The role of community development in rural peace building

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Table of Contents

1  Introduction  
2  What is Community Development?  
3  Peace building in rural areas  
4  The role of community development in rural peace building  
5  Community development and rural peace building in practice  
6  Conclusions and Recommendations
The role of community development in rural peace building

Rural Community Network (RCN) is the leading regional, voluntary organisation for rural communities in Northern Ireland, established by community organisations in 1991. Its vision is of vibrant, articulate, inclusive and sustainable rural communities across Northern Ireland.

The Rural Enabler Programme (REP) was established in 2010 ‘to address issues of sectarianism, racism, social exclusion and all other forms of rural inequality through challenging the status-quo, assisting, supporting and creating the space for local communities and rural institutions to identify the fears of reconciliation and anti-racism work’.

It was funded through the PEACE III Programme and involved a unique cross border partnership between Rural Community Network (as the Lead Partner), Irish Rural Link (IRL), the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) in Northern Ireland and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) in the Republic of Ireland.

The Programme was implemented by a team of Rural Enablers working in each of the six counties north and south of the border and one Rural Enabler working directly with those Institutions which play a key role in rural communities including the Orange Order, the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), the Young Farmers’ Clubs of Ulster and the various churches. Overall the Programme was managed by a Programme Co-ordinator based north of the border and an Assistant Programme Co-ordinator based in the southern border counties.

Each county established a Sub-regional Advisory Group (SAG) comprising those with a statutory remit for social inclusion and good relations including PEACE III and Good Relations Officers where they existed, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and An Garda Síochána. The SAGs also included key peace builders at this local county level. Each SAG supported the work of the Programme through the sharing of key local information and resources, promoting collaborative working among all sectors and it also provided the opportunity to influence local policy. Members of these groups acted as influencers for change and sustainability within their own individual contexts, as well as beyond the life of the Rural Enabler Programme.

### Paper Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to document and share the learning arising from the Rural Enabler Programme in relation to the role of community development in rural peace building.
Methodology
The paper was prepared based on analysis of community development policy on both sides of the border, coupled with a range of reports produced by the Rural Enabler Programme during the course of their experience and practice, as well as consultations with individual Rural Enablers.

The Target Audience
There are a number of key audiences for this paper including:

• Local community groups which are actively promoting peace building in rural settings as well as communities and groups who may be thinking of engaging in peace building and good relations work locally

• National and regional organisations promoting the adoption and implementation of peace building approaches, for example, the Community Relations Council (CRC); Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI); the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation in the Republic of Ireland; and Co-operation Ireland on a cross border basis

• Various local and regional support organisations/institutions including cultural, sporting and farming bodies as well as faith based organisations

• Policy makers and programme developers – at local, regional and national levels including key local authority, government department and cross border body personnel
The 2004 Budapest Declaration: Building European Civil Society through Community Development (p.2) defined community development in the following terms:

‘as a way of strengthening civil society by prioritising the action of communities, and their perspectives in the development of social, economic and environmental policy. It seeks the empowerment of local communities, taken to mean both geographical communities and communities of interest or identity and communities organising around specific themes or policy initiatives. It strengthens the capacity of people as active citizens through their community groups, organisations and networks and the capacity of institutions and agencies (public, private and non-governmental) to work in dialogue with citizens to shape and determine change in their communities. It plays a crucial role in supporting active democratic life by promoting the autonomous voice of the disadvantaged and vulnerable communities’.

While the definitions of community development may differ somewhat, there is generally broad agreement in relation to how it works in regard to enabling people to organise and work together to:

- Identify their own needs and aspirations
- Take action to exert influence on the decisions which affect their lives
- Improve the quality of their own lives, the communities in which they live and societies of which they are a part

Community development can be applied in both rural and urban contexts given that it supports the establishment of strong communities that control and use assets to promote social justice and help improve the quality of community life. It also very importantly enables community and public agencies to work together to improve the quality of government.

This paper focuses on its application in rural areas and with/by rural communities based on the understanding that good community development relates to action(s) that help people to recognise and develop their ability and potential and organise themselves to respond to problems and needs which they share.

From a Northern Ireland context, community development has been described as:

‘a long-term value based process which aims to address imbalances in power and bring about change founded on social justice, equality and inclusion’.

From a Republic of Ireland perspective, the former Combat Poverty Agency also defined community development as a process whereby those who are marginalised and excluded are enabled to gain in self-confidence, to join with others and to participate in actions to change their situation and to tackle the problems that face their community.

1 RCN (2012): Strategic Framework for Community Development for Northern Ireland. RCN supported by the Building Change Trust
Values and Principles of Community Development

As stated earlier in this paper the Rural Enabler Programme operated in six counties of Northern Ireland and the six counties of the border region. Given the regionality of the Programme the community development process used by the Rural Enablers was mindful of the separate but not entirely different definitions of community development within each of the respective regions.

