



A Pot Pourri of Civil Society Action for Conflict Transformation and Peacbuilding

September 2013





A Pot Pourri of Civil Society Action for Conflict Transformation and Peacbuilding

September 2013



September 2013



Published by
Democratic Progress Institute
11 Guilford Street
London WC1N 1DH
United Kingdom

www.democraticprogress.org
info@democraticprogress.org
+44 (0)203 206 9939

First published, 2013

ISBN: 978-1-905592-74-6

© DPI – Democratic Progress Institute, 2013

DPI – Democratic Progress Institute is a charity registered in England and Wales. Registered Charity No. 1037236. Registered Company No. 2922108.

This publication is copyright, but may be reproduced by any method without fee or prior permission for teaching purposes, but not for resale. For copying in any other circumstances, prior written permission must be obtained from the publisher, and a fee may be payable. be obtained from the publisher, and a fee may be payable

Contents

Introduction.....	7
A Creating Space for Voice.....	9
The Citizens' Inquiry 1992.....	10
Beyond Hate Conference.....	11
Community Foundation for Northern Ireland – Space for Discussion	12
B Confidence Building through Local Action.....	13
Inter-Action Belfast (previously the Springfield Inter- Community Development Project.....	13
Community Restorative Justice.....	14
Creating Space for Learning and Sharing.....	16
C Preventing the Spread of Rumour and Misinformation.....	17
Community Dialogue.....	18
The Mobile Phone Network.....	18
D Giving the Conflict a Human Face	19
The Listening Ear Service	19
Counselling and Personal Development.....	20
The Importance of Story Telling.....	20
Political Ex-Prisoners Support Reintegration.....	21
The Use of the Arts.....	22
E Dealing with the Legacies of the Past.....	23
Healing through Remembering	23
Truth Telling from Below.....	24

F	Human Rights – An Essential Baseline	25
	Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)	25
	The Human Rights Consortium	25
G	Where are the Women?.....	26
	Women’s Information Group	26
	Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition	27
	Northern Ireland Women’s Aid Federation.....	27
	Women’s Resource and Development Agency	28
H	Counting the Cost.....	28
	The Cost of the Troubles Study	29
	The Impact of Political Conflict on Children in Northern Ireland	29
	Participation	30
	The G7 Initiative.....	30
	Civic Forum	31
	Final Note.....	32
	DPI Board and Council of Experts.....	33

Introduction

The ideas and suggestions for interventions by Civil Society organisations during periods of both violent conflict in contested societies and transition from violence, as during periods of peacebuilding and conflict transformation are drawn from experience in Northern Ireland. They can be adapted and modified given different circumstances and conditions, but they are based on a number of principles:-

- (i) The need to provide people at all levels of society – but particularly within those neighbourhoods; communities and regions most affected by violent conflict – with an opportunity to express their hopes, fears and experience.
- (ii) The need to create safe spaces for people to have their voices heard.
- (iii) The importance of hearing from often marginalised or silenced groups e.g. women; young people; minority groups within society, etc.
- (iv) The need to include the voices of people who were engaged/ suffered in the violence – victims/survivors of the violence; political prisoners and their families; ex-combatants; displaced communities.
- (v) The importance of hearing from communities in their own words, art forms and languages.

- (vi) A recognition that both Civil Society NGOs/organisations and community-based organisations are diverse and have the right to express a diversity of views.

Many of these interventions are based on an understanding of the importance of connecting learning and action to listening as long-term violent conflict both causes silences through fear and reduces complexity to the artificial simplicity of ‘us’ and ‘them’ – the other.

These interventions – and other actions by Civil Society – can take place in the aftermath of ceasefires, but in a number of situations even where ceasefires break down as so often happens. In such situations it may be helpful to be mindful of what Gandhi says –

*“Keep your thoughts positive because your thoughts become your words.
Keep your words positive because your words become your behaviour.
Keep your behaviour positive because your behaviour becomes your habits.
Keep your habits positive because your habits become your values.
Keep your values positive because your values become your destiny.”*

This Handbook will present a number of Civil Society interventions in the following categories:-

- A Creating Space for Voice
- B Confidence Building through Local Action
- C Preventing the Spread of Rumour and Misinformation
- D Giving the Conflict a Human Face
- E Dealing with the Legacies of the Past
- F Human Rights – An Essential Baseline
- G Where are the Women?
- H Counting the Cost
- I Civic Participation

The Handbook will present some concluding remarks drawn from the case studies collated.

