	% OF RESPONDENTS
Programmes have finished	44%
Staff morale has been affected	28%
We have increased collaboration and networks with other groups	27%
We have developed new approaches to peace and reconciliation work	27%
Staff have been made redundant	26%
Not applicable	23%
We no longer have specific peace and reconciliation work-streams	17%
A reduction in staff working hours	15%

In fact, many respondents reported coping with “a period of uncertainty” which has had “a profound impact on the organisation, the staff and the work.” Some are “currently facing staff redundancies” with potential impact on services:

“We are totally dependent on volunteers”

“We have lost staff but we have changed our approaches by using the offices and resources provided to us by others within the community”

“Our organisation has lost valued colleagues and partner organisations. The increasing emphasis on the ‘professionalisation’ of the sector is pushing out grassroots initiatives in favour of ‘institutionalised’ organisations. There is increasing demoralisation, exhaustion and poor health amongst workers. It is becoming increasingly difficult to manage long term responses to conflict as we are forced to constantly reinvent ourselves in an attempt to secure funding.”

“The changes to the funding have affected the way our organisation has been able to support our clients and the local community in dealing with the effects of the conflict.”

Furthermore, in relation to the changes within the funding environment, it is worth noting that 40% feel that these changes have negatively affected the people they engage with (beneficiaries), in comparison to 15% who feel that changes have not affected those they engage with;

“Our clients believe that they are being marginalised and being punished by the way funding support has been withdrawn from the projects they need, such as education and training programmes, counselling, therapy and lobbying programmes.”

“contact is sporadic due to lack of premises and staff”

“little can be achieved with short term, limited funding.”

3.1.5 The Value of Peace and Reconciliation work.

Some 77% of survey respondents stated that they will continue to seek funding for peace and reconciliation work, in comparison with 9% who stated that they would not and a further 14% who noted that they were unsure at this time. For many, there was a prevailing consensus that there is still “a need for peace and reconciliation work”, whilst others were keen to point out that they “would welcome the day when they no longer needed it”;

“Our work isn’t just work, it’s our vision and mission. We will find ways to better our future even without money. Having said that, failure to secure funds is professionally and personally crippling.”

“Our organisation will continue to seek funding as there is much work to be done in promoting peace and reconciliation, particularly in those communities that were disproportionately affected by the conflict.”

Over half, (52%) of respondents stated that their work has been evaluated by funders, with (22%) stating that it had not and the remainder unsure (26%). When asked about how evaluations affect their practice, responses ranged from those who felt that this task improved their work, to those who felt that they were unnecessary and overly complicated:

“It is important to have funders see the work that you are doing, they may also make suggestions for improvements’

“They have helped us to improve our practice”

“Evaluations are important but would work better if the format of the evaluation reflected the format of the project. Sometimes the funder only wants to evaluate things that are in line with their specific priorities which leads

to a quantitative evaluation, whereas our work on peace and reconciliation requires a more qualitative approach.”

“Much of the focus is on outputs. The reality is that it’s “the bums on seats” that funders are interested in”

“They are too time consuming and there is neither the staff or capacity to devote the time that is needed for them.”

Overall, the survey draws attention to the fact that practitioners believe that numerous issues have not yet been addressed by peace and reconciliation work in 2017. Whilst many alluded to the fact that “funders tend to think that the problems have been solved,” the overwhelming majority were keen to stress that there are many long-standing issues. These include;

- Legacy issues, and unresolved issues from the past
- Sectarianism and culturally continuous hostility
- Physical and Cultural division and segregation and the absence of meaningful integration
- Unresolved Contentious/Sensitive issues such as bonfires, flags and parades, with the potential to galvanise violence
- Continued paramilitary activity
- Border disputes arising from Brexit
- Mental health issues with impacts on communities
- The absence of sustainable, long term plan for peace and reconciliation
- Emerging Racism
- Energy being diverted into sustaining organisations
- Urban emphasis, rural neglect.

3.1.6 Observations

- The survey was designed in a manner which was not prescriptive, in order to gain an insight into the types of organisations' which are engaged in peace and reconciliation work, their approaches and other factors which impact their work. The open nature of the questions also made it a challenging survey to analyse.
- The survey identified self-defined 'peace-building' groups which extends beyond the categorisation of such groups and activities as listed by NICVA, in its State of the Sector Series and the Northern Ireland Charity Commission.
- Respondents defined a wide and varied range of approaches, activities and programmes as peace and

reconciliation work. When asked to state their main achievements in terms of peace and reconciliation, the results tended to refer to project achievements rather than wider societal goals. For some, creating friendships was viewed as a significant achievement, whereas others stressed the importance of capital projects to sustain long term work. To that end, there is no single understanding of how success should be defined, or how quantitative output information about the numbers of people completing activities contributes to qualitative goals like peace and reconciliation.

- An interesting, if unexplored footnote to this survey was the finding of a greater preponderance of single identity work in PUL (12%) compared to CNR (4%) communities. This may be an area of future research.



3.2 Interviews with Key Stakeholders

3.2.1 General Remarks

All participants welcomed the study on the basis that it could generate a discussion about the issues facing their respective sectors at this critical juncture in the peace and political processes. In order to enable people to speak freely, interviews were conducted on the basis that all comments were non-attributable. Some participants indicated that they did not want to speak negatively about their 'funders', in case it would be misconstrued as "biting the hand that feeds them". There was also a sense that the funding environment had created "unhealthy competition" between certain organisations, who were essentially vying for money from the same pot. Many were keen to avoid casting aspersions on the work of others, nor did they want any negative comment, or personal view to be attributed to their organisation. Moreover, some within the 'funding environment' were also reluctant to have their personal opinions featured in the final report.

Many of the participants expressed relief that the issue of reconciliation was being discussed again:

"There is a time frame and limits to how much can be achieved in terms of reconciliation. We don't have the luxury of time and we need to address this now. There are so many unresolved issues and the political instability and uncertainty of Brexit have brought many issues to the fore. It's a very important time to have these conversations."

(Funding Organisation)

"I am glad to see that someone is taking an interest in the state of this sector, especially now that there's no Stormont and everyone seems to be quiet about what's happening to vital work on the ground."

(Practitioner)

One of the major challenges identified in this study is that the key terms of 'peace' and 'reconciliation' remain very loosely defined in policy terms. Practitioners within the voluntary and community sector often found it difficult to speak directly about specific 'peace and reconciliation' actions. Conversations often digressed into multiple topics, aligned to the core practice of their organisation, or what might be referred to in other contexts as 'basic community development work.' For instance, issues specific to youth work and the youth sector in general, rather than peace and reconciliation approaches were raised repeatedly during the interview with a youth sector representative. This underlines the consistent need to ensure that a qualitative target like transformation to peace and reconciliation across society is consistently and transparently translated into quantitative actions, programmes, targets and actions.

Funding was discussed through various lenses and multiple experiences in the interviews. Many interviewees commented on the 'poor state of the sector' as a whole which many directly attributed to a reduction in funding. Many interviewees stated that current funding priorities are not focussed on the priorities of their core clients. Thus one interviewee complained that "dealing with the past was not considered a priority for a funding organisation associated with the promotion of good relations," reinforcing a broadly based perception that reconciliation was no longer a significant priority for some in senior government (i.e. why are we still talking about this?)

There was, however, also a wider acknowledgment that all problems could not be attributed simply to a reduction in resources, but were connected in complex ways to other factors; the impact of pensions policy, poor practice or internal management issues. Others felt that the specific operational nature of particular funding stream, rather than the amount of money, was the primary problem. Thus, even though there was a general sense that funding has created "unhealthy competition" and that many groups and organisations are reluctant to collaborate with others they viewed as competitors, some interviewees

acknowledged that the “problematic funding environment” had also prompted them to work more effectively, to seek collaboration and to an extent, re-engage with the fundamental principles of the voluntary sector.

This research unearthed two potentially important ‘presumed but untested’ perspectives on peace and reconciliation funding through civil society. Several funders suggested that there is a “sense of entitlement” for funding within community and voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland, “simply because there was a conflict.” These funders argued that the sector needs to “demonstrate the impact of their efforts more succinctly, in terms of outcomes, rather than outputs.” They also suggested that “the status quo has been to fund organisations, rather than the practice” – rather than asking the fundamental question, what exactly has their specific work done, or is likely to do, to advance reconciliation? On the other hand, the vast majority of practitioners argued that the weight of peace-building has been placed firmly on their shoulders, without the appropriate political support or financial resources. The extent to which both or either of these presumptions is true requires specific attention.

There was broad agreement however that there was no overarching strategic approach to either vision or goals for reconciliation in Northern Ireland. There was little evidence of any distinction between ‘peace’, meaning the absence of violence, and ‘reconciliation’ as a longer term outcome and no clear understanding of what a reconciled society should be or what role all sections of society have to play in working together to achieve that.

3.2.2 Defining Peace and Reconciliation in Practice

In one-to-one interviews, participants were asked to reflect on their approaches and practices in relation to the key themes of ‘peace’ and ‘reconciliation’, and to articulate what this means in the practical work of their organisation. It was striking how many respondents stressed that as a society, “there has been no peace plan”

or comprehensive approach on how we move forward. It was also apparent that practitioners often referred to peace and reconciliation under the more generic title of ‘peace-building’. This encompassed a range of approaches and themes, which had developed in the absence of a definitive framework of what exactly it is, or what peace and reconciliation means in 2017:

“A while ago I found that there was an increasing focus for us to clearly define what we mean by ‘shared space’. This is what we are - a shared space- and everything that encompasses. I wrote to a number of parties and no-one was able to tell me how they defined it. Here, it’s about a space that everyone can come into, from all walks of life. There is too much focus on Catholics and Protestants and that fails to acknowledge the diversity in our society, even in terms of class.”

(Practitioner)

“If we had an agreement, as a sector and as a society about what it is that we are working towards then maybe there would be a more comprehensive approach to peace, with better outcomes across the board.”

(Practitioner)

In spite of the absence of a ‘definitive framework,’ there was a prevailing consensus of the thrust of the peace and reconciliation activities within the respective organisations. This was articulated as an attempt:

“To create a society which is free from conflict and violence, and where all within that society can reap the dividends of a plural society. “

Some of the interviewees explained that promoting peace and reconciliation, or ‘community relations’ was the fundamental objective of the organisation. Others were not normally categorised or viewed as a ‘peace-building’ organisation by themselves or others, but nonetheless acknowledged that peace and reconciliation features

largely in their work. For example, a representative from the youth sector noted that their ethos and approach was enshrined within the principles of youth work, yet a number of their programmes had clear peace and reconciliation outcomes. This variety is reflected in the comments, giving some indication as to how the themes of peace and reconciliation are integrated in complex ways into the fabric of society;

“We exist to meet a range of issues for women in terms of supporting them to advance and participate in all areas of social, political and economic life. We wouldn’t define ourselves as a peace-building organisation, but peace and reconciliation certainly runs through most of what we do.”

(Practitioner)

“Our work in relation to the themes, covers all our work on the ground with former combatants, faith based organisations, young people, women, people of all ages and backgrounds. In fact, I could tag good relations into everything we do here, into any topic at all.”

(Practitioner)

In discussing their contribution to ‘peacebuilding’ with a broad range of demographics, (including political ex-prisoners, young people, women and minority ethnic groups, and others from all ages and backgrounds), the following areas and themes emerged repeatedly as ingredients of peace and reconciliation work;

- Building relationships of friendship and partnership over traditional boundaries
- Untangling the legacy of the past
- Encouraging and facilitating challenging conversations
- Demystifying culture and commemorations to enable peaceful accommodation
- Directly addressing issues with the capacity to destabilise relationships
- Addressing practical challenges of division
 - Shared space
 - Interface issues
 - Policing and community
 - Paramilitarism
- Sustainable Community Development
- Creating opportunities for the most marginalised and disenfranchised
- Advocacy and support
- Creating a ‘normal’ society on the Western European model.



3.2.3 Practice and Programmes: Project Innovation and Outcomes

It is clear that almost all practitioners regard peace and reconciliation as entrepreneurial work: that is - the outcomes are in the future and require development: they are not currently applied in mainstream practice and they are not integrated within existing procedures. In the context of outcomes based accountability, this is a significant issue. For many working in the field, the vision is clear. The methods and solutions have to be devised by practitioners- and then formally adopted and adapted by those with systemic responsibility and applied in a way appropriate to specific areas- for example, education, community development or policing.

Peace and reconciliation work was articulated by interviewees as being “innovative, creative and responsive to needs on the ground.” Many also alluded to the fact that some of the approaches have now become regarded by practitioners as “tried and tested approaches” which have “significant outcomes.” The following examples provide a flavour of how the sector is attempting to create the desired conditions for a peaceful society:

“We model a shared space. Our aim is to show that culture is not a threat. Our contribution is to allow people to experience culture. A lot of our work is very purposeful and some of it is reactive to changing dynamics, and some of it is casual in the sense that we provide the space for people to come together, this place makes it normal for people to mix, from all backgrounds.”

(Practitioner)

“The work we do provides safe spaces and opportunities for young people to engage in dialogue and untangle a lot of the stuff that gets played out like a pantomime in the media and on the streets, for example, the focus on the Irish Language recently. We have had programmes

where young people’s views and opinions on issues such as this are changed from negative ones to one of acceptance, once they know how others feel and think about certain issues, and how important they are to them.’