In Northern Ireland the key values and principles of community development\(^4\) are described as follows:

- **Equality and anti-discrimination** – practice which acknowledges where there is inequality and discrimination and rejects and challenges any form of it; supports and develops anti-oppressive policies and practices; respects, values, supports and promotes the value of difference and diversity; acknowledges the diverse nature of society and challenges the exclusion of marginalised communities and minorities.

- **Social justice** – practice which recognises that social justice incorporates environmental, political, cultural and economic justice; challenges inequalities and power differences; values diversity of experience; promotes human and civil rights and responsibilities; challenges the underlying causes, and effects, of structural power imbalances and makes the link between local, societal and global contexts all toward the long term goal of a more equal, inclusive and non-sectarian society.

- **Collective action** – practice which encourages the active participation of people within communities; supports the rights of communities to organise, access support and take action; respects the rights of others when planning collective action; empowers communities to recognise and acknowledge their existing skills, knowledge and expertise; uses the power of the collective voice and of collective action and recognises the wealth of creative and positive resources present within communities with a view to encouraging individuals and their communities to organise, influence and take action.

- **Community empowerment** – practice which promotes the rights of communities to define themselves, their priorities and agendas for action; encourages an understanding and commitment to the long term nature of community development practice; promotes the rights of communities to be consulted, involved in, and influence decision making that affects their lives; promotes accountability and transparency; promotes co-operation as a means of connecting and strengthening communities; uses research to support communities in determining needs as a basis for influencing all with a view to instilling confidence amongst individuals to define themselves, their priorities and agendas for action.

- **Working and learning together/participation** – practice which recognises, shares and values skills, knowledge and experience; promotes empowerment through building on existing knowledge and skills; creates opportunities for collective learning through shared reflection on action; encourages reflection on own practice, values and beliefs; uses analysis and evaluation to inform future action; promotes learning from the experiences of communities locally, nationally and globally all with a view to communities and others collectively bringing about change.

In support of these principles, the Community Development National Occupational Standards (CDNOS)\(^5\) promotes the concept of a number of core objectives which should underpin community development work including integrity, competence, personal awareness, empathy, dependability, sensitivity and respect, discretion, openness, flexibility, commitment to change, equality and inclusion, political consciousness and environmental awareness.

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5 Community Development National Occupational Standards (CDNOS); (2009)
Within the Republic of Ireland community work values and principles have benefitted from the publication of, “Towards Standards for Quality Community Work - An All Ireland Statement of Values, Principles and Work Standards”6

The key values referenced in the standards are:

- **Collective Action** – Community work is based on working with and supporting groups of people. It enables them to develop knowledge, skills and confidence so that they can develop an analysis, identify priority needs and issues and address these through collective action.

- **Empowerment** – Community work is about the empowerment of individuals and communities, and addressing the unequal distribution of power. It is about working with people to enable them to become critical, creative, liberated, and active participants, allowing and enabling them to take more control of the direction of their lives, their communities and their environment. It aims to effect a sharing of power to create structures that provide genuine participation and involvement. It is a process based on mutual respect and equal and genuine partnership between all those involved to enable a sharing of talents, experiences and expertise.

- **Social Justice** – The active pursuit of social justice is an essential element of community work and makes an important contribution towards a socially cohesive society. Community work is based on a belief that every person and every community can play an active role in creating conditions for a just and equal society where human rights are promoted and all forms of oppression or discrimination are challenged. The pursuit of social justice involves identifying and seeking to alleviate structural disadvantage and advocating strategies for overcoming disadvantage, discrimination and inequality. It entails the promotion of policies and practices that are just and equitable. In effect it means working to promote human rights for all.

- **Equality and Anti-discrimination** – In working for equality community workers must work from the starting point that while people are not the same, they are all of equal worth and importance and are therefore equally worthy of respect and acknowledgement. Community workers have a responsibility to challenge the oppression and exclusion of individuals and groups by institutions and society that leads to discrimination against people based on ability, age, culture, gender, marital status, socioeconomic status, nationality, skin colour, racial or ethnic group, sexual orientation, political or religious beliefs. It is particularly important that community workers acknowledge the particular and historical inequalities experienced by women in all cultures.

- **Participation** – Participation is about the involvement of groups who experience social exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination in decision-making, planning and action at different levels, from the local to the global. It can be viewed as a continuum of activity that can start from information sharing through capacity building and empowerment to active engagement and meaningful participation in democratic processes. It recognises that people have the right to participate in decisions and structures that affect their lives. In working to promote participation it is vital that inherent power imbalances are acknowledged and addressed. Ultimately the participation of marginalised and disadvantaged communities should contribute towards bringing about social change through appropriately informed policies and processes, to the benefit of all.