Avila Kilmurray¹
akilmurray@communityfoundationni.org
2013

A Creating Space for Voice

One of the first dynamics to happen during extended periods of violent conflict is the disappearance of complexity. The narrative of the conflict becomes simplified to ‘my side’ or ‘their side’. People are challenged as to whether they are supporters of ‘them’ or ‘us’. There is always the danger that individuals who are seen to break ranks with their own community/’side’ in the conflict are seen as traitors – or even worse, collaborators. Over an extended period this sharp division can often result in conflicting narratives growing up as to the *raison d’être* of the conflict, as well as conflicting – and mutually exclusive, versions of the ‘truth’ of what has happened. This was exacerbated in Northern Ireland where communities were often living in single identity communities divided by 30 ft. high ‘peace walls’, and where there was a broadcasting ban placed on a number of organisations that the government decided were

¹ Avil Kilmurray was a founder member of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition and was part of the Coalition’s negotiating team for the Good Friday Agreement. She has written extensively on community action, the women’s movement and conflict transformation. In addition to serving on DPI’s Council of Experts, Avila serves on the Board of Conciliation Resources (UK); the Global Fund for Community Foundations; Conflict Resolution Services Ireland and the Institute for British Irish Studies. Avila was the first Women’s Officer for the Transport & General Workers Union for Ireland (1990-1994) and became Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in 1994. Avila was awarded the Raymond Georis Prize for Innovative Philanthropy through the European Foundation Centre.

advocates of paramilitary violence. Consequently, in order to lay the grounds for a greater understanding and sharing of diverse views and experience a number of initiatives were developed.

The Citizens' Inquiry 1992

A group of people from civil society and academia came together in 1991 – three years before the paramilitary ceasefires to plan an independent citizens' inquiry into possible ways forward for Northern Ireland which was then stuck in a political impasse. Individuals and local groups/organisations would be invited to submit ideas and views, with the commission of inquiry being kept as open as possible so that no view would be excluded. A local Steering Group was set up which, in turn, identified 150 people from Northern Ireland and beyond to act as 'patrons' of the project. These people came from a wide variety of social, political, religious and sectoral backgrounds. The Steering Group and the patrons identified, in turn, seven eminent and knowledgeable members of the Commission of Inquiry. These included Professor Torkel Opsahl (Norway); Professor Pdraig O'Malley (USA); Professor Ruth Lister (England); Lady Faulkner (Unionist Tradition – Northern Ireland); Dr Eric Gallagher (Protestant Clergyman – Northern Ireland); Eamonn Gallagher (Nationalist Tradition – Northern Ireland) and Professor Marianne Elliott (England). Funding was sourced from a number of independent charitable Trusts and Foundations and a small secretariat was set up.

Over a period of one year 29 public meetings were organised across Northern Ireland as well as in London (Britain) and Dublin (Republic of Ireland). Six confidential Focus Groups were held

in communities that were on the front line of the conflict. A schools initiative was developed to ensure the voices of young people were heard. An invitation was issued to every prisoner held in prison in Northern Ireland to contribute their ideas. A number of confidential meetings were held with representatives of various political parties and groups. In the end some 554 written submissions were received from organisations – representing some 3,000 people. Outreach Workers interviewed people in local communities and there were a large number of oral submissions heard by the Commission of Inquiry at their Open Hearings. The material was published and disseminated in A Citizens' Inquiry Report which was widely circulated. The material was grouped under the four themes of (i) Politics and Constitutional Issues; (ii) Law, Justice and Security; (iii) The Economy and Society; and (iv) Culture, Religion, Identity and Education. As part of the exercise the Commission had contacts with both republican and loyalist paramilitary organisations and the state security forces. The main emphasis remained on opening up space for discussion and reflecting – as far as possible 0 the full range of views.

Beyond Hate Conference

An example of a more locally-based initiative to create space for discussion was the Derry organised 'Beyond Hate' conference which again was organised in 1992, before the ceasefires of 1994. The official title was 'Beyond Hate: Living with our Deepest Differences', which was held in the Derry City Guildhall, with participants from twenty five countries. A range of international speakers – who contributed both in person and through message – described how they had moved beyond hate. This included

contributions from South Africa, the Middle East, the Balkans the USA and Cambodia. The local audience, which included the full range of political opinions, then discussed how the views expressed were relevant to their situation in Northern Ireland. The conference contributions were published in a report which was circulated to local groups in the hope that it would provoke further reflection and discussion.