(Practitioner)

“Our approach to building peace and reconciliation has remained largely consistent. It’s about hand holding, it’s about building relationships and trying to get people to engage, particularly those who have been somewhat marginalised over the past decade or so, it is an ever changing environment and field – but you are almost trying to fire-fight in a strategic way and to work on the reputation of the organisation which allows relationships to be established, across all areas of society. It takes and awful lot of hard work to make nothing happen.”

(Practitioner)

“One specific programme we have is Human libraries. This is a way of tackling discrimination and prejudice, basically you borrow a human book and their title can be as broad as ‘policeman’, ‘political ex-prisoner,’ ‘victim and survivor’, ‘transgender’, etc. We have all these people as books – and you can go away for 30 minutes or so and engage in a conversation with them, ask them difficult or challenging questions. It gives people the space to challenge their own prejudices or ignorance of issues that in turn frighten them.”

(Practitioner)



Overall, the majority of community and voluntary programmes for peace and reconciliation are characterised by;

- Engagement on contentious issues within and between communities and constituencies;
- Community activism and organisation across traditional boundaries on shared themes of interest- e.g. youth, women's issues, schools projects, festivals, social issues;
- Giving public voice to complexity and differing perspectives on conflict including 'story telling';
- Producing rigorous research, practical tools, educational resources and publications;
- Undertaking training and education programmes for communities and professionals;
- Mentoring and support for innovative work in local settings; and
- Advocacy, Lobbying and Campaigning.

The overwhelming majority of those interviewed in this study felt that the voluntary and community sector is in the "best position to respond to the complex needs within our post conflict society." Subsequently, many were keen to stress that the work within their organisation was "of an international standard," "had made tangible improvements to the lives and communities of many," and was successful at "engaging with constituencies which others were reluctant to engage with," especially in the years immediately following the Good Friday Agreement 1998. Accordingly, a representative from the political ex-prisoner's sector explained that;

"Our very existence and the work that we do with ex-prisoners enhances peace and reconciliation. This work is vital because if political ex-prisoners are enabled to participate in society, to avail of the resources within it and to become economically active, this in itself adds to the progression of peace and reconciliation. We are uniquely placed

on the ground and have engaged a constituency which others wouldn't have wanted to support, in many ways we have involved ourselves in mature dialogue with others, much more than our political representatives can do"

(Practitioner)

There was a sense that because "peacebuilding is not an exact science," it is difficult to regulate approaches to ensure that all approaches meet a uniform standard. It was thus acknowledged that there were examples of 'bad practice', which some feel has been brought about by a "misinterpretation of what constitutes peace building":

"I would have to say that there are some amazing community relations work both through regional and grassroots organisations. But there are also some very bad examples of it. Sometimes people can get misinformed in some workshops and programmes, especially when it comes to peace and reconciliation in contested areas. Basically I know of cases where people are given biased accounts or one-sided narratives. When we engage with young people we ensure that we give a number of perspectives, so that entrenched views and opinions are not superimposed on a younger generation."

(Practitioner)

Overall, there was a general agreement that the outcomes of the majority of peace and reconciliation projects could point to specific and genuine positive impacts. Taken as a whole, respondents reflected two impulses: On the one hand, peace and reconciliation work is not yet the norm for the wider community and voluntary organisations. On the other, the community and voluntary sector has, in general, produced the greatest tangible evidence of change and the most impressive examples of local effort to consolidate peace. The way in which these project outcomes build into a wider picture of societal or 'population' outcomes is regarded by practitioners as the



task of funders, political leaders and government and it is here that they identify significant weakness in current approaches, which undermine the collective value of their specific successes:

“Coming out of the conflict that we endured, and with our imperfect peace now, it would be hard to imagine what communities would be like if this type of work wasn’t going on at the grassroots.”

(Practitioner)

“The weight of peace and reconciliation work is and has been laid firmly on the shoulders of the voluntary and community sector, but the support does not reflect this and this will become progressively worse.”

(Practitioner)

3.3 Peace and Reconciliation Work within the Voluntary and Community Sector

When questioned about the current state of peace and reconciliation work within the voluntary and community sector, a large majority of the interviewees painted a picture of a sector which is “in a state of flux,” and “in the midst of its greatest crisis.” It is imperative to note that some interviewees transgressed from the specific focus on peace and reconciliation activities at times, referring instead to the voluntary ‘sector’ as a whole. Nonetheless, all interviewees did express a concern about the future of peace and reconciliation work within their organisations,

especially as many felt that there is “a greater need for the work.”

For the majority of interviewees, peace and reconciliation work “is under-resourced” and “under-valued” across Northern Ireland in 2017, which is made more problematic given that “there is a disconnect between the agendas and strategies of funding organisations, and the operational delivery of work on the ground.” In addition to these issues, many felt that the current political impasse, the uncertainty of Brexit and the changes to council structures and policy frameworks underpinning our crawl away from the conflict, all amount to a bleak future for peace and reconciliation activities.

3.3.1 The changing funding environment and its implications

The overwhelming majority of interviewees maintained that their organisation has experienced a reduction in funding specifically aimed at peace and reconciliation activities. Whilst this study aimed to explore the changes to the funding environment over a ten-year period (2007-2017), many of the participants stated that a reduction in funding has occurred in more recent times, on average, over the last 5 years.

Although peace and reconciliation work has many guises within the organisations who participated in this study, it was apparent that reductions in staff, working hours or resources has an impact on peace-building work; work which is often difficult to define, which takes place through both “organic and more structured interventions,” and which often addresses some of the more “sensitive” and “contentious” issues in our society i.e. legacy,

parades, commemorations, bonfires, interfaces. Many of the respondents in this study have seen a reduction in their 'core funding' which in turn, has impacted on staff numbers, staff hours and programmes, specifically in terms of face-to-face hours at the grassroots level;

"We have seen a significant cut. I have to bring my own wage in through other grants or funding and the pressure of trying to find this in addition to the work is so much. Its hard to imagine any other job or sector where people have to do all they can to find their own wage."

(Practitioner)

"Overall we are down from 32 staff to 6, but the amount of the work has not reduced in line with this."

(Practitioner)

"Quite simply, our staff team is currently about 50% of its usual operating size which has had a massive impact on the organisation and peace and reconciliation work on the ground. For example, in terms of CRED – the DE funded Community relations programme, this funding stream has now been removed. Also, in terms of T:BUC, the pilot programme United Youth had specific hard hitting outcomes, but in spite of the policy the funding no longer exists. Also as we have fallen between peace programmes, various community level programmes have ceased and the lack of transitional funding has had a negative impact on the progress already made."

(Practitioner)

Interviewees also acknowledged that a number of organisations, some of which were "held in the highest esteem," have gone out of existence, practically overnight. Yet it is imperative to note that this may be attributed to a number of factors, rather than a direct correlation to a

reduction in funding for peace and reconciliation activities; which many interviewees failed to recognise. Nonetheless, there was a perception that reduced budgets were the main culprit.

The perception that money, or a lack of it, is at the root of all the sectors problems was however rejected by some, one of whom stated that "money is not the issue, rather it is the stipulations attached to the money which cause problems." Therefore, in spite of securing a significant sum of money during Peace III, this interviewee claimed that it had a detrimental impact on their organisation;

"In terms of peace and reconciliation work I would have to say that the peace programmes have had a significant impact on our organisation in terms of funding. Everytime, we put in a claim, we would have about a 10% not validated. As a small organization, this totally drained our reserves. This wasn't as a result of anything around accountability or procurement, it was for unforeseen issues that arose and had to be addressed there and then. We were lucky enough to have the reserves, although we have never been able to build it back up again."

(Practitioner)

Others pointed to basic inefficiencies in the funding system. A number complained of serious delays between applying for funding and receiving funding, particularly within OFMDFM and government sources, putting pressures on organisations, and preventing any planned work;

"Because we didn't know that we were getting our core funding until just recently we had to put a lot of things on hold."

(Practitioner)

“It is not sufficient to apply for funding and wait for months on it whilst problems fester and escalate at the community level. It can take a long time to build relationships, but they are very easily broken down”

(Practitioner)

“It is hard to plan any programmes at the minute, particularly for the summer months which are particularly important in terms of community relations work, as we don’t know if we are getting any funding to do the work.”

(Practitioner)

“We got 10 days notice to say that we were unsuccessful in securing our funding. We had been told that we would know the outcome of our application at Christmas, but months later we were told that our application did not score highly enough. We are uncertain about how we will fill this large hole in our budget.”

(Practitioner)

During the course of the fieldwork (March-May 2017) several of the interviewees revealed that they, or others within their organisation were on protective notice, or had been informed that funding applications were unsuccessful. For these interviewees, there was a general sense that “everything is in flux at the minute”;

“Most of us are on protective notice, but we are in one of those, good bad situations, whereby I know that there are a number of groups who have been informed in writing that they are not getting any funding at all. The letter that we have received has been vague but it doesn’t tell us that we won’t be getting funding. In many ways it feels like we have been given a bus, with no driver. In other words, we are still unclear whether we can get match funding or explore other revenues.

In terms of the impact on the ground, I would say the impact will be catastrophic. I feel that we are facing the worst funding crisis that we have ever faced. Even if we go to direct rule, that means that there will be around a 5% cut. The whole thing is in flux at the min.”

(Practitioner)

“Currently our funding ends at the end of March and with the collapse of Stormont we don’t know if people will have a job at the end of the week. The civil servants can only allocate 75% of any proposed budgets in the absence of the Executive. We are hoping that we will get a 3 month contract at least.”

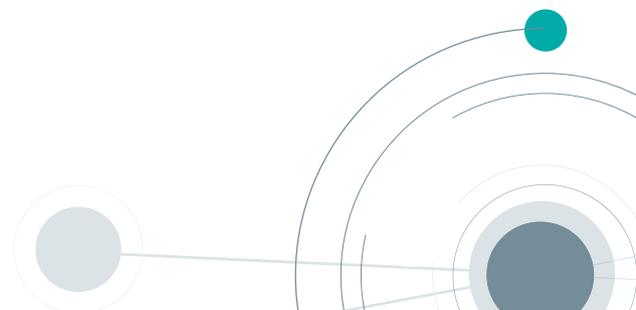
(Practitioner)

“If I am running a peace and reconciliation centre then there needs to be staff to keep that going and when you are trying to reach out, there needs to be someone at the end of the phone. So much of my time is taking up by finance, admin and fundraising. I had 3 reports to do at the end of year and when I am tied up with that then I am not doing the work on the ground, what I am actually funded to do. Funding applications for example can take a week to complete.”

(Practitioner)

“Transient staff has had a real impact on peace-building, which is about relationships and when you have staff who have managed to make relationships across divides it makes, a big impact when they go. It always sets things back and you have to start over again.”

(Practitioner)



“If funding is reduced further at the grassroots level there will be an uncertain future, particularly now when political institutions are in tatters – when there is political instability there will be community instability. The dynamics change here so quickly.”

(Practitioner)

“If there are more funding cuts, on the ground that will manifest in a reduction in programmes, a reduction in face to face hours and the whole notion of building relationships will be set back as well. It’s probably going to be quite drastic – and telling people a week before the financial year is just disrespectful - the impact will be huge.”

(Practitioner)

“At the minute it seems that we are sitting on the cusp and that things could turn nasty at any time..”

(Practitioner)

“I can’t go to my mortgage company with a letter from our funders and say, “oh I might be able to pay the mortgage this month, or I may not”, at a personal level, this may mean that I could possibly lose my home, my livelihood, and all the things that come with that. No one does this kind of work because of the career progression prospects or because it is exciting, we do it because we have a passion and desire for change. But this can only stretch so far when there are bills that need to be paid.”

(Practitioner)

The pressure of the work following the cuts to our good relations staff has been horrific and it has had a profound impact on my health both physically and mentally. None of us are lazy, we work flat out. In terms of the organisation, we have had to be very strategic and do our job rather than chasing money to keep the doors open.”

(Practitioner)

“We don’t do this kind of work for the money or the opportunities for career progression. Everyone is burnt out now and I don’t see how anyone else would take up community relations work. Many of the community practitioners today are heading towards retirement. My biggest worry is about who is coming up behind them? There is no chance of a career in this area of work, it’s a thankless job.”

(Practitioner)

Evidently, many were uncertain about the future of their organisations, in terms of posts and programme costs. Yet it was also apparent that some interviewees had become somewhat complacent about the uncertainty which they feel has “always been a feature of peacebuilding work.” As such, interviewees pointed out that funding has never been allocated on a long-term, strategic basis, whereas others suggested that the uncertainty should not retract from the focus of the work. These sentiments are succinctly captured in the statements below;

“We have been on protective notice numerous times, you could let this dominate things and all you are looking for is to secure funding to make sure you have a post – but this isn’t what the work should be about. Simply you should have the vision in mind and the needs you are set up to address rather than the post.”

(Practitioner)



“One of the difficulties since the austerity measures is that things have got worse, but our funding has always had a degree of uncertainty about it, and in many ways we have been played off against victim’s groups, whereby it has at times been portrayed that we were getting funding at the expense of victims, which was not the case. I would argue that we [political ex-prisoners] have made the most significant contribution in terms of grassroots peacebuilding than any other sector of society.”

