

Workshop Report Summary

Strengthening & Sustaining Cross Border Peace and Reconciliation Work

19th October, Belfast City Hall

Introduction

The following is a report of the Consortium organised workshop entitled *Strengthening & Sustaining Cross Border Peace and Reconciliation Work* on the 19th October 2011, held in the City Hall, Belfast.

The purpose of this event was to:

- a. Provide Partnerships with the opportunity to discuss and highlight cross border reconciliation activity in their own Plans.
- b. Demonstrate practical examples of cross border reconciliation projects.
- c. Take opportunities to learn from projects presented.
- d. Discuss ways of sustaining cross border reconciliation work into the future.

Forty people attended the workshop, with the majority of Partnerships represented.

1. North / South Ministerial Council

The opening presentation was given by Sean Howlett from the North / South Ministerial Council. He gave an overview of the North / South Ministerial Council, the six Implementation Bodies, areas of cooperation and future EU Programmes. His presentation is available on either the [Pobal](#) and CRC websites.

Useful Links

[The North / South Ministerial Council Website](#)
[European Commission Regional Policy 2014-2020 legislative Proposals](#)

2. Café dialogue, 4 tables each hosted by a Partnership or a PEACE Project. Participants moved to a new table every 30 minutes.

TABLE 1 – was hosted by SouthWest Peace Partnership, Chris McCarney

The SouthWest Peace Partnership gave a presentation of the South West Partnerships Cross Border Work in particular under Phase 1 followed by a discussion. The presentation outlined

- Cross Border Scoping Study
- Cross Border Capacity Building
- Council-led Cross Border Project
- Cross Border Small Grants
- Case Studies

The handout is available on either the [Pobal](#) and CRC websites.

TABLE 2 - was hosted by Challenge of Change – Louth Peace Partnership, Paddy Drumgoole and Adrian O'Sullivan -

The Louth Peace Partnership gave a presentation of the Cross Border Challenge for Change Project. This project is funded through the Southern Peace Partnership Plan and operated in their catchment and in Counties Louth and Monaghan in conjunction with both Councils.

Key points discussed were as follows:

1. Peace building work is difficult in itself to mainstream; however this difficulty is exacerbated when the peace building work is cross border in nature involving two jurisdictions and differing systems. With this in mind, a significant focus of cross border peace building work should be placed on building capacity of local communities to continue this work in the future when funding dries up. However there is a need for more inter face with local and regional policy structures.
2. Cross border work can cover significant geographical areas with complexities around differing rules and regulations, not to mention differing community perspectives given the nature of the work involved. There is merit at the outset in establishing appropriate governance structures to ensure all views are heard and accommodated where possible.
3. There is significant cross border work happening, not just under the Theme 1.1 local but through other Themes of Peace III as well as other philanthropic and exchequer funding. There is merit in wider networking opportunities being made available across the eligible area to share learning, avoid overlap and duplication and a view was expressed that this is something the Consortium could look at perhaps on a thematic basis.
4. Participants felt there was a deficit in terms of getting information pertaining to cross border work into policy making structures including the North South Ministerial Council. Any suggestions as to how this could be addressed would be welcomed.
5. A wider issue was raised where clarification was sought from the NSMC as to the status of the Parliamentary and Consultative Forums proposed under the Good Friday / Belfast Agreement.

TABLE 3 – was hosted by the Communities and Policing in Transition Programme, Noel Rooney and Michelle Wilson

The Communities and Policing in Transition Programme is a 1.1 regional funded project. It was launched in September 2009 operating across the North and the Southern Border Counties. It comprises a number of key training opportunities as well as workshops and seminars on best practice with regard to the interface between policing and communities across the island of Ireland. A number of key partners have come together including both police forces, Tyrone Donegal Partnership, INCORE, ICTU and led by Intercomm Ireland based in Belfast.

The objective is to target key areas and also to target key issues including cultural perceptions, conflict resolution, sectarianism and racism. It is hoped that the outcome for participants will be enhanced understanding and the development of key skills in peace building, conflict resolution and best practice. This programme is unique in that it brings the PSNI, Garda Síochána and the Community together in the one room.

Training Programme

To date 11 of the 15 planned courses have taken place. There are 24 Participants on each training programme 4 PSNI officers, 4 Garda Síochána officers, 12 community leaders and 4 other professional staff (DPP/CSP's). The community leaders include former combatants. The training programme is accredited through the University of Ulster and the Institute of Leadership and Management. Each training programme consists of 8 days training commencing with a 2 day residential and is rolled out over 3 months. The programme is a place where difficult conversations can and have taken place. Feedback from the courses has been very positive with places on the most recent programme being oversubscribed.