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6 CWC (2010)Towards Standards for Quality Community Work - An All Ireland Statement of Values, Principles and Work Standards"
Community Development Policy (north and south) in Northern Ireland

At regional level
The key community development policy documents and strategies include:

- **The Regional Infrastructure Support Programme (RISP)**\(^8\) (2012) provides funding (£2.4 million over a 30 month period) and infrastructure support for voluntary and community organisations across Northern Ireland to enable the sector to operate effectively in both urban and rural areas. The Programme is sponsored by the Department for Social Development and administered by a consortium led by Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) and including Rural Community Network as partners. The Programme has identified a number of expected high level policy outcomes that include engagement with sub regional organisations and local councils, as well as improved working relationships, better collaboration and more effective partnerships across the sector.

- **The Social Investment Fund (SIF)**\(^9\) (2011) was set up to deliver social change in Northern Ireland. It operates across nine social investment zones and is open until 2015 with a total funding allocation of £80 million. The Social Investment Fund focuses specifically on supporting communities to:
  - Increase employment opportunities by addressing things such as educational underachievement, lack of skills, access to jobs and making it appealing for businesses to start up in areas which have suffered deprivation
  - Tackle issues such as mental and physical health, use of drugs and alcohol, becoming a young mother, young people’s involvement in anti-social behaviour and the ability of communities to work together which can all be associated with deprivation
  - Increase services in the community by improving existing facilities, making the environment better and providing additional facilities where needed and possible
  - Address dereliction in order to make areas more appealing for investment and for those living there.

The nine investment zones have been established with initial steering groups representing the business, political, statutory and voluntary and community sectors in Belfast North, Belfast South, Belfast East, Belfast West, Derry/Londonderry, the South, the South East, the North and the West. The role of the steering groups is to develop and manage the area based plan/s for their zone.

- **The Community Support Programme**\(^10\) (2009) is a collaborative initiative (involving the Department for Social Development, the 26 District Councils, local community and voluntary groups and local advice organisations). The purpose of the Programme is to support the development of:
  - Active and organised communities, through the increase of public participation in civic life; the promotion of self help and sustainability; the strengthening of community organisations, particularly those in disadvantaged areas
  - Influential communities, through the increased ability of disadvantaged communities to articulate their interests, their concerns and their suggestions for improvement; improved partnership working between district councils, other agencies and local communities and more effective interagency work at local level; positive change for individuals and groups within the community particularly those who are excluded or marginalised

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7 These are presented chronologically with the most recent first.
8 Regional Infrastructure Support Programme (2012); http://www.nicva.org/news/risp
9 Social Investment Fund (2011); http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/the-social-investment-fund
10 Community Support Programme (2009); Department of Social Development, http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/voluntary_and_community/funding_programmes/community_support_prog.htm
- Informed communities, through community access to effective, appropriate, approachable, timely and accurate advice and information services

- Sustainable communities, through the creation of the conditions for social and economic development and promotion (within district councils and outside) of a long term, integrated systems approach to developing and achieving vibrant communities by jointly addressing social, health, environmental, economic and community relations issues.

It does this by:
• Stimulating and supporting community groups
• Providing community centres, local advice and citizens’ information services and resource centres
• Providing grants to community groups
• Employing community support staff in district councils

Funding is allocated according to criteria identified in the District Council developed Community Support Plans.

• The Rural Development Programme (2007-2013)\(^{11}\)
The rural policy division of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has responsibility for this Programme. At local, level it is implemented through rural development clusters of local authorities, seven in total throughout Northern Ireland. Its purpose is to promote the development of a range of initiatives in rural communities and it also raises awareness of the broad range of needs (including community development) of rural communities across government.

• The draft Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) Programme\(^{12}\) was launched for consultation purposes in September 2010 led by the Office of the First and deputy First Minister. Key themes of Programme include developing shared space, crises intervention, young people, interfaces, reducing segregation, expression of cultural identity, racial equality, hate crime and creating secure communities. (This Programme which remains in draft) is proposing a delivery framework within which available resources can be more effectively managed and integrated to target the funding strategically, avoid duplication, ensure complementarity and maximise the impact on the ground. Three levels of funding have been identified – 1) through District Councils, 2) thematic and 3) targeted/emergency.

The Programme supersedes A Shared Future, the previous policy governing Good Relations in Northern Ireland.

• A Strategic Framework for Community Development for Northern Ireland (2012)\(^{13}\) which has been developed by Rural Community Network and supported by the Building Change Trust. This document has been produced as ‘a co-ordinated attempt to highlight the purpose, value and contribution to community development practice in Northern Ireland’. It charts the evolution of community development in Northern Ireland over the past number of years at the local, sub-regional and regional levels. It reports on the contribution which community development has made to local communities in terms of their empowerment and engagement within a peace building context. Also it highlights the importance of community development practice and principles at a strategic level in the roll out of local and central government initiatives.

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12 Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (2009); http://www.ofmldfnni.gov.uk/csi
13 A Strategic Framework for Community Development in Northern Ireland (2012); http://www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org/publications/publicationsearch.aspx1
At local level

The key regional community development policies, strategies and frameworks operating in Northern Ireland get translated into programmes at a local level through a number of mechanisms. Whilst these community oriented programmes are not specifically focused on peace building, nonetheless developing good and sustainable relationships are key to their success. Furthermore they are implemented through local authority led structures and programmes that refer to each other in terms of development and ultimately roll out. They include the following:

- **The Community Support Programme** is implemented by each of the 26 local authorities through locally developed and implemented plans. The community and voluntary sector is involved in this process.