(Practitioner)

“There was never any long term funding and consequently, there has been a contradiction in terms, because funding agencies and governments were asking us to be strategic, but it’s very difficult to be strategic when you don’t know if you are going to be in existence from one year to the next, so both concepts don’t work well together, uncertainty and strategy. This has got worse now.”

(Practitioner)

“I have always been quite open about the fact that our role is not to secure jobs, it is to ensure that we remain true to the mission and values of the organisation.”

(Practitioner)

3.3.2 The changing political environment

While the focus of this study was to explore the impact of changes in the funding environment on peace and reconciliation activities, interviewees also cited a number of contextual issues which are having, or are likely to have, a detrimental impact on peace-building. Simultaneous challenges in a number of discrete issues were creating risks of a ‘perfect storm’ for the stability of peace and reconciliation as a whole, specifically;

- Changes in district councils and community policing structures,
- The ‘current political impasse’
- The uncertainty of Brexit

“Derry City/Strabane council, because of new community plans, the Good Relations money are given out along electoral wards, the majority of which are already segregated along electoral lines, so if there has to be a proportion of Catholics and Protestants, this will create problems as it will be more inclined to focus on single-identity programmes.”

(Practitioner)

“There has been a reduction in funding which has had a profound impact, but there have been many other changes. I would say that the changes in the district councils have had a big impact because people have had to re-establish relationships with good relations officers and others. Changes in community policing has also impacted on the ground, particularly when dealing with contentious, sensitive issues. In many ways, it has been a perfect storm.”

(Practitioner)



“Issues around Brexit and the current political climate or lack of it, reinforces to us daily that this sector is very unstable. I am finding more and more that people are pulling away from community relations work. It seems to be that people are retracting back into their own communities and there needs to be a huge incentive for them to engage in these kind of activities.”

(Practitioner)

“I believe that it will become increasingly difficult to secure funding in the wake of Brexit. We’ve seen the British government making pledges to universities and farmers for example, suggesting that they would compensate them for any loss of revenue. But there is no way that the British government is going to ‘bank roll’ the community and voluntary sector and substitute any loss of European money.”

(Practitioner)

The large majority of interviewees alluded to the potential impact of Brexit on European Funding for the sector. However, for those interviewees focused on addressing peace and reconciliation issues at in rural/border communities, there were greater concerns about the broader political, social and economic implications of Britain’s departure from the European Union, especially if there is a hard border.

“Brexit will have an impact, particularly if there’s a hard border. The implications will be felt here deeply. What happened last time with the hard border, was that this natural hinterland became disconnected. Derry and Donegal is essentially the same place, with the same people; and it stopped being that for a period of about 30 years.

We turned our backs on the border physically in terms of development and relationships. And when relationships break down, and people don’t know each-other, it leads to mistrust and misunderstanding. My fear is that if it becomes difficult to cross the border to get to Donegal, Sligo and other places then it will become challenging to invest here.”

(Practitioner)

“I think that the rural and border areas are more challenging to work in, as no-one is incentivised to do anything in terms of promoting good relations. There are no real physical peace-lines or anything like that, and that’s why it is harder to demonstrate the need for this work. I don’t know what impact a hard border will have, but I think that there needs to be careful consideration about the potential impact this will have in these areas.”

(Practitioner)

In a similar vein, many also stressed the view that the political impasse was having a detrimental impact on peace and reconciliation as a whole. The majority of participants felt that there was “no political will” as “our politicians are incapable of making decisions about how to deal with the past.” Some also alluded to the fact that recent developments in the political realm have served to “bring the green and orange issue to the fore.” It also seemed as if there was a disconnect between many practitioners working in the field of peace and reconciliation and political leadership;

“Our politicians don’t set an example of a post-conflict society, they don’t show leadership and they reinforce divisions across the board.”

(Practitioner)

In addition to the ‘green and orange’ division within politics, it is worth noting that one participant argued that it was “advantageous to befriend those with political power.”

“There seems to be a sense that if you are aligned to political parties then you are more likely to get funding, and if you do not align the organisation to a specific political party or ‘side’ comes at a cost...”

(Practitioner)

Whilst mindful that the elements of the ‘perfect storm’ are serving to increase the concerns of those peace and reconciliation practitioners, one of the main criticisms raised by all interviewees was the current disconnect between the agendas and strategies of funding organisations, and the operational delivery of work in difficult circumstances.

3.3.3 Losing expertise and knowledge

Unsurprisingly, the majority of participants alluded to concerns about the loss of capability and capacity through the sharp reduction in staff and support for peace and reconciliation. For one interviewee, this could only be defined as the “decimation of the peace-builders.” In general terms however, interviewees maintained that they are increasingly finding themselves in positions where they feel they are “constantly begging for resources and support,” where the “time and effort spent on developing staff is wasted, when short contracts end;” and where staff are “stretched beyond capacity.”

“I think that if you look over the course of the past 5-8 years or so, there has been a decimation of skilled workers in this field. All that institutional knowledge has been lost. New people coming

along don’t really realise what they are getting themselves into, they don’t have a clear understanding of the nuances at the grassroots level and the ever changing dynamics that can affect work on the ground.”

(Practitioner)

“We are operating with 50% of the human resources, but we are still operating at the same level as we done before a reduction in funding, engaging with the same numbers of young people and generating the same outputs, but that is not sustainable. We are going to break, the staff are going to break. My concerns are about work-life balance, about burn-out and stress.”

(Practitioner)

It is perhaps worth noting that whilst many expressed a deep passion for the work and a desire to affect change, they also felt that ‘peace-building’ is a “thankless job” and one which is unattractive to a younger generation. Above all, they felt that the rest of society had not picked up the baton of peace and reconciliation, while the expectations of the community sector had increased as resources have reduced. Accordingly, a few were concerned about the next generation of peace-builders, with some suggesting that this gap is particularly evident in Protestant (PUL) communities;

“Where is the next generation of peace-builder, there is no-one coming through”

(Practitioner)

“There is no-one in PUL communities that come back and work within the communities, there is a vacuum of experienced, skilled workers there.”

(Practitioner)

Likewise, concern for peace and reconciliation work on the ground was particularly pronounced for those in rural communities, who feared that these geographical areas will increasingly become, less of a priority.

“I have often stated that there is a perception that there are no problems within rural communities. You have to put up a strong case for anything outside of Belfast. There are less opportunities for people to mix in rural communities and I have genuine concerns about the resources for this kind of work being stripped back further.”

(Practitioner)

The majority of interviewees felt that this reflected a lack of value placed on them or their work, evidenced by “a lack of strategic, long term funding,” the fact that “we appear to be reverting back to the community development/community relations approaches of the 1980s.” This also served to fuel the argument that there is no recognition of added value of the work, in terms of money saved in other governmental departments/statutory agencies;

“I don’t think the issue is just about the reduction in funding, it extends beyond that to the fact that there is no value placed on the practice or the practitioners. For me, a lot of the T:BUC stuff was reinventing the wheel, summer camps, sports competitions etc. We were doing that in the 1980s. This leads me to believe that the purpose of funding is to be seen to be doing something, rather than changing anything. When T:BUC first came out I was really offended by it as I thought “what is the last 30 or 40 years of practice been about if we are essentially going back to the drawing board.” Limited contact – which we know doesn’t work. I mean limited contact between young people from different communities can actually be counter-productive.”

(Practitioner)

“Central Good Relations fund is very challenging fund to work with as it is based on the T:BUC strategy which is very limited. The work and the approach is going back 15 years, I mean, we are handing out forms which are counting how many Catholics and Protestants are in a room together, this is the targets they have set and we have to adhere to this. We have tried to stress the point that we have built relationships with people based on who they are, irrespective of their community background and this approach is contradictory to this.”

(Practitioner)

“If you are serious about peace-building then it has to be funded long term and there needs to be respect for the practitioners”

(Practitioner)

“Our value and our worth versus what we get is awful. We don’t get paid for the work we do on behalf of the PSNI, or other statutory bodies. Our sector is saving thousands of pounds, yet I often feel that I am standing with a begging bowl constantly when I am helping the council out.”

(Practitioner)

“FUNDERS need to have the courage to value what works and the structures we have, don’t allow for that in many respects. I fully understand the challenges, particularly as everything has to go to tender and that there are processes to ensure accountability and transparency. I have had some insight into this and there are examples of where an organisations work is so much better than their application and other times when I knew that a professional bid writer had done the application which was so much better than the work. We need something that cuts through all this, where funders are in a position to fund good practice and organisations for the long term. This needs a decade of support etc.”

(Practitioner)

3.3.4 Adapting to Change

While it was argued that reduced budgets have impacted on staff levels and/or workloads, face-to-face engagement and potential future programmes, some interviewees were clear that the uncertain climate in recent times has prompted them to be “more strategic.” For one interviewee, this meant working in partnership with others and acknowledging that various organisations were striving for the same goals. In other words, there was some indication that organisations have been forced to ‘pool resources’ to achieve shared goals collectively. For others, adopting a ‘more strategic’ outlook meant dropping out of the race to chase funding, or deliberately seeking funding that allows them to be flexible and creative in their approaches;

“A lot of groups were all core funded to do broadly the same work with the same people, so there were conversations about how there could be collaborative working. The groups in this building are generally city-wide or regional groups. Initially we examined what we all do well individually, and the barriers each of us face. We discovered that we had limited resources between us all, that we were paying large sums of money to landlords and that the facilities and equipment was poor and did not place value on the work or in turn, the people who we engage with. In 2005, we started the process of exploring how we could work together more effectively. Over a number of years we secured funding and capital money through the IFI, DSD and Peace III. This cost around 4 million pound and at the time of reduced resources this was significant. This is definitely because of the collaborative approach.”

(Practitioner)

“We are finding that we are ok in the current climate, partly because we are being more strategic about what funding we are applying for.

For example, we did not apply for Peace IV as it wasn’t designed with relatively small groups in mind.”

(Practitioner)

“We had started to drift but we have come back to our core focus. If that means I will lose my job then that will be the case. We have constantly had to remind ourselves and ask ourselves, what exactly are we about? Is this just chasing money. Is so, we put the brakes on. Although this can be difficult when you are trying to keep the lights on.”

(Practitioner)

“If the money doesn’t serve a purpose then we don’t go for it. There was a time when we were applying for anything and everything, purely to stay open. But recently, we have been more strategic in what we are applying for. We realised that we need to stay true to our mission rather than spending our time chasing funding.”

(Practitioner)

One interviewee also explained how their organisation adapted to change as a result of losing their financial reserves, following the end of a Peace III funded programme around 2009/2010;

“Our reserves were drained and we found ourselves in a position where the option was that we continued to operate on a voluntary basis, which all 10 of us done for around 6 months. The freedom was fantastic, we were able to focus on exactly what we believe in. We continued to work with a range of groups and organisations that we had been working with for a number of years. This has changed our approach significantly. We made the decision that we were never going to apply for any PEACE money again, nor were

we going to apply for any government money in Northern Ireland because they had adopted all the PEACE III practices, they had changed all their procedures. The state was trying to show that it was a responsible state going through a transition, but it applied more stringent procedures than those the EU were actually asking for – to be seen as being so effective. For example we were doing procurement for contacts of £200 and we found out that the EU regulations only required it for £2000.”

(Practitioner)

3.3.5 Disconnect between the agendas and strategies of funding organisations and the operation of peace and reconciliation projects

It is imperative to point out from the outset that all interviewees acknowledged the significant transformation in our society brought about by the Peace Programmes. Yet among these practitioners, there was a sense that the underlying approach was to seek “quick fixes” to deeply embedded problems.

One of recurring issues raised throughout this study was what one interviewee referred to as, “the audit on steroids culture and the warped sense of accountability.” Indeed, a majority of interviewees felt that funders are increasingly “making things more difficult, through unnecessarily convoluted application processes,” in the way they filter funding to the ground, and how they measure success, given “their lack of understanding of how people and communities navigate the post conflict society.”

“What is valued at the end is the audit rather than the work. The language in application forms is heavily focused on outcomes and it doesn’t take into account the real work on the ground. And, when you value what you measure, more than you measure what you value, it skews everything. I think that this new culture on outcomes based

accountability is dangerous, although at the same time, it is good practice to work towards outcomes. I suppose it’s about finding that balance.”

(Practitioner)

“OFMDFM – conducted research into the impact of funding – one thing that they didn’t talk about was how much it cost to put funding on the ground. In other words, is it best practice or cost effective to pay an organisation to filter funds to others, or would it be more appropriate to fund councils as they are already set up – is it better to fund people to fund people? Is that really making the greatest impact on the ground. Are these middle organisations providing strategy, advice etc. Surely what you should be aiming for in any case is to get the money on the ground where it is needed. The way that funding is implemented should be re-evaluated – not simply focusing on attempting to measure impact and outcomes on the ground.”

(Practitioner)

In sum, interviewees drew attention to two further issues in particular. First and foremost, there was a sense that if funders are serious about outcomes, then they must be willing to adopt a flexible approach to the methods and targets within a contract. Otherwise, projects are obliged to deliver the contractual targets rather than adjust their delivery because of learned experience or changes in context:

“OBA is so problematic. It tries to simplify everything. The funders don’t understand this at all. If you are born premature there is a 75% chance you will leave school with no qualifications, this does not take into consideration the million other factors that will influence a child’s life chance.”

