

# Funding Peace

## Summary Report

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

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# Research 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:

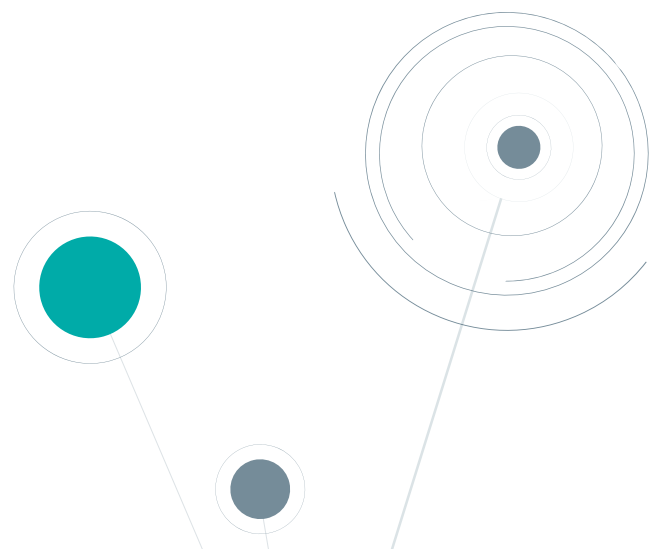
- A desk based analysis of policy and funding frameworks for peace and reconciliation;
- In-depth interviews with key voluntary and community sector practitioners in a variety of sectors;
- Focus groups held in different venues across Northern Ireland drawing together key practitioners in inter-community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



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**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**