Community Foundation for Northern Ireland – Space for Discussion

The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland is an independent, charitable grant-making Foundation, but also acted as a Managing Agent for European Union (EU) PEACE Programme funds over the period 1995-2008. Many of the community-based organisations and initiatives that it was funding were primarily working in single identity either Catholic/Nationalist/Republican or Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist areas. To bring these groups together to examine issues that related directly to the ongoing peace process, the Community Foundation took the initiative to organise a series of 2-3 day conferences. The residential nature of these gatherings allowed people from different communities and backgrounds to meet together and to get to know one another. Speakers from other societies emerging from conflict were invited to share their experiences of what had worked and what proved to be problematic. Issues covered included the Protection of Rights; New Approaches to Governance; Provision for Victims/Survivors of the Violence; Supporting Political Change; Crafting Strategies for a Shared Future – and many others. In addition to the residential conferences a series of regional conflict transformation seminars

were held across Northern Ireland, facilitated by a South African speaker with the aim of exploring the hopes and fears of social and community activists. Very often these activities were organised to coincide with periods of tension and uncertainty in the peace process.

A range of different organisations from civil society organised similar networking events on specific themes – from how the conflict affected young people to the importance of peace for economic development.

B Confidence Building through Local Action

It has often been pointed out in Northern Ireland that local combatants on various sides in the conflict did not come down from the mountains at night, and then disappeared again in the morning, they lived next door to you (with the exception of the British Army that were deployed). Consequently, local community initiatives could often include activists that were either involved with, or close to, combatants and related organisations. This fact could be used to build cross-community confidence and networking both in the years of the violence and the period of transition.

Inter-Action Belfast (previously the Springfield Inter-Community Development Project)

Located in the flashpoint interface area of the Springfield Road in West Belfast this organisation was established before the 1994 ceasefires. It worked from three different locations, one Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist; one Catholic/Nationalist/Republican and one

on the interface itself. It had a Standing Conference which drew in people from both sides of the interface and a Steering Group that had a representation of activists from both sides of the divided society. It employed political ex-prisoners; one a Republican and one a Loyalist. The initiative placed a heavy emphasis on winning, and maintaining, local participation, but it worked on issues of concern to local people, such as area regeneration; unemployment etc. It also linked up with an Adult Education Centre to offer community leadership training to local people. The early objectives of Inter-Action Belfast were outlined as (i) a belief in inclusive dialogue; (ii) recognition of the role of political parties and government in decision-making about interface areas; (iii) importance of economic investment in community initiatives; (iv) work on inter-community cultural initiatives and community-based single identity projects; and (v) work to reduce sectarianism through issues of common community concern and single identity work. This recognised that there was a continuum between community development, community relations and conflict transformation. The building of trust and confidence through a working relationship also enabled the political ex-prisoners employed on the project to feed back information to their respective combatant organisation, which in turn encouraged the latter to engage in some exploratory dialogue about the potential for a peace process. In this case community development provided a baseline for early political development.

Community Restorative Justice

In 1996 a NGO NIACRO (Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders) invited a number of political ex-prisoners to work with two NIACRO officers to

research alternatives to the violent attacks that had been a feature of the various paramilitary groups policing their own communities over many years. The victims of the kneecappings, beatings and expulsions that were adopted, were those individuals (mainly young men) that were accused of ‘anti-social behaviour’, and/or collusion with the state security forces. Police were not acceptable in many local communities as they were seen as an arm of the state. A number of seminars and conferences were held to talk through various ‘informal justice’ approaches that were non-violent in approach and rooted in human rights principles. Those that were involved in these discussions included a number of individuals that were members of the paramilitary punishment squads. The alternate approach accepted was that of mediation and community-based restorative justice – bringing the victims and the perpetrators together to provide an opportunity for the victim to be heard about the consequences of the harm, and to agree about what needs to be done to heal. Alongside this, where it is clear that the perpetrator has specific needs (e.g. drug/alcohol addiction; lack of personal support etc.) intensive programmes are put in place to work with them. For many years these Community Restorative Justice projects have worked outside of the policing structures, although with the progress of the peace process this is currently less the case. However there still are a small number of restorative justice projects that refuse to have any contact with the Police Service Northern Ireland, reflecting the political views of the groups that they work with. Community Restorative Justice has developed projects in both Loyalist and Republican communities.