(Practitioner)

“Somebody shows up and we say, what is it you need right now, what can we do for you. Yet funders don’t see this, instead it’s this idea that people have to fit a profile – it’s this ludicrous methodology of determining who is worthy for attention – did you lose someone in the Troubles? Are you a victim? What is your religion? Now, you fit the profile so let me do things to you!”

(Practitioner)

Secondly, funders do not appear to distinguish adequately between innovation – which implies a willingness to learn, experiment and take creative risks, with novelty – which implies that new is good in a simplistic way. As one respondent commented;

“Another word that is poisonous in terms of funding is innovative, as a lot of the funders don’t understand what innovation looks like. So a lot of funding is awarded on the basis that it looks different or there is novelty in it, even if the ideas are half baked, simply because they meet some new objective or criteria.”

(Practitioner)

An example of the way in which all these issues impacted on a specific project is reflected in the experience of one practitioner:

“Some years ago we had a large peace and reconciliation programme, which was about the experiences[abroad], around changes to policing and justice. Sometimes we were the people offering insights into peace and reconciliation and sometimes we were the people receiving the insights. It was half a million pounds from the Peace III programme, there were 20 people who committed to a four-year programme and they did a

degree-level course in cross cultural facilitation in divided societies.

It was a brilliant programme and I couldn’t count the many learnings that came out of it. But the funding of it was on a very crude model. How it was described to me by someone in SEUPB, was when they said “you are always wanting to do work that is like fine woodwork, but the peace money provides money for chainsaws,” in other words, “it’s never going to be able to do what you want to do, as we fell trees, and you want to carve.” The overall procedures created so many difficulties for us.

The programme was 4 years long, and the business plan for it was submitted a year before it started. In essence, by the end of the programme you were trying to do things that you had predicted 5 years previously, and this wasn’t always accurate on the ground. When we asked if we could modify it based on the context we were facing, we were told, no. It was ludicrous, of course you have to make predictions but you should also be allowed to make changes and adaptations. Over the course of this programme, the Assembly went up and went down, policing and justice powers were devolved, there were significant changes that were directly relevant to the programme, but this was never taken into consideration.”

“No matter how accurate we are in our assessment for programmes, you cannot predict a volatile context like Northern Ireland. And the reality is that we are working with programmes that don’t allow us to make predictions and then make appropriate changes when we need too, then we are not serving the people of Northern Ireland well, because we are implementing programmes which may no longer be relevant.”

(Practitioner)



3.4 Improving the Operating Environment

Many interviewees believe that “the spirit of good will” which existed across society in the immediate wake of the peace process, has by now largely dissipated. Moreover, there was a general consensus that reconciliation requires a long journey that has yet to be travelled, which is not acknowledged by those in the political realm or within funding organisations. For interviewees, this was reflected in a reluctance to tackle the systemic issues which fuelled the conflict. Consequently, “as a society, we have yet to face into the full consequences of the protracted violence.”

“In the early years of the peace process there was a spirit of generosity then, people could see the end of conflict and they were more eager to work together, there was a general level of goodwill to make things work. I don’t think that this level of goodwill exists now. Today I think the legacy topic is toxic. In many ways it’s not about dealing with the past it’s about apportioning blame and that issue in itself is highlighting the need for peace building.”

(Practitioner)

“The task for me is about how do we build a functioning society which takes us beyond community relations work, it takes us to into what is known in other places as ‘nation building.’ How do we do this with younger people, womens’ groups etc.; how do we create a more highly functioning society and reduce our tendency to resort to conflict, and indeed to deal with conflict more effectively; And also, how do we challenge our politicians to be better politicians and to run a functioning government. In that respect the language should be around citizenship, rather than community relations. That’s not to say

that we have solved the community relations problems, as there is still a long way to go and we continue to create a sectarian, divided society. We can’t ignore those problems but I think we need to frame them differently in building the post conflict society.”

(Practitioner)

“There is more need for peacebuilding now, particularly due to legacy issues, but there is little resources to do so. This is particularly evident in loyalist communities as they see the whole legacy debate as biased and one sided and they don’t see the nuances.”

(Practitioner)

“There are so many issues, or associated ills of the past, mental ill-health, drugs and alcohol dependency, isolation and marginalisation and inter-generational trauma and hurt. Even down to the way we interact with each other, and in turn, the way the younger generations interact with each other.”

(Practitioner)

“The demand for the work is always there. We are not there yet, as evidenced by the recent election. I get a sense of increasing polarisation to some extent, particularly at the extremes I think we are getting divided further. But I also think there is a greater wish for normality and particularly in this city, people are getting used to working and engaging with each other. Those at the margins who want to promote division are finding that whoever is following them are that little bit more ‘radicalised’ in a sense, but they don’t have the general support of the community.”

(Practitioner)

“The work has increased as there are so many different aspects that we are dealing with, the drugs, the fact that many people are still afraid to speak up in their communities and the changing demographics and mix of ethnicities and nationalities in our communities now all mean that community relations work is vital. Internal feuding between organisations also makes things more problematic now as people are looking after their own interests, all fighting for the same pot.”

(Practitioner)

When queried about their thoughts and views about how the operational environment can survive and thrive in the years ahead, two key strands of thought emerged focusing largely on the need for better communications of practice, and improved relationships between funders and the work they fund. For interviewees, this interaction and engagement should be “built on mutual trust and understanding that peace and reconciliation is not an exact science and that people and progress are difficult to measure.”

“My main argument is that we are not representing the sector well, collectively. We need to be stronger in what it is we are doing and how much of a vital part of society we are and the positive impact we have on our communities. We are not making a good case for the voluntary sector in terms of peace and reconciliation work. We need better representation and it needs to be more than the lip service which some of the politicians give from time to time.”

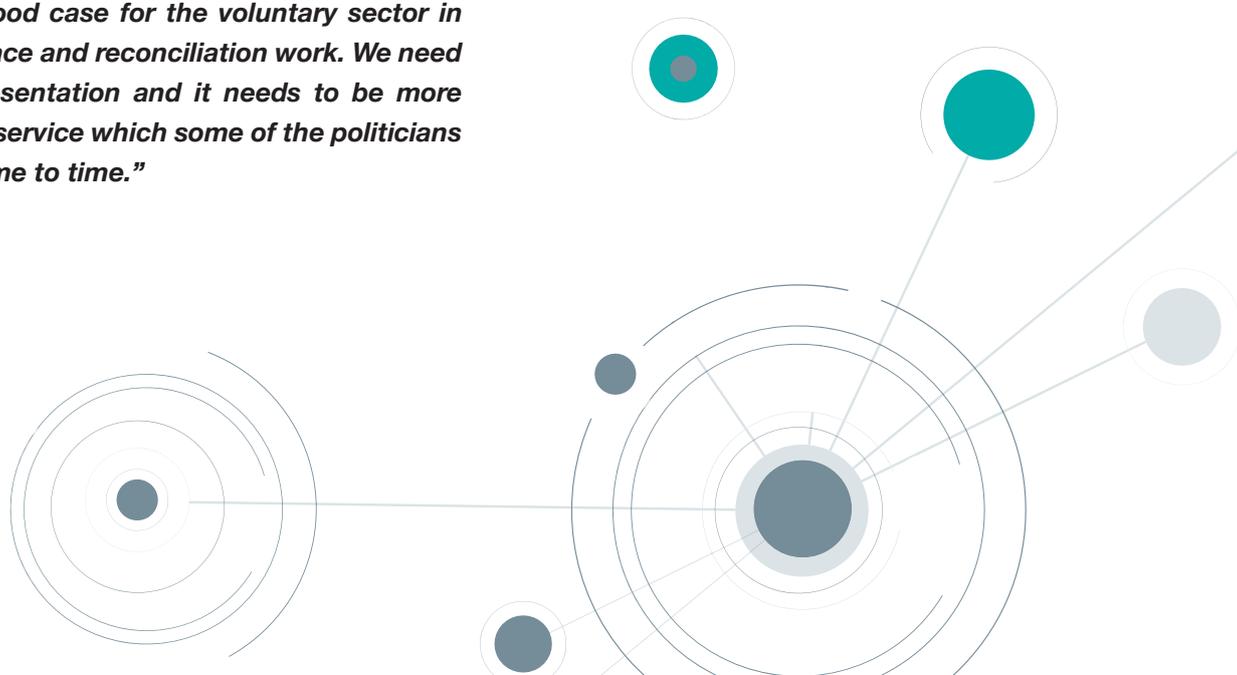
(Practitioner)

“Our specific donor now offers a great example of how work could be funded. Basically, a grants officer came to work with us for around 6 months to get a real insight into what drives and motivates us and what changes we can bring about, by being here, not simply from a form. They examined our financial procedures and spoke to everyone within the organisation about what we have done in the past and where we see our future. In the end they said, “we trust you.” Their support is based on the fact that ‘this is your reality now, but that reality will change, so how do you capture and measure that.’”

(Practitioner)

“As resources are shrinking, funders need to be working together. Bureaucracy needs to be reduced substantially as people don’t go into this line of work to be bureaucrats – when you are funded from multiple resources people are constantly re-writing applications and programmes to meet objectives of funders.”

(Practitioner)



3.5 Issues raised by Funders

Participants representing four major funding organisations were interviewed as part of this study. These participants spoke generally about the changes within their organisations over a period of time. In many respects, there was a general agreement that:

“while funding may have reduced, there is still a significant amount of resources targeted at peace and reconciliation activities within the voluntary and community sector.”

(Funder)

Inevitably, the views of these ‘funders’ were somewhat contradictory at times. For example, one representative was keen for the voluntary and community sector to acknowledge that they “fund peace and reconciliation, but are not the employers of the sector.” This interviewee also suggested that the sector should “seriously question its role and ability to affect change.” On the other hand, there was a recognition that there is still a journey to travel and that funders have some level of responsibility in promoting a strong and vibrant civil society, which is adequately supported to achieve the objectives of peace and reconciliation. Across the board however, there was a recognition that the key terms of ‘peace and reconciliation’ are too broad, and as a consequence, a “peace-building” sector has emerged with varying levels of success at ameliorating the social ills of the conflict.

3.5.1 Defining Peace and Reconciliation

Many interviewees agreed that there has never been a comprehensive agreed framework or approach to peace and reconciliation beyond ending violence and establishing government. Consequently, a ‘peace-building’ sector has emerged, which is all encompassing of a broad and diverse range of activities, and which is increasingly vying for money from the same pot. As such, the ‘implications’ of an agreed narrative or way forward in terms of peace and reconciliation are significant;

“In terms of true reconciliation, I would say the big gap is agreement at the Executive level, where there is no sense of taking those elements of the GFA and converting that into actually peace-building and reconciliation. And reconciliation will include, truth recovery, dealing with the past and the justice issues and the systemic issues that have plagued this society from moving forward.”

(Funder)

“Peace-building is almost a ‘cop-out’ for reconciliation. If its Peace-building, you can virtually do anything. Where is the gap in peace-building? and it’s about reconciliation, truth recovery, rights, justice, what are the big gaps in term of this to having a truly reconciled society. A truly reconciled society for me, has to be based on a rights approach, equal marriage, a Bill of Rights, protections for the vulnerable, minority communities. But the tone for that has to be set by the Executive, and at the moment, everybody else is scratching around in terms of understanding what peace-building and reconciliation is.”

(Funder)

3.5.2 Practitioners and Practice within the Voluntary and Community Sector

Although funders explained that they valued the efforts and endeavours of many people and organisations within the voluntary and community sector, there was a prevailing consensus that the sector as a whole lacks coherence in terms of its approaches and practices to peace and reconciliation. It is worth noting that this was also attributed to the lack of long term, strategic funding which two interviewees in particular felt “would enable an organisation to be more strategic”;

“Groups themselves need to ask the hard questions about what exactly they have achieved, what exactly they have added to peace and reconciliation efforts? There is a tendency to focus on the levels of funding without asking these questions which will become ever more imperative as we move forward.”

(Funder)

“Peace building, the ‘practitioner community’ is an industry that we have grown – where you have multi organisations cross-cutting one another and scrambling for small amounts of money, with a lack of coherence about quality or planning those services better. No one has really grasped that issue. If you moved to proper locality and service delivery planning, you will come up with a better solution. Although many of the organisations will go to the wall.”

(Funder)

“I would say that many organisations have been funded for quite a long time and that makes them somewhat dependent. On the other hand, it’s not good or effective for a group to get one year’s funding as they are constrained in what they can do, therefore it is often better to fund programmes and groups for a longer period. However, this funding is seen by many as simply a repeat prescription and that needs to change.”

(Funder)

“It’s not healthy for an organisation to be dependent – but the funding environment in itself doesn’t help. There is a tendency to constantly return to the same groups and for certain groups to receive multiple layers of funding – which are not counter-dependent on the other.”

