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Building Peace

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CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Peace building does not and cannot take place in a vacuum. Today we live in a world that is better connected, but where the polarisation of vulnerable people and promotion of extremist agendas has become more prevalent.

As the threat of violent polarisation has become a critical global issue, so too have the lessons from long-term conflict transformation. This year we mark the 30th Anniversary since we started our work to create the conditions for sustainable peace and prosperity on the island of Ireland. Though our mission is not yet complete, our experiences to date can act as a model for intervention efforts in other regions that are seeking to move beyond division and create more stable societies.

It is only right that we recognise the distance we have travelled and adequately signpost the way for others dealing with the blight of sectarianism and violence. This edition of Fund

Focus looks at the broad theme of sharing and learning in peace building and how experiences should be examined for the benefit of others. In recent weeks, I had the privilege of meeting with Dr Arun Gandhi, an internationally respected peace builder and a grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, at the launch of the John Hume and Thomas P O'Neill Chair in Peace.

Dr Gandhi, who modestly refers to his job as a 'peace farmer', offers powerful reflections on the causes of violence and steps for reconciliation are thought provoking for all. The Fund is grateful that Dr Gandhi has offered to share his compelling views in this edition of Fund Focus and I strongly recommend his article.

We must always be seeking new ways to improve, adapt and develop our experiences, but should be mindful that learning is of course a two-way process. We have an obligation to share the models that have helped advance us towards a lasting peace and to encourage others to emerge from and avoid conflict.

The Fund's three decades of essential work would not have been possible without our international donors and we remain grateful for their enduring support and encouragement.

Dr Adrian Johnston,
CHAIRMAN

International Fund for Ireland commits €1.17m/£980,000 towards 13 community projects

In June, 13 projects including eight in Northern Ireland and five in the Southern border counties were awarded €1.17m/£980,000 by the Fund.

The allocation, approved at the Fund's Board Meeting in County Sligo, includes more than half a million Euro (€600,000/£500,000) for six projects that will support vulnerable young people to enrol in good relations activities that enhance their education and employment prospects. These yearlong projects are supported through the Fund's Personal Youth Development Programme, which assists young people to make positive choices in their lives and build resilience so they can excel in difficult environments.

A similar amount (€579,000/£480,000) will also be shared among seven projects under the Peace Impact Programme. This aims to address difficult issues linked to the legacy of conflict and engage with people who are at risk of becoming involved in sectarian or anti-social activity.

Commenting on the announcement Dr Adrian Johnston, Chairman of the

International Fund for Ireland, said: "The Fund is focused on equipping communities, and young people in particular, with the means to resist and disrupt the dangerous spiral of division and disaffection. This allocation of financial support is a timely investment and will support vulnerable people who are at risk of being exploited by criminal or armed groups. The projects receiving financial support have set out bold and innovative plans to build confidence, resilience and leadership within their communities.

"We cannot and do not seek to control the external factors that impact on communities, but we can help foster the resilience needed to overcome existing and emerging challenges. We know there are risks that still need to be taken for a lasting peace and the quality of our interventions has never been more evident."

More information on the latest funding package is available at www.internationalfundforireland.com



ABOVE: Pictured at the Board Meeting in Sligo are Board Members: (back row) Allen McAdam; Dr Adrian Johnston, Chairman; Billy Gamble; Paddy Harte; (front row) Siobhan Fitzpatrick CBE; Dorothy Clarke and Hilary Singleton.



GLOBAL PEACE

I very recently had the honour of delivering the inaugural address at the University of Ulster's John Hume and Thomas P O'Neill Chair in Peace Studies event. The Ulster University in Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland, is not only beautiful at this time of year but is among the few Universities in the world willing to look at World Peace a little differently.

This is substantially due to the fresh, open-minded approach of the first Chair, Dr Brandon Hamber, and his close association with the peace process in South Africa. It is also creditable that progressive organisations like the International Fund for Ireland, ably led by Dr Adrian Johnston, deem it necessary to fund a Peace Studies Chair to educate future generations in the art of building peace. Building is the only way to describe the work of peace because peace cannot be wished for nor can it come simply by ending wars and fighting.

While humanity has progressed in many ways we haven't made much change

in resolving conflicts. We still have the cavemen attitude towards anger and resorting to violence to resolve a dispute. What has changed is the weapons we use. They have become more and more potent. The gist of my talk was that if we want peace in this world it is important to understand and appreciate the two key ingredients. First, what does peace look like? Nine out of ten people will say no wars, no fighting means peace. Yet, this is only a fraction of the problem. Second, what does "violence" look like?