- **The Rural Development Programme** is rolled out through the development of local rural development plans by the seven rural clusters.

- **Local Good Relations Strategies** have been developed and implemented by the 26 local authorities with funding from the Community Relations Unit of the Office for the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM). In some instances, these strategies and action plans (which are updated regularly) are closely linked to the local PEACE III strategies.

- **PEACE III Strategies**: eight clusters (formed by the coming together of the local authorities) implement a significant element of the current PEACE III Programme.

Community Development Policy

In the Republic of Ireland

At national level

The key national community development policy document remains ‘The White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between State and the community and voluntary sector’ published in 2000. The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government has lead responsibility for both the implementation of this paper and for the development of the relationship between the state and the community and voluntary sector.

The aim of the paper is to provide a more cohesive framework of support and encouragement for the community and voluntary sector. It gives formal recognition to the partnership ethos that informs much of the working relationship between the two sectors, while recognising the differences between them. It also includes a commitment by government to provide a range of funding measures to support the Community and Voluntary Sector. These currently take the form of three schemes:

- **The Scheme of Community Support for Older People** which provides grants to locally based community and voluntary organisations for the provision of personal alarms for older people

- **Support for National Organisations Scheme**

- **Support for Volunteering Scheme**

There is no national policy on good relations or any lead department.

- **Local and Community Development Programme**

The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government is also the lead department for the Local and Community Development Programme. Under this Programme, support is provided for community development at local level. The Programme which is managed by Pobal on behalf of the Department is implemented through a series of local development companies (one in each county across the six border counties). The publication in 2012 of the Putting People First Report and the Local Government Alignment report respectively suggest that there will be changes for local

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14 [http://www.environ.ie/en/Community/LocalCommunityDevelopment/]
development over the coming years with the dissolution of the current County/City Development Board and the creation of new Social and Economic Committees to replace them. Depending on how these changes are implemented, these may or may not impact on the role and value placed on community development at a local level.

- **Rural Development Programme**
  The Department of Agriculture is responsible for this Programme which is being implemented through the amalgamated Leader Partnership companies throughout the country, the focus here being on facilitating balanced and sustainable regional development while tackling the issues of poverty and social inclusion. The main priority within this Programme is on the creation of employment opportunities and there are also provisions for village enhancement schemes, conservation of rural heritage and provision of culture and leisure facilities where the intention is significantly to improve the quality of life of rural areas. In the border region, the promotion of social inclusion and targeting of women, young people and minority groups is being addressed further through the composition of the local action groups where there may be reference to peace building activities.

**At local level**
Organisations and groups that support and, in some cases, apply a community development approach to their work at local level include the local development companies (identified above); Local Authority Community and Enterprise Sections (six); various Local Authority Strategic Policy Committees; Community and Voluntary Fora and; Community Networks and the various locally focused Family Resource Centres; as well as the six southern border county based PEACE III Partnerships. There are also currently three (PEACE III funded local authority) Community Relations/Good Relations Officers (in Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan respectively that apply and use a community development approach in their work.

**Cross Border Development**
Governments in both jurisdictions within their Programmes for Government do make a commitment to north south co-operation primarily through the North South Ministerial Council and the bodies for which it has responsibility.

The North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was established under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (1998) to develop consultation, co-operation and action within the island of Ireland - including through implementation on an all island and cross border basis - on matters of mutual interest and within the competence of the Administrations, North and South. It comprises Ministers of the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government, working together to take forward co-operation between both parts of the island to mutual benefit.

Formally there are six north south implementation bodies – Waterways Ireland; Food Safety Promotion Board; Trade and Business Development (InterTrade Ireland); Special European Union Programmes Body; The Language Body; Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission. There are six areas of co-operation namely Agriculture, Education, Environment, Health, Tourism and Transport.

Community development and peace building do not formally feature, arguably making it all the more challenging for these areas to progress on a cross border basis. However bodies such as the Centre for Cross Border Studies and its sister organisation, the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) have an interest in the development of the border region which make references to the role of community development in peace building.
Peace building in rural areas

Communities living in both rural and urban areas in Northern Ireland and the southern border counties of Ireland have endured a long period of sustained civil conflict, violence and political instability. Peace building is the process/ies that ultimately lead to:

- An absence of violence and conflict
- Justice flourishing and people being free from the fear of all kinds of violence
- The peaceful co-existence of diverse social and cultural beliefs and norms
- Economic, social and political justice
- Shared ‘democratic’ use of power and non-violence.

