

## 7: Further Considerations

Outside of the discussions surrounding the impact of PEACE II a number of issues were raised concerning sustainability, bureaucracy and potential developments for any future funding programmes. Although this was beyond the immediate remit of the research it is desirable to include a summary of some of the more dominant issues that were raised during the interviews. On the issue of sustainability there were a number of issues raised across all three areas about how the recipients of PEACE II funding may sustain and develop their projects in the future. It perhaps comes as no surprise that the main concern was the fear of losing paid posts which have been funded through PEACE II (as has been demonstrated throughout this research a significant numbers of posts have been directly funded under PEACE II). The respondents believe that the loss of staff has potentially a serious impact, especially within smaller organisations, where staff knowledge and contacts are essential to the survival of the project.

From a great deal of comments made on this issue there is some anxiety around the sustainability of PEACE II funded projects in the absence of any future funding under the PEACE programme. It would be unfair to suggest there is a prevailing school of thought that suggests projects should be continually funded even after their natural life expectancy has been reached. The concern relates more to the less tangible aspects of the impact of PEACE II funding and maintaining the momentum that has been created in terms of building confidence and facilitating engagement within communities. However the concerns surrounding sustainability are not only focused on the financial side of things.

A number of respondents made reference to the decline in voluntarism but more specifically the demands that are placed on individuals working on a voluntary basis (especially those involved in the governance of organisations). There is a fear that a further round of PEACE funding will weaken the community infrastructure with small groups being unable to secure funding. One of the less positive impacts respondents have associated with PEACE II funding has been the decline in voluntarism. In some instances a number of respondents felt that the large sums of funding which have been available to groups have in some way spoilt them. It is very difficult to directly attribute both of these particular outcomes to PEACE II it is perhaps symptomatic of wider issues in society. Nevertheless respondents recognized this point but they felt that there had been a marked difference in relation to both these issues and at the very least they felt that PEACE II funding had in part contributed to this situation.

There was an issue of funding small, inexperienced groups which may have difficulties rolling out the programmes. These groups could benefit if future funding offered the possibility of small grants. These groups could also be encouraged to network with larger, more experienced groups in their area and this perhaps underlines the degree to which insularity is common across some of the areas. Indeed respondents felt that a separate fast track programme for smaller amounts of funding would be beneficial. A programme distributing smaller amounts of funding within a simplified framework would assist smaller groups which were previously put off by the bureaucracy. There was

almost unanimous agreement that the administration associated with PEACE II should be streamlined as it was detracting from work on the ground. In many cases the monitoring system has created a perception of mistrust between many funders and funded projects. Although this may be a well rehearsed point, it is nevertheless an important point. It was also felt that a degree of proportionality should be built into any future funding application process to ensure that smaller organisations can avail of funding and that the level of monitoring and audit is in line with the size of the grant. Some respondents feel that there is too much emphasis placed on the cross-community aspect within the overall framework of the funding. Although there is recognition of the need to focus on cross-community criteria in order to create a normal and stable society, there is a feeling that not all areas are in the same position to engage in this type of work and single identity issues need to be given more attention. Because of the demographic make-up of some of the areas included in this study, a number of respondents expressed a sense of frustration that single identity groups were finding it difficult to secure funding. In the eyes of the respondents this had a negative effect on developing capacity and therefore stopped groups becoming involved in peace building and the provision of services.

As discussed previously there is a perception that the distinctiveness criteria have put some pressure on the minority community in each of the areas in relation to their level of engagement. When looking at the way forward there was a feeling that the distinctiveness criteria have worked well but there should be a little more flexibility in their application. Under the methodology used by this research project an informed discussion of the impact of PEACE II funding across each of the areas set against wider social, economic and cultural factors has been achieved. In this regard the research most certainly showed how external factors can impede or facilitate the implementation of PEACE II objectives. A total of 84 interviews were completed with a wide range of individuals saying that by being given the opportunity to tell their story of PEACE II outside the confines of monitoring forms was a welcome development.

A total of EU36,585,140 (£25,620,812) under the PEACE II programme has been distributed across Strabane District Council area, East Belfast and County Cavan. This funding has enabled 218 projects to deliver a variety of services, training courses and employment opportunities. The funding has also assisted in the development of local economies and the development of capacity and infrastructure within communities and organisations. In other words PEACE II through its various Priorities and Measures has made things possible that were not necessarily the priority of mainstream funding programmes. It has been evident throughout this report that PEACE II has acted as a mechanism through which a process of change and engagement has been facilitated. There are of course varying degrees to which this process has been a success and the external socio-political environment is a key determining factor in impeding or facilitating this process. It is therefore perhaps unwise to focus solely on the monetary value of the funding. Equally, it is also perhaps imprudent to view the PEACE II programme in isolation as the external social, cultural and political environment really shape the extent to which any funding programme, such as PEACE II, can bring about change on the ground. Indeed for a number of respondents the PEACE II programme was part of a wider process in which the funding is just another tangible manifestation of the wider peace process. Of course PEACE II in itself cannot solve the problems of our divided society and it goes without saying that there is still considerable work to be done.