We are obsessively focused on "physical" violence manifest in the hurtful and bloody acts that lead to injury and death. What

we are unaware of is that we have learned to practice "passive" (non-physical) violence in the form of exploitation, verbal insults, psychological abuse, prejudices, hating, wasting resources, over consumption and so on. All we need to do, individually and collectively, is self-examination to determine how we are indulging in passive violence every day.

The result of the introspection can be shocking. Selfishness and greed have been ingrained in us and is reflected in our relationships with each other as individuals as well as nations. To personally benefit we are willing to go to any extent within legal limits but

not within moral limits. Nations of the world have based their foreign policies on what is good for that nation. The result is that the economically powerful nations can and do exploit the natural and other resources of the poor nations for their own benefit. No one gives much thought to the harmful results of such exploitation on the rest of the world.

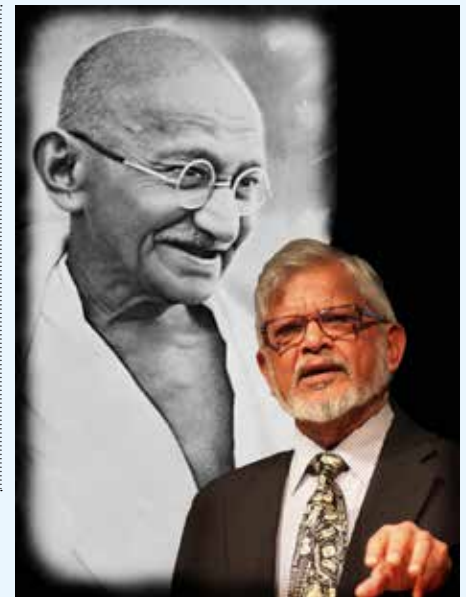
The objective always is to serve and protect "our citizens" and "our country" at the expense of the rest of the world. We have lost sight of the important fact that as individuals and as nations we are interconnected, interrelated and interdependent and that exploitation

and destruction anywhere is ultimately going to lead to exploitation and destruction everywhere. Non-physical passive violence that individuals and nations practice rampantly fuels the fire of physical violence or wars. No country, however powerful and rich, can ensure its safety and stability if the rest of the world is being destroyed.

Therefore, the only way we can live in peace is if we transform our harmful habits and become more conscious of the needs of others that then results in promoting harmony. I call on each one of us to be the change you wish to see in the world.

“The only way we can live in peace is if we transform our harmful habits and become more conscious of the needs of others that then results in promoting harmony.”

—DR ARUN GANDHI



ABOVE: Dr Arun Gandhi is Founder and President of the Gandhi Worldwide Education Institute and refers modestly to himself as a Peace Farmer.



IFI funded groups attend the guest lecture given by Dr Gandhi at Ulster University's Magee campus. Also pictured are Chair in Peace, Professor Brandon Hamber, Dr Gandhi and Chairman of IFI, Dr Adrian Johnston.

CASE STUDY: Donegal Youth Service

ACTIV8 is a unique youth outreach project run by Donegal Youth Service that works across the bordering counties of Donegal and Tyrone.

Areas targeted by this project are often affected by deprivation, social issues and paramilitary behaviour.

“Our ACTIV8 Project deals with young people from Nationalist and Unionist backgrounds who feel left behind by the Peace Process” says Charlene Logue, a Youth Outreach Manager.

“We’ve been able to offer a number of community development, youth work and leadership training opportunities to help them make positive changes in their lives.

“Participants are continuing to build on their qualifications and are currently working towards certificates in Youth Training. There are also 24 young people who are now mentors for new recruits to the project, which is really encouraging.”

Charlene recently took part in the Fund’s annual ‘AMBIT’ study programme in the USA where participants share experiences of community engagement and models

of peace building. For her the experience offered invaluable access to other youth projects across Ireland and a chance to learn from innovative models and good practice in the United States.

“The areas we work in can at times be sensitive and it was great to share these experiences with other groups. There is a common thread amongst peace building here – difficult conversations are a part of what we do but they are a necessity to build trust with participants.

“Engaging in discussions with others who work in this field also demonstrated that despite background, history and culture everyone experiences similar issues at a grassroots level.”

The Fund supports a wide range of initiatives that promote dialogue and reconciliation throughout Ireland. Charlene understands the importance of applying lessons from various projects to help build a more successful future for youth within the Donegal and Tyrone areas.