Creating Space for Learning and Sharing

Creating Space for Learning and Sharing is an initiative of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland which recognises that encouraging local communities to take the risk of meeting up, and working in partnership with, communities from the other' side is not always easy. The challenges for CSLSP (Creating Space for Learning and Sharing Programme) is to ensure that local groups are supported to identify peacebuilding and conflict transformation issues that could impact in a positive manner on the wider range of activities and services that community-based groups were already involved in delivering in their own areas. The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland approached a list of groups on both sides of the sectarian divide who had either struggled to engage in peacebuilding and cross-community contact work, or who had simply not considered it a priority. The Community Foundation also recruited a team of Mentors who had experience in working with local communities and in facilitating discussion on contentious issues. Groups that agreed to participate in the CSLSP were provided with both Mentor support and a small grant of £2,500 to implement a local Peacebuilding Action Plan which they drew up with the mentor support. When trust and confidence was built, groups from different identity/political backgrounds were then encouraged to meet/network with each other, to share experiences and discuss differences and divisions in order to learn from one another; to identify shared issues and to build their capacity to undertake reconciliation work. This proved to be a popular programme as single identity groups could rely on the mentor to offer a 'challenge function' of encouraging local participants to tackle issues and questions they may not otherwise have been willing to address; it provided groups with space for

reflection; it introduced them to people working on similar issues in communities of a different political identity; and it provided them with a small amount of funding to implement their own Peacebuilding Action Plan.

C Preventing the Spread of Rumour and Misinformation

There is nothing better in aggravating violence and fear than misinformed rumour which suggests that there will be a violent attack, or a conspiracy from ‘the other side’. This is particularly the case where single identity communities are physically divided from one another and when their sources of information are divided as well. In Northern Ireland local single identity communities often read different newspapers and listen to different sets of political parties. However it is worth mapping what are the main sources of information that might be accepted in common.

In the aftermath of the 1994 ceasefires, BBC Radio (Northern Ireland) did a very useful exercise of broadcasting a 5-minute story of an individual who had been affected in some way by the violence. This was broadcast immediately after the main morning news report; it was broadcast without comment; and the individual stories were drawn from all sides of the conflict. This was a very effective use of media to make the point that the political violence had been experienced across the whole of society in Northern Ireland and not just by one particular community.

Community Dialogue

This was a NGO initiative to present information within local communities about what was happening in the ongoing peace process. As most of the peace talks were taking place behind closed doors, local communities were dependent on ‘their’ political representatives for feedback. They were also often fearful about what was happening. Community Dialogue was a group of activists, drawn from both sides of the community divide, who prepared a number of simply written Information Sheets and Pamphlets. These contained up-to-date information about what was happening in the peace process and presented summary points of any political agreements made. The written information was supplemented by community meetings and discussions.

The Mobile Phone Network

Given that local communities in urban areas of Northern Ireland are so often physically divided by very high ‘peace walls’ there was a concern that the lack of contact between community activists could allow rumours to flourish. In some cases this gave rise to misinformation and fears as in the case where a large group of young men were reported as gathering and moving in the direction of an interface or peace wall in one single identity community, which resulted in young men on the other side of the wall mobilising to stave off a feared attack. However it turned out that actually the first group were only returning home from a football match. As a result of this it was decided to create a network of community activists working on the community interfaces and to issue them with mobile telephones. This allowed them to contact each other to check out rumours during times of tension. The timely

clarification of issues could then be reported back to the local community leaders, and could serve to alleviate and/or prevent possible violence. The mobile phone holders were then brought together to meet on a monthly – or more frequent basis. Any issues of contention were raised and discussed. In many cases the mobile phone activists were themselves ex-combatants/political ex-prisoners from both sides of the conflict.

D Giving the Conflict a Human Face

While a protracted violent conflict affects all aspects of society, there are a number of groups and communities that invariably bear a disproportionate impact of the violence. Two of these are the victims/survivors of violence – i.e. those that have been bereaved or/and injured in the conflict – and another group are political ex-prisoners. Clearly ex-prisoners can also be victims/ survivors of the conflict, and then there is the broader group of ex-combatants. The challenge of humanising the casualties of conflict is particularly important in seeking to effectively reintegrate these individuals and families into a society emerging from violence, but also to facilitate them in accepting political compromises and agreements.

The Listening Ear Service

A number of self-help Victims/Survivor groups – representing people from all sides of the conflict developed Listening Ear services. This involves training people (often volunteers to act as a ‘listening ear’ for people³ who have been bereaved or injured in the conflict. The service entails listening not giving advice. The volunteers have to make application to become ‘listening ears’, and

also to provide references. Training is provided in how to carry out this role and the critical importance of confidentiality is stressed. A support centre for the volunteers is put in place so that they can be both supported and supervised on a regular basis. This approach is rooted in the recognition that many victims/survivors did not have space to speak about their hurt/anger over years of violence and it is a non-medicalised and non-judgemental response to meeting this need.