(Funder)

3.5.3 Financial Arrangements

Funders recognised that financial support for peace and reconciliation has generally reduced over the past few years. Yet, interviewees were keen to stress yet again, that a significant amount of resources continue to be channelled to peace and reconciliation activities. What is more, each interviewee acknowledged that their respective organisation has a specific role in funding either smaller, locally based groups or larger, regional organisations. Regardless of the size and scope of organisations however, there was a desire to emphasise the point that “funders cannot simply keep funding organisations and programmes that are not delivering.”

“... funded programmes are currently at just under [X million], but that has really been getting cut back by 4 or 5% year on year, which is reflective of the budgets cuts everywhere, at the minute. That is the main factor which is creating pressure for the organisations here who are seeking funding.”

(Funder)

“I think there’s no doubt that money has reduced, but I think there is significant resources on the ground that are going in to help build peace. The difficulty with much of this is separating out what is standard community development, community work, with genuine reconciliation work. This is all about how we define “peacebuilding” as it pretty much covers everything on the spectrum now.”

(Funder)

“[X million] in lots of ways is a significant sum of money, but it must be clear that in no way could it be a substitute for wider EU funding. We see ourselves as having a different niche almost as we try to support smaller groups, if we can give grants that allow groups to fund small projects etc. that may have a greater impact in the long run then we try to do that.”

(Funder)

“We are not doing programme work; we want to target our money where we know it will make a difference. There is nothing wrong with a programmatic approach for bread and butter work, for [our fund], we as directors took the conscious decision that we had to have relevance and we needed to be intervening where we know we can make a difference. We have been in existence for 30 years, and we can’t keep doing the same when things aren’t fundamentally changing.”

(Funder)

3.5.4 Measuring Success

It was apparent that those interviewed, were acutely aware of the fact that evaluating progress, outcomes and outputs has been problematic for a number of groups within the sector. For them, the challenges organisations face was attributed to the contrasting methodologies that are employed to ‘measure success’, and to the fact that there is no single “joined-up approach” about what exactly constitutes peace and reconciliation work and how it should be measured. Yet again, failures of the political realm to create an entity which could articulate a vision and direction, oversee the formulation of policy and the implementation of funding and ensure that each actor is working to the same set of outcomes was a major cause of contention:

“What you find in this absence is that there are organisations who offer relatively small pots of money, to do “peace-building” and in terms of the sum total of this, it is difficult to discern what exactly this is doing, its wider impact.”

(Funder)

“Value for money assessments are employed – you must bear in mind that we are never comparing like for like, but if one group appears that they

would generate a greater body of work for less money. I think that we are going to be seeing more and more that groups with a regional presence and approach will be more likely to receive funding than locally based groups. I think there will be a move away from locally based organisations who are receiving various funding streams, whilst others, particularly outside Belfast are not in receipt of funding.”

(Funder)

“Outputs and outcomes are very different. A number of departments are quite happy to keep doing what they are doing and to measure that activity, what went in, what went out – tick the box. And a lot of that has been perpetuated by wider changes in procedure. The big challenge in all of this, is that you get caught up in funding organisations, rather than funding what difference they are going to make and what they are doing. For me there are 3 questions which should be asked of anything that comes forward; what is it doing, how are you doing it and will it make any difference?”

(Funder)

“We have attached the outcomes model to everything we do at the moment. There are clear measurables in terms of difference occurring, and where difference or impact isn’t occurring, we have a methodology to challenge what is happening and what extraneous factor is actually stopping us from getting the outcome.”

(Funder)

“The Executive have started to outline what it wants in terms of a reconciled society. I suppose the question has to be then, that within each of the arms of government, what are they

contributing to that? there needs to be a cross-cutting approach. However, if you are talking about a sustainable economy, people can get that, but if you are talking about a reconciled society it's a lot more difficult, because, what does that mean?"

(Funder)

"4 T:BUC headings would be too narrow in order to define outcomes and it adds to the confusion as to what community relations work is. Groups would try to fit their intended outcomes in – it takes away from having a better defined vision of what community relations work is. As a funder we would need to have closer working relationships with all groups to see what they are actually doing."

(Funder)

"We have moved away from a programmatic approach to one of targeted interventions. For example, we would use a number of interventions in targeted areas which were hardest hit by the conflict. We will target one or two people who we saw as having leadership potential and we will encourage and support them. What we are saying is, lets identify a few key people in this community and support their development."

(Funder)

3.5.5 The Future

ALL interviewees acknowledged that issues relevant to peace and reconciliation are not "about to disappear" in Northern Ireland and Ireland. In that respect some suggested the need for closer collaboration between funders and a more strategic approach as to how civil society can advance peace and reconciliation with the appropriate support. Three broad themes emerged

from funder responses. As noted above, the absence of any clear leadership on this issue from government was raised:

"We need proper government for everyone, and a clear articulation of the way forward and its priorities, we need to strike a deal on how we are going to address the past, to work out what is needed in order to get peace walls down and the system has to move away from throwing money out and simply hoping that some change will occur."

(Funder)

"There needs to be more discussions. I think it's important that the NI Executive can come up with its own strategies, we are clear about our own strategy, direction and framework – our framework is quite clearly the GFA. Inevitably where some tension may come in, is the types of groups that we fund."

(Funder)

Secondly, it was apparent that better co-ordination between different organisations working in the field of peace and reconciliation is required:

"In terms of policy and practice and what each of us are doing, it would be great to know more. I talk to other funders a lot, because we fund a lot of the same groups and those links are vital. We will ultimately make our own decisions but I believe that this would be more informed if we knew exactly what other funders were doing. It's a small place and a small sector, we try to look at each application on its own merits but there are times when we see applications and we think that this work has been repetitive for a number of years but we have to look at the specific programme to funded and see it as the overall picture."

(Funder)

“I think that some kind of Reconciliation Forum would be very beneficial- we try to stay in touch with what’s happening and we find it a good way of getting this subject out in the open and to allow [...] government to get a real sense of what is happening on the ground.”

(Funder)

“We need to support civil society to be a lot stronger. I think the weak infrastructure between funders – it is a very dispersed sector with regards to the fact that groups have to struggle to get money and they spend a lot of time chasing funding and each funding stream has different application processes, there are different time scales and its surprising that groups have time to do anything else when they are chasing and applying for funding.”

(Funder)

Finally, interviewees suggested that the quality of peace and reconciliation work in civic society should be improved. This includes developing better ways to capture learning and measure progress:

“I think that funders will be focusing more on asking groups to demonstrate that they can secure income from other sources rather than depending solely on one source for their survival.”

(Funder)

“We are facing difficult times but in difficult times you make choices, which should be based on better measuring qualitative and quantitative outcomes.”

(Funder)

“It’s hard to see how the money is filtering down to the community. How do you measure reconciliation? We try to do it in a qualitative way, quite simply we try to go out to the groups that we fund or may potentially fund and that way we get a good sense of the work that is going on. We know that groups may not have a broad scope or base but we get a sense that they are promoting reconciliation.”

(Funder)



3.6 Focus Groups

This section presents the findings from the three focus groups that were conducted with participants who have a wealth of experience of peace and reconciliation work within the voluntary and community sector over the last decade. These group settings made it possible to identify and reach an agreement on emerging themes, to share ideas of good practice, to discuss relationships with funders and to identify areas of mutual concern.

3.6.1 The Value-added of Peace and Reconciliation work in the Community and Voluntary Sector

Participants were asked to self-identify areas of their own work which had been pioneered in the community and voluntary work which they believed had made the biggest contribution to peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. A number of issues emerged from the responses:

First and foremost, the responses revealed that these practitioners focused primarily on qualitative changes in personal and community-level relationships, rather than on any claim to quantitative effectiveness. In that respect, it was clear from the outset that many were suspicious of attempts by funding bodies to assess or measure success based on numerical targets, which were regarded as inappropriate.

Secondly, the funding approach has encouraged multiple small-scale examples of good practice with no correlation to one another in terms of content, participants or geographical/ cultural location, but are nonetheless joined together by an implicit commitment to values and goals. This has implications for both how and what is regarded as 'good practice' and for any quantitative approach to measuring success, but also implies that peace and reconciliation work in Northern Ireland loses its coherence when the values and vision are blurred or unclear at a wider level.

Finally, while it was suggested that projects can pioneer new approaches or identify potential avenues for change,

it was argued that there is no easy or automatic vehicle to upscale or 'roll out' models developed by independent operators across wider society. In a similar vein, it is imperative to note that the best voluntary and community projects were deemed to reflect personal or community entrepreneurship and commitment – ultimately, two factors which are difficult to replicate in a wider context.

What follows is a small selection of responses:

“We focussed on the idea of local development, done locally, but with cross community and cross border link built in to everything. The networking is based on a business community model. And it made an everyday difference.”

(Community Activist)

“We have a project to encourage historical remembering and ethics. It has had huge reach and range – North-South or groups that would never have crossed the door talking. By using a 100-year framework, it gave room for facing more recent issues. There was lots of challenge, and a huge hunger for knowledge. And it addressed other issues like patriarchy but by engaging ordinary people. It is complicating to simple narratives. And excluding this from political decision making is a mistake.”

(Reconciliation Group)

“We have been using Sport as a way to engage young people for 20 years. Sport is a powerful medium to work with people where they are at. The key issue is the need to build relationships of trust and funders trusting you to do the work is critical. But nobody pays for the ‘hidden’ work – the relationship building that is required. There is a real gap with funders not listening to what is happening on the ground.”

(Youth Agency)

“We used a story telling project that had opened up rural areas to talk about terrible secrets in the past. There was some resistance from other story telling organisations that we were coming into their territory. But we had people round the table who wouldn’t normally be –the end of the project was supposed to be the website but there is an obvious need for a second project that creates debate.”

(Community Development Agency)

“We did single-identity work with Women after the flags protest. We brought key women in different communities together. No funder would fund it. It was too much of a risk but we got 10 neighbourhoods talking.”

(Community Worker)

“We used our drama project: Across NI, people sat on in silence after every performance and waited for conversation. We found a power to nurture empathy. And it created other assets like documentaries, workshops in community and schools.”

(Arts Group)

“We work with over 1000 people a year engaged in dialogues that would not take place otherwise. You can see the learning and appreciation in people’s eyes –when something has changed and things can’t be the same again. My frustration is that it hasn’t enabled anything close to enough work to happen - it is still so small.”

(Community Agency)

“We used a whole range of digital creative technologies and people to teach contested history. We were teaching things that are difficult to teach. We hardwired our stuff so it could be taught in geography or history or numeracy and we now have 250 teachers using it. It has even spread to the Lebanon. But local funders would never have funded it.”

(Education Agency)

“Just paying the salaries of Community Relations Officers in Councils made a huge difference. Building foundations across Political Parties and community organisations. Without that basis of trust and communication we could not have done anything.”

(Community activist)

“Our City Partnership is an overarching partnership. We actually built physical space to embed collaboration and relationships between 9 groups. So many people crossed the threshold. A different message other than division.”

(Community Agency)

“Being part of regular Lunchtime discussion events has been crucial for me: Relationships, listening, challenge. Catalyses other decisions and actions.”

(Community Activist)

“It has been a very delicate journey, built on developing trust between adults –issues within a community can jeopardise everything, but in meeting a need, something can happen. We have been working on building shared space with other communities. Out of that we wanted to have an arts/community parade. And 7 times the amount of people across communities turned up together. People wanted to be part of something –the event has grown in strength and now takes an even more challenging route thanks to community agreement reached after 3 years of consultation. This highlighted how complicated it can be when you meet with community representatives, who may have different views to the residents themselves. The question is how do you genuinely show you’re interested in young people and build trust.”

(Youth and Community Agency)

“In our project, we would seek to work with people whose story has not been heard. Other human beings. We collaborated with others in a healing process. The result for me personally was really hearing the hurt in a community caused by people from the community I come from. How can people be heard? - what springs from it. There is a huge risk in giving testimony in public. There is no knowing who is in the room. We are making visible conflict-forced invisibility and it releases other stories.”

(Community Agency)

“We would have been seen as an exclusive organisation. But by opening our premises we took a huge risk, encouraging all beliefs to come. It started with a small grant. But it has changed the understanding of our culture. Others have tried to copy us.”

(Community Activist)

“At the moment we are supporting two local primary schools to come together and collaborate. It is working really well. But because nobody had ever asked them to work together before, it was like they had been operating in different worlds –the overarching policy had made no difference –they needed the invitation and the support. – they have gone from 0 -80mph in no time at all.”

(Community Agency)

“I am proudest of our work with the loyalist bands established through PEACE II extension. That has now rolled out to other areas and I think that there is a positive view of the bands that wasn’t there before. It was about an ‘enabling process’ but much of it has had to remain under the table.”

(Community Agency)



The groups were also asked to identify how this work contributed to wider peace and reconciliation. All members agreed that they saw themselves as contributors to a wider vision. In every case, responses by practitioners focussed on the importance of establishing relationships at a human and community level as a critical element in ensuring the long-run stability of society, more than a specific military or political outcome. Measuring Outcomes appeared to be implicitly shaped in terms of a quality of relating throughout society and 'peace and reconciliation' is implicitly conceived of as a reality primarily visible in the quality of relationships rather than as a political project.

As one participant commented:

"PMs and Presidents sign accords –people build peace. We have achieved a lot but we are victims of our own success.."