PEACE II funding across each of the three areas has been different in terms of the

nature and focus of the projects that have been funded. This is of course reflective of the different needs and priorities in each of the areas. Nevertheless at the macro level there are some very obvious commonalities that exist across each of the areas. For instance, Strabane District Council area shares some features with Cavan in so far as it is essentially a rural area that is trying to promote itself as a niche tourist provider, it is right on the border and it has suffered from a lack of inward investment. On the other hand Strabane exhibits some of the characteristics associated with East Belfast, in that there are some very deprived areas in Strabane District Council area, it has a very real and self-evident legacy of the conflict and of course there are the usual tensions between the two communities. One distinct characteristic of Strabane is the fact there is not the same degree of homogeneity in terms of the religious background of the population as in the other two areas.

## 8: Conclusion

This has influenced how projects have interacted and worked together. It was clear that in Cavan, where there is understandably less mistrust and misunderstanding between the two communities, there appears to be more engagement between funded projects. During the interviews in East Belfast and to a lesser extent in Strabane, there was little indication that projects worked together to any greater degree than if they had not received PEACE II funding. The increased capacity either in terms of staff or through the delivery of front line services has meant that a significant number of organisations are more heavily involved with government, statutory agencies and funders. The fact still remains that circumstances on the ground have meant that inter-community (or as is the case in East Belfast, intra-community) engagement has often been difficult and this has often been regardless of the PEACE II funding an area has received. Another area in which it was difficult to draw any firm conclusions from was in relation to examples of good and bad practice. Perhaps understandably respondents were rather reticent to discuss what they felt was not working so well in relation to their projects. Of course external factors were cited as reasons why projects had not progressed as quickly as originally thought but these were often seen by the respondents as outside the control of the organisation and were not linked directly to how projects had been instigated. To that end all the respondents in one way or another felt their projects were being administered and delivered successfully. This issue was compounded by the fact that those respondents who were not recipients of PEACE II funding only had a very general overview of the impact of the funding and in the main did not have a detailed understanding of what was good or bad practice within specific projects. To conclude, what are the main messages to emerge from this research in relation to the impact of PEACE II in Strabane District Council area, East Belfast and County Cavan?

First, PEACE II has instigated, implemented and supported initiatives, projects and activities that would have perhaps not been funded or would have taken longer to establish. PEACE II has provided an impetus to address the under investment in the social, physical and economic infrastructure of each of the areas that has been as a direct consequence of the conflict. Second, through the introduction of the distinctiveness criteria, an environment has been created where applicants have had to think about other communities and the needs that exist there. This has made a lot of recipient organisations of PEACE II recognise the impact of the conflict and how that may be addressed in as inclusive a manner as possible. Many respondents who were in receipt of PEACE II funding claimed that they would not have otherwise

considered quite as fully the needs of the other community and would not have necessarily pursued just as explicit a programme of peace building or cross-community work. That is not to say there was unanimous agreement with regard to the distinctiveness criteria.

A number of respondents (both recipients and non-recipients of PEACE II funding) felt that some elements of the PEACE II programme were inflexible to realities on the ground, for instance the interface violence and intra-community feuds in East Belfast and what may have been appropriate in a rural setting was more difficult to translate into an urban one. There was also a feeling that the distinctiveness criteria had, in some cases, meant that some projects were not funded because of the adherence to ensuring a reconciliation element in all funded projects. This was particularly the case in relation to single identity work in areas where there is almost homogeneity within the population. Like all research, and particularly this type of research, more questions than answers are often posed. This report is no different and at its core the question still remains, is this type of funding programme the best way to tackle the most basic issues of what divides us? No one initiative or funding programme could ever reasonably claim to tackle such a fundamental issue. At the very least this research has shown us that PEACE II has contributed to putting in place an environment where individuals and organisations have to consider the needs of others. Whether or not this has fully translated into addressing divisions and engendering greater inclusivity within our society is debatable. Nevertheless given the enormity of the task in hand it would be churlish not to recognize the significance of PEACE II in attempting to create the conditions through which a normal and stable society may be achieved. The PEACE II funding programme is a chapter in a much larger and complex story that has yet to reach its conclusion.