Counselling and Personal Development

A number of Counselling and Personal Development Centres were established to provide counselling and psychotherapy services to victims/ survivors of the conflict, as well as to ex-combatants. In the case of these services it is crucial that accepted quality standards are in place and adequate training, support and supervision. People availing of the services not only receive counselling, but also can benefit from stress/anxiety management techniques. Centres have also offered a range of alternative therapies to relieve stress – e.g. music therapy; art work; reflexology; reiki; aromatherapy etc. In the case of ex-combatants it was found that self-help groups had to get their own counsellors trained as the law in Northern Ireland required registered counsellors to report any crimes that clients admitted to to the police. This was not appropriate to an ex-combatant client group in a society emerging from violent conflict.

The Importance of Story Telling

Both Victims/Survivor groups and political ex-prisoner groups speak of the importance of telling individual and collective stories

of how people became involved in the conflict and what impact the violence had on themselves, their families and their community. This is one of the best ways to humanise the cost of the conflict rather than always talking in terms of the statistics. However it is important to have clear procedures in place with regard to the ownership, use and storage of the stories. A number of approaches have been used to facilitate people's involvement in the story telling process – such as art work; drama and the crafting of patchwork quilts. In this case the family member who had been bereaved made a patch for the quilt which contained something that represented the lost loved one (e.g. a piece of material from a wedding dress; football shirt etc.). The quilt was then sewn together. The main benefit experienced was the stories shared by the Victims/Survivors while they made their quilt patch. Again, it is important to remember that encouraging people to tell their story can give rise to feelings of hurt and anger that will then need to be supported and addressed.

Political Ex-Prisoners Support Reintegration

It is not unusual for political ex-prisoners to have experienced long terms of imprisonment; this can leave them with difficulties in reintegrating into their communities, but also in rebuilding relationships with their families. As a consequence of this a number of Political Ex-Prisoner Support Centres were opened in Northern Ireland to provide advice, support and to act as a focus for mutual assistance. In the vast majority of cases these Centres are managed by representatives of the particular political grouping that the ex-prisoner was associated with. However, as a funder of this work, the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland has

brought the majority of the political ex-prisoner Centres together into a Prison to Peace Partnership. The groups that make up this partnership are drawn from 5 different paramilitary organisations. They identify and select issues that they will agree to act together on, while retaining the autonomy of their own Support Centres. In recent years they have worked collectively on an Education Pack for Schools (DVD and curriculum materials) explaining to young people why they got caught up in violence; what was it like in prison; and why they now support the peace process. The Prison to Peace Partnership also gives the various organisations the ability to debrief each other during periods of tension.

The Use of the Arts

The arts, in various forms, have been used to both humanise and interrogate the conflict in Northern Ireland. Neighbourhood Open Workshop developed an early 'The Barricades Project' where a group of teenage Protestant girls from one community made a video/DVD of an imagined encounter with a Catholic girl from a nearby area. The second stage of the project brought the participants together with a group of girls from the neighbouring estate. Collectively they devised a play about their shared experience and perceptions. Local community-based Theatre Groups have written and performed dramas reflecting interpretations of the conflict, often drawing the cast of actors from those communities affected by the conflict, and debates and discussions with the audience have been encouraged after the play. The Playhouse in Derry has particular experience in the production of drama that reflects on the conflict. At a community level, local Festivals have woven together a combination of celebration, music, the arts,

together with staging debates and discussions that can reflect the views of ‘the other side’.

E Dealing with the Legacies of the Past

Dealing with the past, where the causes and nature of the conflict remains contested, is an ongoing challenge in Northern Ireland. This is invariably true of many violent conflicts where one person’s ‘freedom fighter’ can be another person’s ‘terrorist’ – or in the case of the British Government in Northern Ireland ‘criminal’. Although an independent cross-community Commission was established to look at how the legacies of the past might be addressed in Northern Ireland, no agreement was arrived at concerning its recommendations. There have, however, been a number of voluntary initiatives.