While the consistent themes were values and visions, the precise intervention undertaken in each project was inevitably variable. Few, if any, of the projects made direct attempts to intervene to prevent violence, but saw their contribution either as experimenting with new ways of working and thus reducing the potential of issues of contention to escalate or in creating vehicles for sustained co-operation and building sustainable relationships:

"Hope is the antidote to fear. This is hope. Anger needs acknowledged but transformed. Give a language for complexity."

"Global crises need social glue. We are in the business of an alternative and a vehicle for human complexity."

"Peace is about building – it is more political than ever. It has to be built. Trauma is inter-generational."

"Stopping this work will just lead to increased polarisation and segregation. Opportunities have to be created to meet and engage."

"Our outreach work has created understanding. Without that there are serious difficulties ahead. Politicians don't see the risks."

"The phrase 'being a catalyst' resonates"

"Calm just didn't happen- it takes and took time, effort, communication."

"Young people will travel to our shared youth club, but as an agency our staff don't have the channels to find the people (paramilitaries) threatening young people to negotiate with them. So we can have the clubs, but we can't end the threats"

3.6.2 The Wider Political and Policy Context

Almost all of the participants commented on the importance of good political leadership and partnership for peace and reconciliation. In particular, participants emphasized the need for collaboration between policy makers and community organisations in both learning and delivering change:

“The Executive needs to pick this work up. If resourced it can prevent violence.”

“Collaborative engagement of government and community is critical.”

“Statutory sector is critical. Everything else is discretionary. Our society needs community involvement as critical to democracy.”

At the same time, there was significant concern in all of the focus groups about the current state of political relationships in Northern Ireland and about the commitment, or lack of it, within the political realm to promote inter-community reconciliation. In the focus groups this took the form of a general concern about polarization between communities in recent years AND a concern that politicians under devolution regarded the community and voluntary sector, and in particular the non-partisan elements of civil society, as a hostile force without any popular mandate:

“We were the challenge to politics and they don’t want it. Politicians see us in opposition to them – although we don’t”

“Government is more interested in containment, not transforming. In the end they are cynical, practical and pragmatic”.

“There are some information flows between bodies and political system, but, in truth the latter won’t take the risks.”

“Largely the door had been slammed by government to the voluntary sector.”

(Community Agency)

The absence of clarity and coherence around the vision and values, the goals of wider policy frameworks, the role of statutory bodies and the expectations of voluntary and community organisations within reconciliation was a consistent themes throughout the 3 focus groups. Participants also identified specific concerns that the current policy framework for addressing community relations issues (T:BUC) was “a weak vehicle for providing coherent direction”, in the face of contradictory signals from government:

“T:BUC is very weak – results are calculated in terms of bums on seats.”

“The T:BUC engagement forum is hopeless – we have given advice countless times on how to improve things, but nothing changes. They take it back and there is no change in policy. The purpose of the forum is to make it look like something is happening.”

“Paramilitaries are still carrying on!! Some young people still being recruited. Some of the ex-combatant groups are legitimate and some are not.”

While there was widespread agreement that the policy priority given to addressing reconciliation at community level had reduced sharply, there was unanimous agreement amongst all participants that the issue of reconciliation in Northern Ireland remained unresolved. More importantly however, was the perception that the scale of the challenge of building a shared society remains significantly underestimated:

“We’re only scraping the surface.”

The absence of consistent vision or values around reconciliation in politics in Northern Ireland is a significant challenge to organisations who look for resources from the political or statutory system. Underlying this uncertainty is an unresolved question of expectations: Are the community and voluntary sector expected to ‘deliver’ a vision which has its apex and authority in political co-operation, or are they expected to contribute, with politicians, to the emergence of a shared vision of reconciliation through licensed experiment and risk-taking towards a shared but still uncertain goal? As one focus group member commented:

“Politicians are not the same. I remember after the GFA some people thought we had arrived. But it was about process not product. A general misunderstanding that this is about product.”

“Applications are not framed around reconciliation any more. They don’t value the outcomes”.

“Community and Voluntary sector took the risks for reconciliation and the wider civil service don’t want to know that.”

As a result, of the issues detailed above, many conveyed their confusion and concern about specific out-workings of political decision-making around reconciliation.

“Under United Youth, Good Relations is supposed to be a key element. But the young people also have severe mental health issues, the fact that across divides they may be threatened by paramilitaries – shared threat from different paramilitaries. So it may be that Good Relations means dealing with a lot of the other issues first.”

(Youth and Community Agency)

“Community Relations work has allowed itself to be painted as addressing the past rather than constructing the future. Move on. Reframing and repositioning is key.”

“Some of the funding has been ruthlessly directed to political clients, not to good work.”

“The need to constantly reinvent what you do to get funding cripples and crucifies you. E.g. you need to respond to current events like Brexit, ends up with funders asking stupid questions about relevance.”

Moreover, whilst the majority supported the concept of mainstreaming, a large majority believed that statutory bodies did not acknowledge the skills of people in the voluntary sector which could not be reproduced “like widgets”:

“Statutory bodies (e.g. councils) don’t have the reach and will end up just using tendering out to any group as long as it is for less money. Or they take ideas that have worked in communities and over-egg them.”

“In some cases mainstreaming might make things worse!”

This issue of mainstreaming was a recurring theme through much of the discussion across focus groups, but without much commentary of what this might look like in practice. There was an inferred prevailing notion that it involved statutory agencies taking on the work that had been piloted in the voluntary sector, in order for it to be taken to scale. Whilst this is one potential model, there may be others for consideration. Mainstreaming could also mean that the objectives and methodologies of the work become part and parcel of public priorities, with delivery being undertaken by public bodies, voluntary sector groups and other relevant stakeholders. This will of course require considerable vision and cohesion across a range of government policies. The evidence within this study may suggest that the necessary relationships, commitment and planning are not yet in place to make this a realistic prospect in the short term.

3.7 Changing Funding Environment and relationships with funding agencies

In sum, it would appear that participants feel that they (the voluntary and community sector) are striving towards a vision of reconciliation, based on a set of values which can no longer be assumed in the changing political environment, yet where no new priorities for social and political relationships have been identified. In addition to changing public priorities, the advent of austerity has restricted the availability of funding in many areas. This was reflected in many of the observations around funding and relationships with and between funding.

3.7.1 Access to financial support

All focus group participants identified a reduction in the availability of financial support to voluntary and community organisations. Most people accepted that some of this was inevitable in the financial climate, but indicated that there did not appear to be any pattern or planning to the approach:

“When there was high levels of violence, money was thrown at our work. Now you have TBUC summer camps.” (Interface agency)

“It is much more difficult now to find money to work with young people at risk of sliding into self-harm and other forms of violence. Many of the young people we work with would have anger management issues, self-harming and a traumatised environment –we find it harder and harder to get money because they are not breaking windows.”

(Youth Agency)

3.7.2 Relationships with Public Sector Funding Bodies

Many also felt that there is a significant ‘culture gap’ between funders and community organisations.

“Statutory Agencies need to adjust how they fund –one example –if you exceed your targets with Big Lottery, they say well done. One statutory agency said, if we pay you this much and you have twice the targets we would only give you half the money!”

(Community Agency)

“This work is very much valued by parents, children and young people - my impression is it’s not valued by the funders as it could be. There is a disconnect between outside and inside statutory agencies.”

(Youth Agency)

“The public sector don’t seem to understand there is no big ‘pay off’ in the voluntary sector if you lose your job–you have to give someone a letter, that’s it.

In particular, many participants identified what they felt was a rising demand to respond to administrative and audit requests as a significant barrier to effective functioning.:

“Even Councils are struggling with administration. Timescales are becoming absurd. No group could survive it.”

“The level of audit with Good relations programmes seems much greater than other audit. There is no trust.”

“Administration kills innovation. Resilience in new organisations is not enough. Old organisations dominate with same old projects.”

3.7.3 Models of good practice in funding

In general, the participants in the focus groups had a very clear idea of what they understood by ‘good relationships’ with funding organisations. At a general level, participants were content to work with a variety of funders but looked for funding bodies who liaised closely with each other and with the projects being funded:

“The concept of jigsaw funding has been critical to us and creating a ‘circle of learning’ - we worked with 4 groups who had never come together, one left the other 3 come together once a month – and it only took a small amount of money”

(Community Agency)

“We need funders that actually care. Funders needs to have a relationship too.”

A number of participants suggested that partnership with funders had been lost in recent years:

“The idea as funders being partners has largely gone. Some questions were posed as to who are the new funders? How can we shape the statutory policy to shape what we need? Youthwork funders in particular have to be more supportive of working in the way other funders do (to allow joined up approaches).”

(Interface Agency)

“Funders don’t seem to communicate with each other.”

(Community Agency)

“Funding has divided groups and didn’t promote partnerships”

(Youth Agency)

In addition to close learning partnerships, participants valued certain qualities above all:

1. independence from political orthodoxy
2. a willingness to support exploration
3. The ability to experiment and;
4. a degree of reliable competence in administration:

“We need independent funding; funding that funds challenge, change and experiment, not delivery.”

“Trust and professionalism in a funder can be undervalued. Basic competence is important”

“It is good to see deeper, holistic approach in funders – we have to have somebody looking at root causes.”

Participants acknowledged that they had enjoyed positive relationships with funders over many years. Particular partners whose practice was held to be supportive and enabling were identified:

“Had it not been for IFI as a flexible, listening funder and a critical friend we wouldn’t have made it through the loss of government money. It brought our work to a new level. We felt that the established funding had created a situation where we were just parachuted in at a particular phase of a young person’s development, but would not be there as things moved on”

(Youth Agency)

“The IFI funding we received enabled us to renegotiate how we worked and to focus more on changing systems not just doing programmes. The reality however is there are no longer as many organisations left on the ground to deliver this work. The attempt to help policy see these realities and develop and deliver practice on the ground has led to some burn out across the sector as a whole.”

(Youth Agency)

“DFA were always very good: small pots but reduced red tape.”

“You can report to an agency like Big Lottery, but the statutory agencies will never see them. Government policy is not informed by good practice from voluntary sector.”

(Youth Agency)

“The impact of IFI funding has been positive – the difference it made in working with all the stakeholders. Likewise parents will often reject the paramilitary influence in their communities, stating ‘why couldn’t we have had this when we were young’ (in reference to a programme they were on). Parents are able to disconnect their own prejudice for the good of their children with a future focus.”

(Youth Agency)

“Our local Good Relations programme tried to be very flexible and engaged”

“Over the years [P and R funders] were very good, although they have become very controlled and risk averse now.”

3.7.4 Poor Funding Practice

In general participants defined poor or bad funding practice as the unwillingness to take political and social risks, bad administrative practice and the tendency to deliver/work within short term frameworks. The following comments give a flavour of some of the responses:

“If we are allowed to speak truth to power then we can do something. But I feel like we will be punished if we speak out of turn.”

“Risk now depends on bodies from outside Northern Ireland giving the money. Public money seems wrapped up in administrative demands.”

“TEO took 12 months to reply to applications – if another agency like CRC performed like that there’d be hell to pay. Government and Statutory Agencies don’t have to worry about tomorrow, we do”

(Interface Agency)

“The Central Good Relations Unit is not fit for purpose in either administrative or policy terms. And people are afraid to speak out”

(Community Agency)

“Core resources are not as accessible as they once were. CRC’s independence has been restrained and that has not been good.”



3.7.5 'Bottom up' Practice and 'Top down' Funding?

Although the agencies represented in the focus groups identified a shortage of resources, there was a widespread acceptance that refusing, or exiting from, directive statutory funding could sometimes bring significant advantages for agencies and their practice.

“To be honest, the quality of our work improved after government funding ended. The DFA were much more flexible and we can now decide what we want to prioritise and then look for funding. For us that means that the focus on Peace and Reconciliation is assured and it’s not too over-designed by the needs of the funder.

(Youth Agency)

“Staying true to organisational aims and objectives is a big challenge.”

“Independence from bean counting has improved our practice.”

(Youth Agency)

“When the DENI Core money went, there was a vacuum until CRED came along. There was a push back by government against external agencies supporting school. But that is beginning to change as schools and others realise the need for specific expertise.”

(Youth Agency)

“We have been on a journey from the early 1980s in thinking about how we do peace work. The advent of DENI core funding allowed us entry into more schools and it helped keep the work on their agenda. But it was always shoe-horned in with a lot of numbers. DENI never really listened to the feedback they were given and we often got pushed back when we wanted to push the boundaries of the work.

(Youth agency)

3.7.6 Measuring Change in peace and reconciliation

When asked about measuring change, it was striking that participants in the focus groups measured success at the level of their direct project responsibility and reach - that is among participants and across their programme activities.

In general terms, community and voluntary groups see themselves as participating in change at a wider level and contributing to that change, but believe that responsibility for overall change lies in politics and with funding bodies.

All could point to substantive evidence of change which had happened as a result of their work, and were generally content to use both quantitative and qualitative measures:

“We have so many success stories of young people having been on programmes and then successfully challenging other young people in their peer groups about sectarian attitudes.”

(Youth agency)

“We transformed our provision to have a mixed youth club which wasn’t possible even 5 years ago. Sometimes even our own staff don’t realise how special this is and funders too. The group met a rep from the Education Authority regarding getting into their area action plan, but this would mean some other group would lose out and the best we might get might be 6 hours of youth work a week.”