Living with and living in the aftermath of conflict and unrest can make trust between people from different backgrounds (for example, religion, age and generation, community background, interests, sides of the border) fragile. Communities and individuals can be seen to have adopted different strategies to avoid this type of tension and misunderstanding - some choose silence while others find ways to avoid contact. In urban areas, for example, peace walls have been used to separate different communities while in rural, local people generally know which areas are uncontested and which are not. It is also the case that within some towns and indeed villages, people from different traditions do not live together.

Elements of peace building

Breaking the silence

Breaking the silence is generally one of the first key steps in peace building work. The silence in rural areas has been characterised19 in a number of different ways including:

- A ‘polite silence’: where pleasantries are observed but where there is limited further engagement and no communication/conversation about the impact and legacy of the conflict.

- Avoidance: where there is little or no contact between groups/communities from different backgrounds and cultures – this occurs most frequently in single identity communities and groups where there is little opportunity for contact with people from different background. However it can also occur in majority communities where the minority is so small that it can be ignored leading to minimal or in some cases no contact.

- A ‘tacit culture of silence’ which can be characterised by communities/groups only advertising/promoting their events and activities in places that are known to them thereby excluding others from participation. This tacit culture which is the result of accepted historical practice can be practiced by both majority and minority communities and is often presented in terms of ‘it has always been done this way’. The historical nature of this tacit culture of silence can make it difficult to name, and to change. Community development provides a useful tool in breaking these various types of silences (which can occur singly or in combination) by bringing people together to help them identify both their needs and their concerns.

19 RCN (2012) Breaking the Silence Practice to Policy Paper
Learning to share space in rural areas
Learning to share space is another important element of peace building particularly in a society where people from different traditions often live apart with few possibilities for contact with individuals and groups from other backgrounds. Research\textsuperscript{20,21} has indeed demonstrated that there are few shared spaces in rural areas, with many facilities in rural areas associated exclusively with one tradition or the other. The development of shared space in rural areas is also increasingly important from an economic/value for money imperative where the population base is low in relation to sustaining services (including outreach community education, welfare advice and health services). In this context it can again be seen that community development offers a useful process to assist people to identity their needs and take collective action to address them.

The development and emergence of community and civic leaders
Taking collective action to break the silence, and to share space, for the greater good, requires leadership from within, as well as encouragement and support from external agencies. Community development offers active and potentially active individuals a process and a route they can use to lead and facilitate collective visioning and action. Community development benefits from support from elected representatives. The presence of elected members at community peace building events is both useful and important in terms of raising awareness and valuing community development work locally.

\textsuperscript{20} Contested Spaces (2012) commissioned by Community Relations Council on behalf of their Rural Policy Committee
\textsuperscript{21} Beyond Belfast (2010) jointly commissioned by Rural Community Network and Community Relations Council
The role of community development in rural peace building

Conflict on the island of Ireland cost an estimated 3,500 people their lives, leaving 35,000 injured and with many more thousands bereaved and communities divided and wary of engaging with others. The Conflict has also had enormous social and indeed economic impacts. The flag protests (sparked by a controversial decision to limit the flying the Union flag at Belfast City Hall) which began in December 2012 provide a very real example of the economic costs.

By 24 January 2013, these protests have been estimated to have cost the local Belfast economy £15 million (€17.7 million) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) at least £7 million in an effort to control and police the demonstrations. Community development offers a useful approach in addressing the legacy of the conflict north and south of the border in a number of different ways.

From an economic perspective
Given the current focus on economic recovery and the efficient use of increasingly scarce resources, the application of a community development approach supporting communities to work together is important. There is, for example, no scope or desire for ‘double resourcing’ of community facilities, especially when there is commitment to support shared space. In other areas, there continues to be a need to tackle anti social behaviour including sectarianism and racism. Community development has a role to play in ensuring that issues are foreseen and prepared for and where they do arise, they are tackled quickly and not allowed to escalate unchecked. This in turn can lead, and has led, to enhanced community empowerment, enhanced relations and real reductions in policing and other emergency services costs.

From a social perspective
A community development approach functions by bringing people together from a diversity of backgrounds. Carefully managed, this process can break down barriers and enhance connections and links with and between communities. In this context, it is clear that community development has an important role in building trust and relationships both within and between communities (including geographically focused communities and communities of interest) as well as between the community and voluntary sector and statutory bodies at both local and regional/national levels.

From a political perspective
The application of community development practices and principles has a role in ensuring that elected representatives and other community leaders continue to develop their relationships with one another and with members of the wider community based on the principles of mutual respect and understanding of their different perspectives and roles. This is particularly important in a Northern Ireland context where there is increased political independence at regional level and the move towards enhanced responsibility at the local level (with the associated enlarging of council areas), both of which place a renewed significance on the need for the development of strong connections and good relationships between representative and participatory democracy.