Healing through Remembering

Healing through Remembering is a cross-community organisation made up of a range of individuals and groups, holding different political perspectives, but committed to working on the common goal of how to deal with the legacy of the past as it relates to the conflict in, and about, Northern Ireland. When it was established it undertook a wide public consultation on how people wanted to remember the past, with ads placed in 56 local newspapers; 5,000 leaflets distributed and over 400 organisations contacted. On the basis of feedback a number of themes were identified for further work – (i) A network of commemoration and remembering projects; (ii) Establishing a Day of Reflection; (iii) Collective story telling and archiving process; (iv) the development of a permanent Living

Memorial Museum; and (v) Dealing with the acknowledgement of the past and the need for truth. The last theme has proved to be the most difficult, but the work continues. Healing through Remembering offers workshops and sponsors exhibitions and discussions on aspects of the 3 past.

Truth Telling from Below

The Ardoyne Commemoration Project was a community-based truth-telling initiative that was carried out with, and by, people in the Ardoyne area of North Belfast. This small Catholic/Nationalist/Republican area recorded and published the testimonies of the relatives and friends of the 99 victims from Ardoyne who died as a result of the conflict between 1969-1998. The book that was published, with the help of two academics, tells the story of a 'hidden history'. Many local people were involved in the interviews, database collation, transcribing, proof-reading and other tasks that the project required. While time consuming this provided the local community with a sense of ownership, as well as enhancing the skills of local people. Many of the families interviewed during the course of this project remarked how they had felt isolated over the years of the conflict. The project meetings were an informal way of bringing people together in order to share information in a supportive environment. The Ardoyne Commemoration Project Committee was made up of representatives from community groups, victims' organisations, ex-prisoners, victims and community activists. This local sense of participation gave the project legitimacy in the eyes of the community.

F Human Rights – An Essential Baseline

Respect for human rights is often an early victim of a violent conflict and yet international standards demand that human rights should be respected both during a conflict as well as in the period of transition to a peaceful society. Concern over issues of human rights has been most frequently expressed in Northern Ireland through the work of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations).

Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)

CAJ is an independent human rights organisation with cross-community membership in Northern Ireland and beyond. It was established in 1981 and lobbies and campaigns on a broad range of human rights issues. CAJ is committed to ensuring that the Government complies with its obligations in international law. To this end it researches and publishes reports on aspects of human rights abuses. It makes submissions on aspects of legislation and policies. It also provides information, advice, and, where appropriate, representation to victims (or potential victims) of human rights abuses in Northern Ireland as well as monitoring the handling of past human rights abuses. CAJ provides human rights training to a wide range of organisations.

The Human Rights Consortium

The Human Rights Consortium was established in 2000 to encourage widespread community support for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. It is a campaigning organisation that draws its support from a wide ranging membership which includes individuals, Trade Unions, community organisations and NGOs.

It promotes dialogue and discussion about the Bill of Rights (which was promised under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement 1998) with wider society.

G Where are the Women?

A study by the University of Ulster (2010) screened 585 peace agreements, signed between 1990 and 2010, concluded that only 16% of these agreements contained a reference to women. That same year (2010) the UN Development Fund for Women (Unifem) noted that women make up less than 10% of negotiators and less than 3% of the signatories to peace agreements. So where are the women?

In Northern Ireland a number of interventions were taken by women within NGOs and community-based organisations.

Women's Information Group

This was a network of locally-based Women's Groups throughout the greater Belfast area. Starting in 1981, they continued to meet one day a month throughout the years of conflict and into the years of the peace process. Initially they met in a 'neutral' downtown venue. Then they agreed to rotate their meetings in their 'own' communities and then visiting communities of 'the other side'. Transport, childcare and lunch was provided. They identified subjects of interest that they wanted to talk about e.g. cost of school uniforms; health issues etc. Generally these were not issues that addressed the major political controversies. The aim of the Women's Information Group was to build the confidence

of the women involved; to hear their concerns and to break down sectarian stereotypes of ‘the other’ community.

Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition

When elections to the Peace Talks were announced in 1996, a number of women from Civil Society came together with the concern that the voices of women would not be represented during the negotiations. It was recognised that there were female members of existing political parties, but notwithstanding this it was felt that these parties were still male dominated. The Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition was set up as a result of two meetings of women drawn from various organisations in Civil Societies. It organised its successful election campaign over a 6-week period and financed the campaign with £25,000 that it raised both locally and internationally. Rather than draw up detailed policies, it adopted 3 principles - Equality; Human Rights; Inclusion - that it used to bring together a platform of women from all sides of the divided community. It had two leaders - one from each of the two main traditions. The single focus of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition was the peace process. It took the decision to dissolve itself in 2004.