(Youth Agency)

Finding solutions to the issues of measuring success where beyond the remit and aim of the focus group sessions. Nonetheless, participants were keen to outline what they see as prominent issues which have the capacity to stifle progress;

“Often statutory services don’t get the level of change that is involved and how a small step is a big change -trying to convince them that Principals reaching out for help across the divide is a massive transition and change is not easy.”

(Youth Agency)

“One of the biggest problems with youth has been a lack of longitudinal studies –getting the whole range is difficult.”

(Youth Agency)

“Movement towards Outcomes based accountability is potentially problematic. It is very general and does not really tell us what is expected of us”

(Community Agency)

“Accountability/measurability is very bad for a developmental project. So it is framed in risk-averse administrative terms. We need learning, including failure, and a focus on lessons for the future in our work. The Civil service is very strong in funding” [intimating that civil servants don’t have to look for salary costs etc.]

(Community Agency)

3.7.7 Priorities for the future of peace and reconciliation funding

The discussions in the focus groups ranged over a wide range of topics. Among the many avenues of conversation a number of specific suggestions also emerged for improving the context of funding for peace and reconciliation in the eyes of the participants. Some of these are reproduced for the record below:

“Invest in people –we need an independent Reconciliation and Development Fund.”

“Could we establish a Council of Elders not dependent on political funders.”

“Given the limits of statutory funders we need discretionary funders to act in a strategic way. That means close co-ordination and published values and vision for reconciliation”

“Remember, this is art, not science! That means risk, creativity and active learning from failure not just condemning it”

“There is a need to train the trainers –funders won’t fund something that’s already been done.”

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Summary of Main Findings

4.1.1 The Ambiguity of Reconciliation

This project set out to establish how changes in the political environment and availability of financial resources have impacted on voluntary and community based peace and reconciliation activity in Northern Ireland and Ireland over the past decade. There was a prevailing consensus amongst the broad range of participants who engaged in the various aspects of this study, that reconciliation has NOT yet been achieved in Northern Ireland and Ireland.

It is apparent that this was less the result of a single political decision but of a cumulative sense of uncertainty reflected in a series of indicators over a number of years around politics, policy and resource allocation. Many practitioners appear to continue to operate on the assumption that reconciliation remains essentially defined by the issues identified by Bloomfield (Finding a way to live that permits a vision of the future, rebuilding relationships, coming to terms with past acts and enemies, agreed long-term processes of deep change and acknowledging, remembering, and learning from the past), and there was a considerable degree of consensus among respondents that these were not being rigorously applied in determining resource allocation or policy direction.

Although not necessarily citing Hamber & Kelly's (2004) definition, respondents expressed their own peace and reconciliation priorities in terms consistent with that study (Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society, acknowledging and dealing with the past, building positive relationships, significant cultural and attitudinal change and substantial social, economic and political change). They acknowledged that these were often the issues on which there had been limited progress in Northern Ireland in recent years. Instead of what Galtung called a 'positive' notion of peace, the absence of violence and the existence of a cross-party executive seem to be providing the ceiling of ambition rather than the floor for further change.

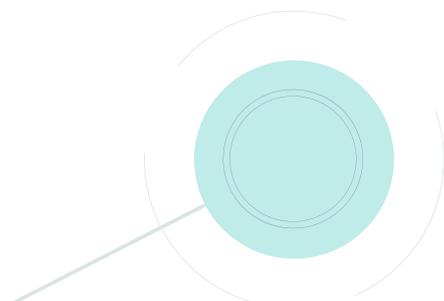
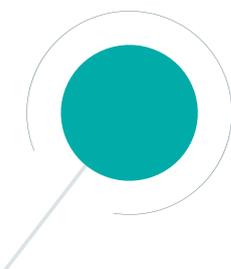
4.1.2 The danger of 'lost' learning

Most respondents reported a reduction in available resources for peace and reconciliation work, recognising in part that this was the inevitable result of the reduced international importance of Northern Ireland/Ireland and to be seen against the background of general austerity across the voluntary sector. There was, however, concern that innovative work could be abandoned or discarded before it had been fully adopted as normative, mainstream practice.

4.1.3 Is Policy serving us well?

There was uncertainty among practitioners about the priorities and direction of the Northern Ireland Executive's T:BUC strategy. While it is recognised that T:BUC is the umbrella for policy in Northern Ireland, some argued that it lacks internal consistency and has an overly top-down model of change. More worryingly some targets appear to be treated by practitioners as implausible (peace walls) or somewhat outdated (summer camps).

The respondents in this study expressed a range of responses to their own uncertainty. A number were optimistic that the reduction in public funding in Northern Ireland would result in less bureaucratic management and a greater emphasis on creative and professional innovation. Some remained hopeful that the broader project of reconciliation remained viable, if increasingly intergenerational. Other less positive responses varied from confusion over perceptions of mixed political messages, some despondency over the future of all work to promote peace and reconciliation, irritation over short-term funding cycles to a deeper cynicism about the priority of sharing, integration or prioritising the stated goals of the peace process such as dealing with the past, dissolving paramilitary organisations or removing interface barriers.



4.1.4 Disparity across funding streams

Practitioners made distinctions between specific funders in their responses. In general, those funds which were perceived as flexible and building good relationships between funders and practitioners were praised as 'well-managed'. Two issues dominated criticism of other funders: at times, the EU PEACE programme was perceived as becoming closed to voluntary sector activity and overly bureaucratic in its demands. Some Northern Ireland government programmes were criticised as increasingly top-down and politicised. The sharpest, but repeated, criticism was made of NI Executive direct-funding programmes for community relations which were variously described as 'incompetent' and 'not fit for purpose'.

4.1.5 What level of change is expected and how is it measured?

Some practitioners voiced concern about a mismatch between the desire to deliver systemic change with short term project capacity. This meant that that work for change developed within projects could be both unrecognised in terms of its achievements, effort and value and dismissed as inadequate for the broader purpose of social change. Some funders reflected that the results of investing many millions of pounds, euros and dollars into voluntary and community activity were unsatisfactory in terms of wider outcomes. At the present, there is no shared understanding of where the blame for this predicament lies.

In this uncertain context, both practitioners and funders in this study reflected a broad sense that the frameworks for evaluating progress remain unsatisfactory. While practitioners pointed to progress within their projects, they were somewhat anxious about the trend towards Outcomes-based Accountability (OBA), while theoretically welcome, would, in practice, be used to judge reasonable project outcomes against 'population' targets that could only be attainable where government, private and academic resources were also being applied to achieve the goals. For example: the removal of peacewalls will only be achieved through consistent inter-agency co-

operation in which policing, council, housing regeneration, education and infrastructure would be critical partners to community effort. In its absence, and the absence of political commitments to resolve cultural and issues relating to paramilitarism and the past, projects could and would evidence good internal work. They were however unlikely to 'achieve' or 'deliver' the removal of a peace-wall single-handedly.

4.2 Some Consequences

4.2.1 Reconciliation Practice has not fully moved from the margins to the middle

In a context of uncertainty about the political commitment to reconciliation, reductions in funding for community-based peace and reconciliation work runs a significant risks. Most of the creative and innovative capacity for addressing the dilemmas of violence, developed over decades, continues to lie within organisations funded within the third sector, or in those working closely with the third sector in public bodies. Ending explicit public support for reconciliation at community level without any planning for wider sustainability is only desirable IF it is presumed that reconciliation in Northern Ireland and Ireland can now be taken as completed and integrated into everyday reality (in the DNA of society as it were) and 'mainstreamed' into the practices of key institutions. This study suggests that while the language of reconciliation remains ubiquitous across Northern Ireland, the evidence of a commitment to deliver is weakening. What is understood by mainstreaming needs further exploration.

John Paul Lederach suggests that longer term financial sustainability in peace and reconciliation work depends either on governments and philanthropy providing grant-aid or on a combination of mainstreaming, volunteering through local initiatives and 'fee for service'. Moving from grants towards this type of economy could be highly desirable but it can only happen with political support. This study suggests that strategic resource planning for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and Ireland remains uncertain. Many respondents to this study believe that the

withdrawal of grants is not being replaced by systematic mainstreaming (and often shows little confidence in the capacity of the public sector to implement change in a meaningful way), that inter-community local volunteering is not increasing sufficiently and that tendered, fee for service, work is not driven by strategic resource planning. This pattern implies a presumption either that there is public indifference/hostility to unachieved reconciliation goals on the grounds that they are undesirable and/or unnecessary or that lack of attention is leading to unintended decay.

4.2.2 Reconciliation is a multi-sector and multi-level task

Project Funding alone cannot ‘deliver’ social change on the scale anticipated by the goals of peace and reconciliation in a society divided as deeply as Northern Ireland. Systemic change will require an all-system effort. If that is not forthcoming, there is a risk that money will be expended on projects which are then judged a failure because their qualitative learning is considered to be of limited quantitative value.

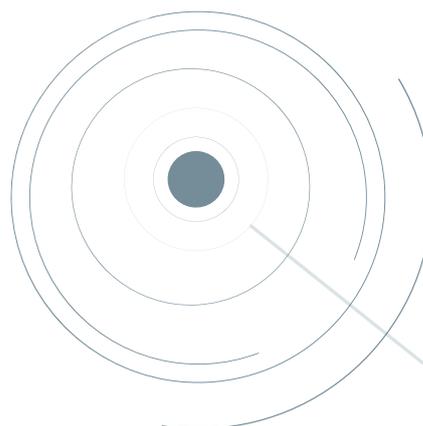
4.2.3 Can you speak truth to power?

The study evidences some gaps in perception between political leadership and organisations funded for peace and reconciliation work. For example, some practitioners felt that there had been a retraction from inter-community activity in politics but which could not be challenged in public without risk of reduced funding. Developing an appropriate culture of critical engagement between community/voluntary and political leadership is an important priority, including clarity on the extent to which the voluntary sector is a critical partner in developing shared goals and/or the extent to which it is seen as a delivery agent of outputs established by government or other partners. The original role and purpose of the Civic Forum outlined in the Belfast Agreement, may have played a significant role in this regard.

4.2.4 Measuring what we value or valuing what we measure?

Practitioners complained of a specific and unnecessary emphasis on financial regulation within peace and reconciliation work and a relative disinterest in project goals and policy outcomes. Making sure that these are aligned is a critical element in any value for money assessment.

As Outcomes-Based Accountability (OBA) is extended across Northern Ireland, it will become critical both to integrate peace and reconciliation objectives and to ensure that evaluation and monitoring are fit for purpose. Currently, Years of ‘thousands of flowers blooming’ and changing frameworks for evaluation has led to cynicism about peace and reconciliation projects. While it is evident from this study that some of the organisations and people involved in this work have made and continue to make heroic efforts on behalf of a shared society, it is also clear that they are vulnerable to a variety of easy criticisms in the absence of clear reporting structures. Among the most toxic are allegations that the lack of definition has allowed such a variety of practice, that the peace and reconciliation element of funding is no longer evident. Others maintain that what counts as peace and reconciliation is driven by the political priorities of leaders who use the term to disguise special interests and nepotism, while others maintain that the existence of money has created a culture driven by material desire rather than commitment to purpose. It is in the interests of the peace and reconciliation sector to demand clarity from funders about this.



4.3 Where to Next? Some Indicative Recommendations

Twenty years after the Good Friday Agreement, continuing progress on peace and reconciliation will depend, in part, on renewed attention to a number of fundamental issues.

4.3.1 Develop a Shared Understanding of Reconciliation

If peace and reconciliation work is to prosper at a societal level, there is a need for renewed political and systemic clarity in relation to:

- the definition of reconciliation being applied and measured in public policy;
- the identification of concrete priorities for community based reconciliation; separate from associated work such as Fresh Start; and
- the commitment of long term resources to achieving these agreed reconciliation goals.

The issue of definition was examined most effectively in the work of Brandon Hamber and Grainne Kelly and it is suggested that their five priorities for reconciliation should be confirmed. Community-based work for reconciliation should therefore continue to address:

- Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society;
- Acknowledging and dealing with the past;
- Building positive relationships;
- Significant cultural and attitudinal change; and
- Substantial social, economic and political change.

This definition could be reconfirmed by all parties to the Agreement process, including both governments and the Northern Ireland Executive, and applied to shape outcomes and priorities by international, philanthropic and other funders.

4.3.2 Develop a cohesive and fair funding structure for Reconciliation

Some practical out workings of a cohesive funding structure could include:

- Establishing a common framework for ensuring that funding is distributed on a coordinated and consistent basis, ensuring that both merit and political independence are protected;
- Establishing a basis for statutory and non-statutory funders to meet, perhaps within an ad hoc Funders Forum, to share learning and challenges and agree future directions;
- Funding bodies or streams that do not currently name peace and reconciliation or inter-community cohesion as an explicit priority, including both government department based schemes and those distributed by non-departmental bodies, could be encouraged to revise their criteria to ensure that this issue is realised amongst their other priorities; and
- Given the important role of international bodies in supporting peace and reconciliation in the past, some study of the implications of reductions in international support for reconciliation should be undertaken.