International Best Practice

There has been a number of international best practice visits organised over the duration of the programme. Destinations include South Africa and Middle East – Palestine with a trip planned to Berlin. A Conference is planned for 2012.

Research

The project is conducting action research identifying trends in violence/crime in Northern Ireland and the border region in partnership with INCORE, University of Ulster. This research will identify barriers to and opportunities for conflict resolution, transformation and prevention.

Working Cross Border - Benefits and Challenges

- The Board has representatives from both jurisdictions and this has proved very beneficial.
- They do not parachute into an area; they work with local organisations that assist them to identifying participants.
- There was initial reluctance by some to become involved in the project due to a fear that it was a prelude to an all Ireland Police Force.
- The Gardai were initially unsure of the need for them to be involved.
- The fact is was a community organisation initiative was seen as being a positive model for engaging locally to work together on local issues.
- The Protestant community in border areas highlighted the issue of isolation and closing of PSNI stations within their areas
- All training so far has been based in Northern Ireland due to security issues with members of the PSNI crossing the Border. A training programme is planned to take place in Dublin later in the year.

Learning and successes so far

- Participants have talked together that would never have spoken to each other before, and they sat down to dinner together having never sat in the same room before.
- The practice of stop and search in Derry was reviewed and changed by the PSNI after it was raised as a issue at one of the training sessions there.

- Being community based project makes it easier for more open conversations to happen as it is outside of workplace.
- Good relationships have been developed between participants both cross community and cross border that have continued beyond the training programme.

Future

- The Project is due to end June 2012. The project promoters are currently in discussions with SEUPB.
- CAPT are looking at setting up a similar project but focusing on the youth.

TABLE 4 – was hosted by the Belfast Peace Partnership, Isaac May

Belfast gave an overview of the Cross border work that it has undertaken. The Key points discussed were as follows:

1. How can letters of support that come in at the initial application stage for cross border work be followed up once a project has been approved for funding. Very often there is intent to work on a cross border basis but nothing materialises when the project commences.
2. How do Partnerships become aware of what cross border work is already happening?
3. The Phase 1 experience would indicate that a longer funding period is required; many plans have been drawn up from the start and there is little opportunity to be flexible if new cross border links are established in the process and have the potential to secure funding.
4. There are numerous barriers to cross border working- some of which discussed were- transport costs of maintaining a relationship especially for those Partnerships further from the border counties. Time to foster and maintain these relationships was also cited as a barrier as Partnership staff have busy schedules.
5. One participant suggested that Council areas could consider a twinning arrangement with a border County Council.
6. In order to avail of the opportunities for cross border working it was suggested that advertising regarding expressions of interest for cross border working could be placed into the local provincial papers.
7. Cross border work amongst many Partnerships has been piecemeal so far, it is time to step it up a gear in Phase 2 given the experiences of Phase 1.
8. Cross border work is a different priority for each of the Partnerships, some find the work easier than others, and very often there is a psychological barrier to cross border work. Can this be overcome?

3. Summary notes and common threads from 4 groups

Discussion from the four groups highlighted a number of core key issues with cross border work.

- Time -** Building cross border relations takes time - From finding a partner and then developing a relationship.
- Cost -** A budget is required to pump prime cross border work. This might include staff time and travel time and expenses. Without the initial investment and financial support to sustain activity the relationship does not get the necessary time to prosper.
- Bureaucracy -** The Peace 3 programme bureaucracy can actually inhibit the development of cross border relationships.
- Co-ordination -** Co-ordination of activity and the effort required particularly for Partnerships without a natural inclination to work cross border.
- Commitment -** Fostering a sense of commitment and enthusiasm for cross border working.

How to overcome these - some practical suggestions

IT – The SouthWest Peace Partnership had highlighted their website www.crossborderopportunities.com They has offered Partnerships the opportunity to use the website to create opportunities for cross border working. Using websites to share and link cross border information.

STAFF – some partnerships have staff that is employed to deliver cross border work.

PDP – a cross border element is included as a learning element in the Partnership development programmes

Working to the target of 30%

Consortium Events that link Partnerships and projects can take the opportunity to meet and link up help to strengthen and sustain cross border relations.

An interesting point was that cross border working needs to have a mutual advantage. That relationships may be more productive when based on delivering finite projects. It was suggested that it need not necessarily be the relationship be sustained for the sake of it but rather that numerous and multiple relationships develop to create mutual benefit and advantage. It is the commitment to cross border working that needs to be sustained not just the relationships.

4. Feedback/Outcome

A total of 17 evaluation responses were received and collated from an attendance of 40 participants. Rating of the event was high – with the majority of attendees scoring the event at 3 or 4.