22 Morrissey, M, Smyth, Marie, Fay, M. T & Wong T (1999), The Cost of the Troubles Study. INCORE, Derry/Londonderry
Community development and rural peace building in practice

This section highlights a number of projects which provide practical evidence of the positive role community development can play in rural peace building. Each project highlights at least one of the five community development values and principles identified in section 1. Examples from local history and cultural projects, arts and sports activities, which worked with specific target groups including institutions and cultural groups, young people and women illustrate these principles. The Rural Enabler approach itself also offers another useful example. The projects have been described in generic terms in order to ensure anonymity of the groups and communities involved who continue with the sensitive and slow work of building peace.

Example 1: Local history

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE – EQUALITY & ANTI-DISCRIMINATION**

This project used a community development approach to facilitate the organisation and hosting of a local history exhibition and talk in a mixed area where any portrayal of history ran the risk of alienating at least one community or other.

The group leading the project involved were single identity (not by design) and, although extremely knowledgeable on their subject, were new to hosting and apprehensive about the challenges and potential risks associated with historical interpretation.

With the input and advice of the Enabler, the local history group decided to organise a discussion meeting with members of the wider community to explore the issues and challenges more broadly. The group initially found the idea of organising this type of discussion meeting quite challenging but recognised that it was necessary to break the silence and build new local relationships. The involvement and support of the local council’s Good Relations Officer was useful in this context.

Among the topics discussed at the actual discussion meeting included schools, community groups from both main traditions and local leaders. It was a challenging event for all concerned.

Following the meeting, the group sought to take on board many of the issues raised at the meeting in the planning of their exhibition and event. These included the design of the invite, the letters to schools and a welcoming extension of the invitation to attend to the wider community. All of these actions contributed to the success of the project in terms of attendance levels, ownership and the development of enhanced relations between the two main traditions.

**LEARNING**

The application of the value of equality and anti-discrimination led ultimately to the organisation of a more inclusive event. Its application was clearly not without challenges but the success of the event has created opportunities for further peace building work. The involvement of the local Good Relations Officer in the process highlights the values of working and learning together and collective action.
**Example 2: Encouraging Community Activity**

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE – SOCIAL JUSTICE**

This project brought together community, voluntary and statutory agencies with a remit for community support at the local level in one venue. The venue selected (because it was agreeable to all) was a local church hall.

The groups who got together to organise the event were very aware of the troubled history of the local area and the absence of good relations with the local council – at both local representative and officer level. There were also a number of groups (including a local band) who because of their perceived political affiliations in the area were feared by many in the community.

Applying the principle of social justice, the organising group with the support of the Enabler sought to engage with the Band. This involved meeting with their members and others and encouraging them to attend the wider community event and exhibit evidence of the work that they had undertaken for local and regional charities. This purpose of encouraging and supporting them to attend was to start to build tentative relationships with this group of otherwise quite isolated local people.

**LEARNING**

The application of the social justice principle within a community development approach ensured the inclusion of a diverse range of groups including a very isolated and challenging group. Their inclusion has set the scene for the development of enhanced community relations.

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**Example 3: Churches engaging cross border**

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE – WORKING AND LEARNING TOGETHER / PARTICIPATION**

This cross border project involved a number of church choirs coming together to take part in a public event. Each church choir carefully selected their hymns.

This enabled sharing learning (based on an indepth exploration and discussion of the various hymn choices) and offered opportunities for reflection on values and beliefs which promoted empowerment among all religions involved including the Roman Catholic, Methodist, Church of Ireland and Presbyterian churches from both sides of the border.

**LEARNING**

This cross border interfaith project highlights the value of working and learning together. It began with a process of people making choices around their own contributions, then sharing it with others and having a collective opportunity to reflect on their various choices.
Example 4: Engaging young people

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE – COLLECTIVE ACTION

This project involved a rural youth group using sport as a medium to encourage other young people to join.

The young people involved in the group initially developed an action plan for the sports event. They went on to very successfully organise and host what turned out to be quite a major event including agreeing and developing the branding for it as well as taking part in the activities. As part of the event, they presented a showcase DVD ‘Insider? Outsider? - Speaking For Ourselves’ funded through Youth Action’s Peace Dividends.

Those attending the event got a unique opportunity to take part in a wide range of sporting activities and to meet and play with young people from different traditions whom they had never met before. They were exposed to new skills and techniques whilst working alongside each other. The sense of team was also promoted through t-shirts designed by the young people and which bore the logo ‘Playing for Peace’ providing those attending with something tangible with which to remember the event. The event was followed by a barbecue which offered those attending a further opportunity to share experiences and develop contacts. The event was attended by the local Mayor in recognition of the role young people were playing in making things happen in their communities.

LEARNING

This application of the community principle of collective action was what made this project successful with young people at the core of the decision making and action planning. The recognition of their achievements by the Mayor was an important acknowledgment of the need for collective action.
Example 5: The role of the arts

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE – SOCIAL JUSTICE

This project involved a Family Resource Centre located in a disadvantaged area which is continuing to struggle to deal with the legacy of the conflict working to support young people and the wider community. The project took a staged approach in considering and dealing with the concerns about young people in the community. These stages included:

- A community audit within which a number of young people were identified as feeling isolated and marginalised and running the risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour because the lack of provision of any form of extra-curricular activities.