4.3.3 Promote a values based framework for Reconciliation work

Reconciliation is measured by change in the quality of relationships as well as an end to active violence. As a consequence, it remains potentially nebulous and is therefore highly susceptible to manipulation and obfuscation by political and other interests, with consequences for the allocation of funding .

Work carried out in the 1990s identified Fairness and Equity (Equity), the need to accommodate and permit difference (Diversity) and issues of Trust, Inclusion and Pluralism (Interdependence) as inter-connected core values which characterise reconciliation work. A renewed Equity-Diversity-Interdependence framework might allow for a variety of approaches, enabling more consistent monitoring and evidence-gathering while ensuring that



the core values of reconciliation work are protected. Among the practical measurable which might emerge are:

- Visible changes in the life-chances and expectations of children and young people in relation to hostility and separation.
- Evidence that neighbourhoods are becoming safe as places for everyone to work, live and play, including eliminating the requirement for separation barriers as a means of providing safety.
- Evidence of local and regional agreement on cultural and symbolic issues which cause contention and the development of concrete agreements on how to resolve the complex issues of past violence and its legacy
- An end to paramilitary activity and the transformation of community development to inclusion in all communities
- A public funding model which explicitly prefers sharing over separation in prioritising public spending. Capital and Resource projects symbolising ‘a shared future despite a divided past’- and therefore evidencing that activities and relationships are designed to, and succeed in, bringing people into partnership and co-operation where this was previously unlikely or unthinkable- should be unambiguously preferred for investment over projects which do not or cannot achieve this. This priority could be a commitment over a longer period, integrated into planning and monitoring across government and communities.

4.3.4 Promote shared accountability and learning

The question of measurement and public scrutiny for measurement is important. In general practitioners were keen that the ownership of progress in reconciliation was widely shared and suggested that independent mechanisms for measuring change, including both qualitative into quantitative indicators should be open to regular public scrutiny. Furthermore, they believed that politics in Northern Ireland should be accountable to a shared understanding of reconciliation rather than the other way around, as is the case at present. The Peace Monitoring Report pioneered by CRC should be funded to be independent on a ten year basis and subject to formal response from the executive and debate in the Assembly. Furthermore it should be extended to include information on best practice in the voluntary and community sector and progress towards mainstreaming by public bodies and Government Departments.

Many organisations reported that reductions on funding and uncertainty over outcomes, definitions and commitment had the consequence that they were obliged to prioritise organisational survival over learning and policy advocacy. Recent funding rounds were felt to be affected by poor administration, political favouritism and/or fashions in funding which varied among funders. Respondents also clearly favoured funding focussed on fewer projects funded over a longer period of time.

If voluntary and community projects are to contribute to wider social change three critical challenges require attention:

1. Clear pathways should be identified to enable qualitative learning from individual projects to impact on mainstream practice (eg in Education or Community Development) at a quantitative level. Funded projects could have an identified mainstream partner who is also obliged to illustrate how projects have impacted on their wider policy approach.

2. Reconciliation describes a creative activity seeking to make possible what has previously been thought of as impossible in the face of violence and hostility. No reconciliation strategy can succeed without the risk of failure. Paradoxically, funding which can succeed in making high-level change must therefore plan for, and even welcome, failures at the project level. Creativity could be protected as a specific funding stream where success is explicitly measured by the extent of progress in learning rather than the delivery of less important numerical targets for activity.
3. There is a continuing need to ensure that participation is broadly based. This specifically does NOT mean that all money goes to the interface or to any single sector, but, rather, implies the widest possible participation in reconciliation work.

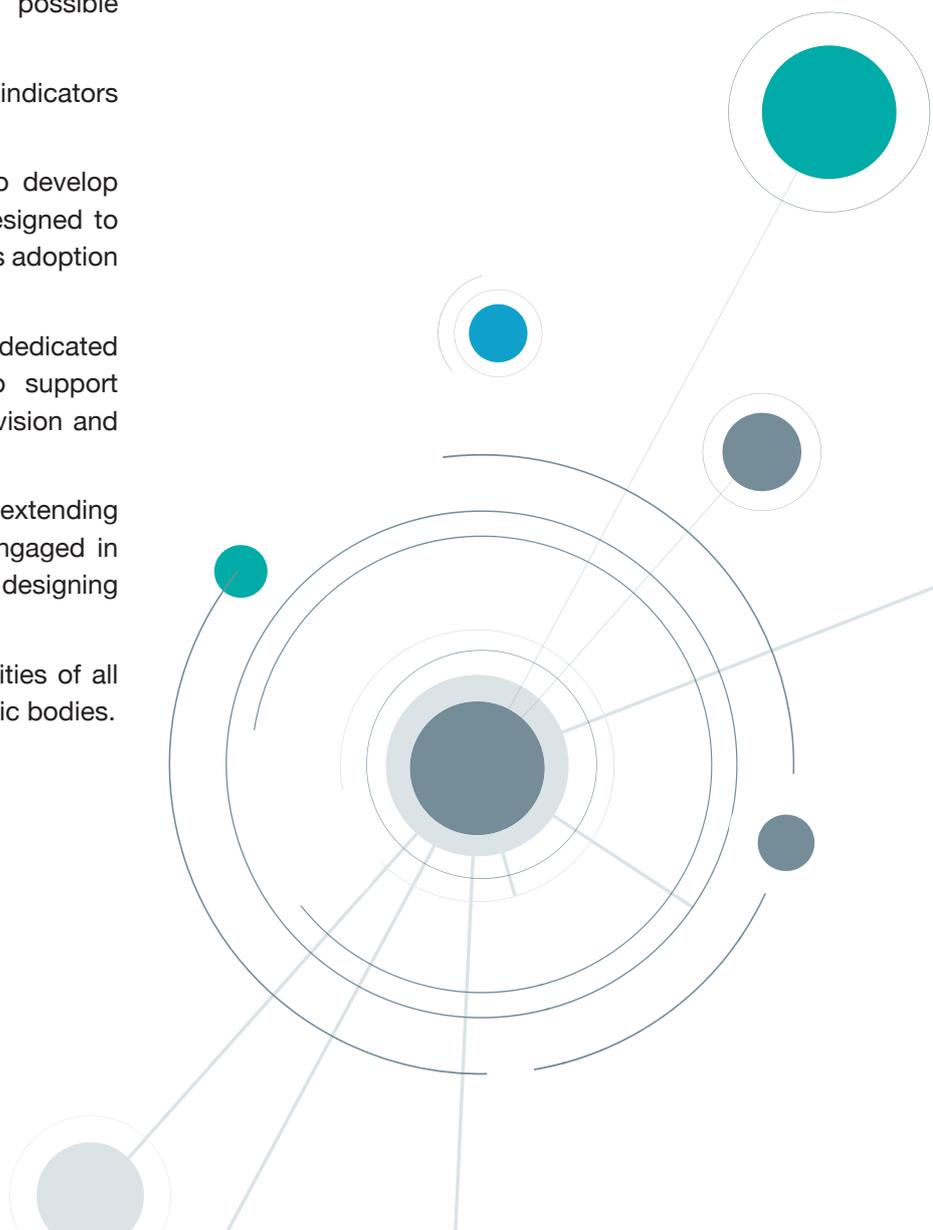
Arising from these issues, performance indicators could include:

- Ensuring that funded projects designed to develop innovative models of good practice are designed to include clear post-project pathways towards adoption within mainstream practice.
- Establishing a 'Risk and Learning Fund' dedicated to experiment, research and learning to support innovation and change from the known (division and antipathy) to the unknown (reconciliation)
- Supporting democratic participation through extending the number of people and communities engaged in examining both the legacy of the past and designing and leading change in the future.

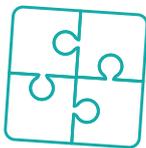
This framework could shape the funding priorities of all funders, including international and philanthropic bodies.

4.3.5 Review current policy provision

Government in Northern Ireland might consider undertaking a half-way review of T:BUC including consultation to ensure that funding is directed to secure sustainability of the infrastructure that has been established at a local level and sustains the capacity of individuals and organisations working to build good relations across society'. Respondents in this project also suggested that consideration be given to creating an oversight or Ombudsman function in relation to funding issues, capable, inter alia, of investigating fraud or misuse of funds, arbitrating issues of accountability and ensuring transparency in distribution.



**Reconciliation has not yet been achieved.
We recommend the following:**



**Develop a shared understanding
of reconciliation**



**Put reconciliation at the centre
of public policy and practice**



**Develop a fair and standardised
system for managing funds**



**Make reconciliation work a
shared task across sectors and
at every level of society**



**Evaluate and share the learning
across service provision**



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6 Appendix

Peace Funding Questionnaire

Dear Recipient,
 Corrymeela, in association with the Ulster University and the Understanding Conflict Trust, are conducting a small scale study to examine the changing funding environment and its impact on peace and reconciliation work in Northern Ireland and the border regions, over the period 2007-2017.

Given your experience of the subject matter, we would appreciate your time and co-operation in completing this short, confidential survey. The survey should not take longer than 10 minutes to complete. You will be asked a series of general questions about your organisation and its activities. It is anticipated that the outcomes of the study will inform the current debate surrounding future funding practices.

If you have any further questions, please contact us.
 Dr Duncan Morrow dj.morrow@ulster.ac.uk
 Dr Lisa Faulkner-Byrne lisaf24@hotmail.com
 Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey.

Peace and Reconciliation Funding Your Organisation

1. Could you describe your organisation and the current focus of your work?

2. Could you list 3 areas of your work which you define as 'peace and reconciliation' work?

3. What percentage of your organisation's work is currently focused on peace and reconciliation work?

- 76% to 100%
- 51% to 75%
- 26% to 50%
- 0 to 25%

*** 4. Would you say that your organisation is involved in more or less peace and reconciliation work in 2017 than it was in 2007?**

- More
- Less
- About the same
- Can you explain your answer?

*** 5. Thinking about specific peace and reconciliation work within your organisation, is it mainly focused on:**

- The Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist (PUL) community
- The Catholic, Nationalist, Republican (CNR) community
- Both communities
- Other Communities
- All of the above

*** 6. Thinking specifically about peace and reconciliation work, which council areas has this included?**

- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
- Ards and North Down Borough Council
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
- Belfast City Council
- Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
- Derry City and Strabane District Council - Derry Office
- Fermanagh and Omagh District Council - Enniskillen Office
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- Mid Ulster District Council - Dungannon
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
- Border Counties

7. Who has funded the peace and reconciliation work within your organisation over the last 10 years?

- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- International Fund for Ireland (IFI)
- EU Peace Programmes
- NI Executive (including CRC Core Funding and Small Grants)
- District / City Councils
- Trusts (e.g. Rowntree)

- Philanthropic Organisations (e.g. Atlantic Philanthropies)
- Other (please specify)

*** 8. Over the period 2007-2017 has the amount of funding for peace and reconciliation work within your organisation:**

- Increased
- Decreased
- Remained the same
- Unsure

Please explain your answer

9. Has your organisation been affected in any of the following ways by changes to the funding around peace and reconciliation work?

- Not applicable
- Programmes have finished
- We no longer have specific peace and reconciliation work-streams
- Staff morale has been affected
- A reduction in staff working hours
- Staff have been made redundant
- We have increased collaboration and networks with other groups
- We have developed new approaches to peace and reconciliation work

Other (please specify)

*** 10. Have any changes to the funding around peace and reconciliation work affected the people that you engage with?**

- Not applicable
- This has not affected the people we engage with
- This has negatively affected the people we engage with
- I am unsure of any effect on the people we engage with
- Other ...

Please explain your answer

11. Has your peace and reconciliation work been evaluated by funders?

- yes

- no
- some of the work has been evaluated

*** 12. Do you think that evaluations for funders improves your practice?**

- yes
- no
- unsure

Please explain your answer

*** 13. Could you list 3 main achievements of your peace and reconciliation work over the period 2007-2017?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

*** 14. Will you continue to seek funding for peace and reconciliation work?**

- yes
- no
- unsure

Please explain your answer

*** 15. Do you believe that it will become increasingly challenging to secure funding for peace and reconciliation work?**

- yes
- no
- unsure

Please explain your answer

*** 16. What are the 3 main issues that need to be addressed by peace and reconciliation work in 2017?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

17. Thank you for your time in completing this survey. If you have any final comments please add them below.

7 Glossary of Acronyms

CCRU	Central Community Relations Unit
CNR	Catholic Nationalist Republican
CRED	Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (Policy of DENI)
DENI	Department of Education Northern Ireland
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Ireland)
DSD	Department for Social Development (now incorporated into the Department for Communities)
GFA	Good Friday /Belfast Agreement
IFI	International Fund for Ireland
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
OBA	Outcomes Based Accountability
OFMdFM	Office of the First and deputy First Minister (now the Executive Office)
PEACE	Special European Union Programmes for Peace and Reconciliation (I,II,III, IV)
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
PUL	Protestant Unionist Loyalist
SEUPB	Special European Union Programmes Body
T:BUC	Together: Building a United Community
TEO	The Executive Office
TRC	Truth & Reconciliation Commission (South Africa)



8 About the Authors

Prof Duncan Morrow is a Lecturer in Politics with Ulster University, where he has published widely in the fields of conflict resolution, Northern Ireland politics and the relationship between religion and politics. He is currently the Director of Community Engagement at the University, developing relationships with groups and organisations across the community.

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