Northern Ireland Women’s Aid Federation

The Women’s Aid organisation operates a number of refuges for women who are victims/survivors of domestic violence. They report an increase in the demand for their services when the conflict related violence ends. Although Northern Ireland did not experience the specific conflict related sexual violence that has happened in many wars, it did report an increase in the reports of

domestic violence. This is a common factor in the aftermath to violent conflict.

Women's Resource and Development Agency

WRDA is a regional women's organisation whose vision is "of a society where women are confident, valued and respected and occupy visible positions of power and influence in all area of life." WRDA ran a Women and Conflict project which worked on the basis that women have very distinctive and diverse experiences of conflict, including those associated with organising and sustaining family life during violence. The project included a series of meetings and Workshops held in a wide range of geographical areas which were facilitated to encourage women to talk about their experiences of living through violence. The initial round of Workshops was held with women who shared the same/or similar single community identity. The second phase of the work was to explore the extent of the commonality that was found between the different groups. This then led to a specific Workshop on the potential for Good Relations between women on a cross-community basis. A report was produced on the outcomes of the work, which is currently being followed up (2012/2014) with an updated Women and Peacebuilding: Sharing the Learning project supported by the EU PEACE III programme.

H Counting the Cost

One of the hidden aspects of the conflict in Northern Ireland was the actual cost in terms of the impact on people's lives. At regular intervals the direct economic costs of bomb damage and keeping soldiers on the streets would be reported, but because the British

Government version was that Northern Ireland was essentially a normal society that was experiencing an aggravated crime wave – the cost in terms of the numbers of politically motivated ex-prisoners and the number of victims of the conflict often went unrecorded. This became a major challenge when programmes were being put in place to address the consequences of the conflict.

The Cost of the Troubles Study

An early stage was carried out by a number of community-based academics immediately after the 1998 ceasefires to count the cost of the ‘Troubles’. It totalled up statistics of who killed who, and where. This allowed for a greater targeting of resources to those areas and groups that had suffered the worst effects of the violence. In addition it introduced a greater awareness of the complex impact of violence, for example where it became evident that there had been killings within single identity communities as well as between them.

The Impact of Political Conflict on Children in Northern Ireland

A second study was carried out to detail the specific impact of the conflict on children and young people. It was established that there had been a disproportionate impact on those aged 24 years and under; they accounted for some 40% of the total number of deaths. An analysis of the deaths by religion was also carried out as well as by area. In addition, interviews were conducted which highlighted the mental distress caused to children/young people who had known someone killed in the Troubles related violence

or who had witnessed someone they knew being attacked. The adverse educational impact was also considered.

Participation

At various stages of both violent conflict and peacebuilding individuals and organisations within civic society can play an important role. Northern Ireland had cases where both connected individuals acted as a mechanism for back-channel communication between the various protagonists in the conflict – suggesting scenarios; clarifying points of interpretation; and relaying messages. In addition there were organisations that created the space for informal dialogue between the representatives of combatant groups. However there were also some more formal initiatives.

The G7 Initiative

In the aftermath of the 1994 ceasefires the Northern Ireland branch of the CBI (Confederation of British Industry) published a document ‘Peace – a challenging new era’ which looked at how peace might help to encourage economic growth, and how economic growth would help to consolidate the peace process. This led to discussions about how organisations in civic society could join together to present an economic rationale for peace. The Group of 7 was created which included the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce; the CBI; the Institute of Directors; the Ulster Farmers’ Union; the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (Northern Ireland Committee); the Northern Ireland Association of Agricultural Producers (NIAPA) and the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA).

The G7 group acted as a cheer leader for the peace process with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions calling public rallies in protest at any breakdown in the ceasefire arrangements. The G7 group also endorsed a set of Guidelines related to how companies should screen themselves when they are working in a divided society. These included:

Has your business...

1. A thorough knowledge of how it is perceived in both main communities in Northern Ireland?
2. Evaluated the business costs/benefits of this image?
3. Decided whether this image is one it should have in order to be most profitable?
4. Considered to what extent the business and its staff are actively involved in the community at present, formally and informally, e.g. in schools, community organisations, charities?
5. Ensured that the appropriate balance of active involvement in the two communities is maintained?
6. Planned its future community involvement to ensure that it creates the image in local communities which it wishes to have?
7. Made an unequivocal commitment to being anti-sectarian in its community involvement?
8. Clearly communicated its anti-sectarianism to all staff?
9. Senior staff who consistently model good anti-sectarian practice in their work-related community involvement?