- Development of an arts project aimed at young people delivered through a series of workshops based on a variety of media including music, drama and art.

- Delivery of a programme for the wider community (including young people). This was achieved through implementing an interactive show on completion of the workshops to the broader community.

All of these various activities served to bring different sections of the community together enabling people to work collectively to develop and run activities in which they were interested. Most importantly, it resulted in a greater sense of belonging for the young people involved and gave them a stake in their own local community. It also enhanced good relationships both on a cross community and inter ethnic basis and resulted in reducing levels of racist and sectarianism behaviour.

LEARNING

The application of the community development principle of social justice/empowerment within this project has ensured that young people who were in real danger of being further marginalised have now been included and valued. They have been provided with a very real opportunity to contribute and their inclusion has helped to enhance relationships and reduce levels of sectarian and racist behaviour which were a real concern in the local community.
Example 6: Women building relationships

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE – WORKING AND LEARNING TOGETHER/PARTICIPATION

The recognition of the existence of very strained relationships between neighbouring counties (across the border) exacerbated by the recent burning of an Orange Hall (used on a regular basis by a local women’s group whose craft and tapestry work was ruined in the fire) was the catalyst for developing a project. It led members of a local community fora to begin work to rebuild and enhance cross border contacts and relationships. The group approached their Rural Enabler for support. As a result of a series of conversations, a cross border women’s project was identified and proposed as a method for rebuilding relationships and trust between the neighbouring areas.

The project saw the women involved organise a networking seminar where they explored issues and themes of commonality. They featured women through the ages and the contribution they have made to community in rural life and social change in this cross border community. It also considered the barriers to cross border and cross community engagement and how these could be addressed. An added feature of the project was the introduction of outside speakers who focused on the importance of diversity and equality.

LEARNING

The application of the community development principle of working and learning together was made real through a process of collective planning, development and organisation of a peace building event. It allowed communities to come together to value and acknowledge their shared skills and experiences, breaking down the barriers that conflict and recent events had created. These are all important elements of building peace in rural areas and among rural communities.
The role of community development in rural peace building

Example 7: The Rural Enabler approach as a way of working

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES – EQUALITY AND ANTI DISCRIMINATION, SOCIAL JUSTICE, COLLECTIVE ACTION, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT & WORKING & LEARNING TOGETHER/PARTICIPATION

The Rural Enabler Programme based its approach to peace building firmly on the five core practices and principles of community development. Conscious from the outset of the Programme’s short term nature and reliance on external funding, Programme staff and management sought to make links with local communities as well as statutory bodies and representative democracy at the local, sub-regional and regional as well as cross border levels. This included a particular focus on work with local communities to encourage, empower and support them to work and learn together to develop their peace building work grounded in the core values of community development. This facilitated communities (and decision makers at the local and regional levels observing and supporting the work) to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the value of community development in peace building work.

LEARNING

The Programme, as a source of neutral, external support, had the capacity, resources and credibility to be able to support, challenge, resource and broker relationships with and between groups at community level and between community and statutory levels.
Conclusions

Building peace in rural areas and communities is all about supporting the processes that lead to an absence of violence and conflict; an absence of fear of violence, a flourishing of economic, social and political justice, peaceful co-existence and the shared ‘democratic’ use of power. The principles of community development (equality and anti-discrimination, social justice, collective action, community empowerment and working and learning together) clearly resonate with this.

Key elements of peace building in rural areas relate to breaking the silence/s (including ‘polite silence’, avoidance and a ‘tacit culture of silence), learning to share space and the development of community and civic leaders prepared to engage in this type of challenging work. The application of community development approaches, principles and values have a valuable role to play in the context of rural peace building given their particular focus on:

- Building the capacity of active individuals through community groups, organisations and networks
- Building the capacity of institutions and agencies to work in dialogue with individuals to shape and determine change in their communities
- Promoting the voice of the disadvantaged and vulnerable communities

The application of community development principles in practice indeed enables people to follow a very useful and structured process of working together to identify their needs; take action to exert influence on the decisions which affect their lives; and improve their quality of life and ultimately the quality of wider community life. It also provides a mechanism by which community and public agencies can work together to improve the quality of government.

The experience of the Rural Enabler Programme and the groups it has supported has proved (beyond doubt) that the application of a community development approach to rural peace building is useful in terms of supporting the development of actions and relationships (in both Northern Ireland and the southern border counties) that can be built upon ensuring progress towards an ultimately peaceful and sustainable society in the longer term.
The role of community development in rural peace building

1. Community Development and Community Development and Peace Building Policies at national level

Community development policy varies significantly north and south of the border. In Northern Ireland, community development policies and supports are delivered through a range of Programmes with a particular focus on infrastructure provision. In the Republic of Ireland, community development policy is limited with some policies considerably out of date.