## 9: References

*Cavan Partnership Strategic Plan 2000-200, Cavan Partnership, 2000*  
*Census 2001, <http://www.nicensus2001.gov.uk/nica/common/home.jsp>*  
*Census 2002, <http://www.cso.ie/census.html>*  
*East Belfast Statement of Need, East Belfast Partnership, March 2003*  
*Harvey, B Review of the PEACE II Programme, The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust*  
*PEACE II Operation Programme, SEUPB, 2001*  
*Smyth, M and Hamilton, J 'The Human Costs of the Troubles' in Hargie, O & and Dickson, D Researching the Troubles: Social Science Perspectives on the Northern Ireland Conflict, Mainstream Publishing (Edinburgh), 2003*  
*Strabane Economic Profile and Trade Directory 2003/04, Strabane District Council, 2004*  
*Structurally Unsound: The Northern Ireland bids for further EU monies, Democratic Dialogue, March 2000*

## 10: Interview Schedule

*What is the general awareness of the PEACE II programme and funding in the specific area? What is the overall perception in terms of the impact that PEACE II has had in the area?*

- Outputs, ie jobs.
- Wider community impacts - what difference has the funding made to people's day to day lives?
- Economic impact - has economic renewal/confidence increased in the area because of Peace II?
- Environmental impact - has the physical and social environment of the area improved as a direct result of Peace II funding?
- Peace and reconciliation impact - have things improved between the two communities - is there greater dialogue/trust/networking - have other factors contributed to this perceived improvement?
- Is it too difficult to assign any impact of PEACE II because of other activities and sources of funding?
- Is there a lack of distinctiveness when trying to measure the impact of PEACE II?
- *If there is a perception of a negative impact, what factors in the community have impeded the successful implementation of Peace II objectives?*
- *Have PEACE II programmes integrated within the area and how well do they interact/meet the needs in the area?*
- *What have been the main advantages/disadvantages with regards to PEACE II?*
- *What lessons have been and should be learnt from PEACE II?*
- *If the funding of PEACE II projects in the area were to be removed, would it have an impact?*

## Appendix 2: List of Respondents

### **Strabane District Council area**

- 3rd Tyrone Scouting Ireland
- Abercorn Estate
- Border Arts
- Churchtown Community Project
- Dennett Interchange
- Democratic Unionist Party
- Fountain Street Community Development Association
- Koram Centre
- Melmount Forum
- Melmount Roman Catholic Church
- Mourneberg Partnership
- New Horizons Partnership
- Pushkin Prizes Trust
- Social Democratic and Labour Party
- Sinn Fein
- Sion Mills Strawberry Fair
- Strabane District Council
- Strabane Lifford Anglers Development Association
- Strabane Local Strategy Partnership
- Teach na Failte

- The Villages Together
- Tyrone Constitution
- Ulster Unionist Party
- West Tyrone Voice

#### **East Belfast**

- Ashfield Boys' High School
- Ballymac Friendship Trust
- Ballymacarrett Arts and Cultural Society
- Barnardos
- Belfast City Council
- Belfast Local Strategy Partnership
- Belfast Regeneration Office, South and East Team
- CAREW 2
- Castlereagh Local Strategy Partnership
- Democratic Unionist Party
- East Belfast Community Development Association
- East Belfast Independent Centre
- East Belfast Observer
- East Belfast Partnership
- Gae Lairn
- Greenway Women
- Inner East Forum
- Mediation NI
- Mersey Street Residents Association
- Oak Partnership
- Oasis Family Centre
- Round Tower Project
- Short Strand Community Forum
- Sinn Fein
- Sustainable NI Programme
- The Beat Initiative
- Ulster Unionist Party

#### **County Cavan**

- Area Development Management/Combat Poverty Agency
- Bailieborough Development Association
- Belturbet Community Development Association
- Bunnoe Community Development Association Ltd
- Cavan Community Development Board
- Cavan Family Resource Centre
- Cavan Monaghan Rural Development Co-op Ltd
- Community Connections
- Cootehill Resource House
- County Cavan Community and Voluntary Forum
- Fianna Fail
- Fine Gael
- Killeshranda Community Council
- Killinagh Community Council
- Kingscourt Community Development Council
- Mac Nean Women's Group
- National Training and Development Institute
- North Cavan Community Development Initiative
- Rural Lift Ltd
- Sinn Fein

- The Cavan Partnership
- West Cavan Community Council
- Youth Reach Centre Kingscourt

The number of organisations listed does not match the total number of interviews conducted during this research. Where interviews have taken place with more than one representative from a political party or statutory agency the organisation has been listed only once.

## Notes