“The ongoing work of ACTIV8 has given a lifeline to local youths enabling them to play an active role within their community.



This project is playing a key part in creating opportunities within marginalised areas. The project acts as a stepping stone to make people aware of a wider sense of community and how we must share experiences and space in order to evolve.”

“Areas like Strabane and Lifford are a testament to the success and impact of the programme. Participants have not only fully engaged with the project but have also rejuvenated the local community centre and there is a real sense of positivity and people moving forward together.”

ABOVE: Pictured are guests at the ACTIV8 celebration event in 2015 at Fir Trees hotel, Strabane; (seated) Lorraine Thompson, Regional Director, DYS; Mary Moy, Development Officer, IFI; Dr Adrian Johnston, Chairman, IFI; and Charlene Logue, DYS; (Standing), Sheena Laverty and Boris Lisov, youth workers.

CASE STUDY: Inter Estates Partnership

Based in Antrim town, the Inter Estates Partnership (IEP) is supported from the Fund’s Peace Impact Programme (PIP) to motivate, inspire and build confidence within and between five Loyalist housing estates in the town.

It offers a range of practical employment-related training courses and aims to help tackle big social issues such as anti-social behaviour, drug abuse and inter-



Some of the young people from the IEP at an event in Antrim.

community tensions. To date, more than 350 people have completed accredited training courses through the project and some 70 participants have secured part-time/full-time employment and many others have felt able to return to education.

Raymond Thompson, Project Officer for IEP, says that the support and encouragement have helped rekindle an interest and commitment to personal development among young people who previously believed they had limited prospects. He has been active in promoting the success of his project with other community groups and hopes the model can help build positive future options for more young people in different areas.

Raymond was also one of the participants who took part in the Fund’s AMBIT study trip to the USA where groups were able to share similar peace building experiences and look to new ways to approach youth engagement.

“On the recent AMBIT trip, I was able to share as well as learn about progressive methods of youth intervention including re-entry into society after imprisonment.”

Many projects that are supported through the Fund work in disadvantaged areas and the AMBIT experience opened up new conversations about how to address shared and emerging issues.

“It is evident that many communities face similar problems but there is one thing that unites every project regardless of race or religion – we want the best for the young people within every community.

“Even though IEP has experienced considerable success there is always room to build upon this and shape better communities. It is encouraging to see that our young people view one another as equals with no religious barriers and in terms of peace building here that can only be a good thing.”



**SLIG- Suffolk and Lenadoon Interface Group
Peace Walls Programme**

SLIG and Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) recently ran a 16-week scheme, which brought together almost 30 people in west and north Belfast to identify how changes to Peace Walls could improve their everyday lives. Supported by the Fund’s Peace Walls Programme and Belfast City Council, the scheme gave participants the chance to undertake technical mapping and re-visioning exercises, visit other Peace Walls projects and complete practical training courses. The project equipped young people with knowledge and skills as well as begin conversations around sensitive issues such as sectarianism and physical division. Pictured are Chloe Pritchard and Aaron Stewart who were among almost 30 young people to give their views on Peace Walls.

Chair in Peace Event Ulster University, Magee Campus

Dr Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mohandas K. “Mahatma” Gandhi, delivered a keynote speech on peace and non-violence at the University of Ulster’s Magee Campus in Derry/Londonderry. This was the first headline event to be hosted by the new John Hume and Thomas P O’Neill Chair in Peace, Professor Brandon Hamber. Dr Gandhi met with students and staff and talked about the importance of learning for future generations to build and capture a culture of peace. The role of the Chair is to build upon the work of INCORE and apply lessons from the Northern Ireland Peace Process to other conflict zones as well as train the next generation of peace builders. Pictured at the event: Dr Arun Gandhi; Brandon Hamber, Chair in Peace; and Dr Adrian Johnston, Chairman, International Fund for Ireland.



**Twaddell Woodvale Resident’s Association
Peace Impact Programme**

Based near a contentious interface in north Belfast, Twaddell Woodvale Residents Association has been working with local authorities to rebuild confidence within the local community. At a recent showcase event, the project highlighted its success and progress particularly with young people who were more at risk in getting caught up in interface violence. In 10 months, over 300 people in the area have been able to access a wide range of training and learning programmes. Pictured with Dr Adrian Johnston, Chairman, International Fund for Ireland, are project participants Jonathan Kinner (left) and Kevin Hu.