- Policies need to be developed on the role of community development in peace building (perhaps as part of the preparations for a PEACE IV Programme) and greater consideration needs to be given to the creation of enhanced levels of cross border community development interchange and policy discussion. Relations between community development and community relations/good relations policies are not clear and would benefit from being made more explicit, particularly in the context of diminishing external resources being available to peace building and in light of reform of local government a continuing feature of life on both sides of the border.

2. Community Development and Community Development and Peace Building Policies at local level

Many organisations at local level, north and south of the border, apply a community development approach in their work. There is clearly learning generated from this work that could usefully be shared between these organisations and with others. This is currently being supported through initiatives by the Centre for Cross Border Studies such as information on what organisations exist and what they are doing. However it needs to be further developed.

- Mechanisms need to be found to share learning at local and cross border levels.

3. Community Development and Local Government

In Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, local councils have responsibility for administering community development funding from the Department for Social Development as well as Good Relations funding from the Office of the First and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM). Within some local authorities the development and implementation of these strategies and action plans make reference to one another but a strengthening of the outwarding of the actions within these plans would enhance this valuable work at the community level, encouraging and supporting enhanced relationships. Furthermore, the impacts of other council funding opportunities, such as the Community Festival Fund (DCAL) and the Policing & Community Safety Partnerships (DOJ) could be further developed by ensuring that the principles and values of community development are at their core.

In the Republic of Ireland

In the border region of Ireland local councils have a lead in the development and implementation of Peace strategies and their action plans. Some councils have employed Good Relations Officers who work as part of the Peace and Reconciliation teams and within the current Departments of Community and Enterprise where responsibility for community programmes also lie. Within these departments and the successor structures as proposed in the Final Report of the Local Government/Local Development Alignment Steering Group (March 2012) there is real opportunity to develop greater collaboration.

- In the reform of local government and the resulting re-organisation of the councils and associated structures, there is a real opportunity to formally develop cohesive approaches within programmes so that community development principles could be placed at the heart of them.

Recommendations

- Policies need to be developed on the role of community development in peace building (perhaps as part of the preparations for a PEACE IV Programme) and greater consideration needs to be given to the creation of enhanced levels of cross border community development interchange and policy discussion. Relations between community development and community relations/good relations policies are not clear and would benefit from being made more explicit, particularly in the context of diminishing external resources being available to peace building and in light of reform of local government a continuing feature of life on both sides of the border.

- Mechanisms need to be found to share learning at local and cross border levels.
4. Community Development and Peace Building on a Cross Border basis
The past 20 years have seen significant external resources invested in community-led initiatives on a cross border basis, mainly through initiatives promoting peace and reconciliation. There has been considerable learning from this work particularly in cross border neighbourhood work and on a thematic basis. A key resource has been the development of the all island Community Development National Occupational Standards.

- The work of CDNOS provides a sound foundation from which further programmes North, South and Cross border could further develop, making peace building more central rather than being on the periphery.

5. Valuing the Community Development Approach
At a time of economic contraction, it is important that decision makers and others are made aware of the potential and the value of community development in terms of contributing to the economic, social and political fabric of society.

- Those involved in community development need to find practical ways to demonstrate how its application, particularly within a rural context, can save money, make connections and build the relationships critical to building and sustaining peace.

6. The usefulness of community development principles in rural peace building work
This paper has provided clear examples of how community development principles can make a very useful contribution to peace building in a rural context.

The case studies have also illustrated how by applying community development practices and principles, this has often resulted in positive change in rural communities. This has worked at a number of levels including through community volunteers, paid practitioners, local council support staff and elected representatives. There is a need to provide further analysis of this work – theoretically as well as practically.

- Individuals and organisations seeking to support peace building should be encouraged, facilitated, resourced and supported to apply community development principles in their peace building practice/s.

- Further work in analysing the role of community development practices and values in rural communities needs to be drawn out to, for example, illustrate learning on addressing division in communities.

7. The importance of independent outreach support
Using and successfully applying a community development approach, the Rural Enabler Programme was able to reach out to and support hard to engage groups including disaffected young people, institutions and communities, many of which had never engaged in peace building previously. This enabled these groups to lay a solid foundation for their engagement in peace building work into the future. Other rurally based groups which have yet to engage in peace building also need to be able to access this kind of expertise and support.

- Ways need to be found to enable the provision of independent outreach support for peace building work (both locally and on a cross border and cross community basis) based on community development principles.

8. Supporting the application and implementation of community development approaches at a local level
At local level, it is clear that rural communities, those that support them and local decision makers would benefit from the provision of further practical examples of the application of community development approaches in peace building work.

- Further practical examples of the application of community development approaches in rural peace building work need to be developed and widely circulated. It would be particularly useful in this context if joint projects which involve statutory bodies and communities working together could be highlighted.
This is the third of a series of four research reports. The others are:
- Churches and faith-based organisations
- Institutions - their role in peace building in rural communities
- Rural communities – polite avoidance and denial – rhetoric or reality?