This group continued to meet throughout the 1990s.

Civic Forum

The Civic Forum is a consultative body provided for under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. While it had no legislative or

governmental powers it consisted of members of various civic organisations, with representatives from

- Arts and Sports (4)
- Culture (4)
- Churches (5)
- Employers' Bodies (7)
- The Trade Union Movement (7)
- Agriculture and Fisheries (3)
- Community relations Interests (2)
- Victims of Terrorism (2)
- Voluntary and Community Sectors (18)

with an additional 3 nominees by the First Minister and 3 by the Deputy First Minister. Nominations from the Voluntary and Community sectors were managed by the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action and, in turn, included representation of women; young people; rights groups etc. The Civic Forum was set up in 2000, but was suspended in 2002, when the Northern Ireland Assembly collapsed. There is an ongoing debate over its reinstatement. In April 2013 the Northern Ireland Assembly voted to re-call the Civic Forum.

Final Note

What this paper highlights is the range of initiatives where individuals and organisations on the fringes of formal politics can, and have, made a difference. Hopefully the ideas and approaches can be adapted in other contexts.

DPI Board and Council of Experts

Director:

Kerim Yildiz

Kerim Yildiz is Director of DPI. He is an expert in international human rights law and minority rights, and is the recipient of a number of awards, including from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights for his services to protect human rights and promote the rule of law in 1996, the Sigrid Rausing Trust's Human Rights award for Leadership in Indigenous and Minority Rights in 2005, and the Gruber Prize for Justice in 2011. Kerim has written extensively on human rights and international law, and his work has been published internationally.

DPI Board Members:

Nicholas Stewart QC (Chair)

Barrister and Deputy High Court Judge (Chancery and Queen's Bench Divisions), United Kingdom . Former Chair of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales and Former President of Union Internationale des Avocats.

Professor Penny Green (Secretary)

Head of Research and Director of the School of Law's Research Programme at King's College London and Director of the International State Crime Initiative (ICSI), United Kingdom (a collaborative enterprise with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and the University of Hull, led by King's College London).

Priscilla Hayner

Co-founder of the International Centre for Transitional Justice, global expert and author on truth commissions and transitional justice initiatives, consultant to the Ford Foundation, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and numerous other organisations.

Arild Humlen

Lawyer and Director of the Norwegian Bar Association's Legal Committee. Widely published within a number of jurisdictions, with emphasis on international civil law and human rights. Has lectured at law faculties of several universities in Norway. Awarded the Honor Prize of the Bar Association for Oslo for his work as Chairman of the Bar Association's Litigation Group for Asylum and Immigration law.

Jacki Muirhead

Practice Director, Cleveland Law Firm. Previously Barristers' Clerk at Counsels' Chambers Limited and Marketing Manager at the Faculty of Advocates. Undertook an International Secondment at New South Wales Bar Association.

Professor David Petrasek

Professor of International Political Affairs at the University of Ottawa, Canada. Expert and author on human rights, humanitarian law and conflict resolution issues, former Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of Amnesty International, consultant to United Nations.

Antonia Potter Prentice

Expert in humanitarian, development, peacemaking and peacebuilding issues. Consultant on women, peace and security; and strategic issues to clients including the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, the Global Network of Women Peacemakers, Mediator, and Terre des Hommes.

DPI Council of Experts

Dermot Ahern

Dermot Ahern is a Former Irish Member of Parliament and Government Minister and was a key figure for more than 20 years in the Irish peace process, including in negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement. He also has extensive experience at EU Council level including being a key negotiator and signatory to the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties. In 2005, he was appointed by the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to be a Special Envoy on his behalf on the issue of UN Reform. Previous roles include that of Government Chief Whip, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Justice and Law Reform. Dermot Ahern also served as Co-Chairman of the British Irish Inter Parliamentary Body 1993 – 1997.

Dr Mehmet Asutay

Dr Mehmet Asutay is a Reader in Middle Eastern and Islamic Political Economy and Finance at the School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA), Durham University, UK. He researches, teaches and supervises research on Middle Eastern economic development, the political economy of Middle East including Turkish and Kurdish political economies, and Islamic political economy. He is the Honorary Treasurer of BRISMES (British Society for Middle East Studies) and of the International Association for Islamic Economics. His research has been published in various journals, magazines and also in book format. He has been involved in human rights issues in various levels for many years, and has a close interest in transitional justice, conflict resolution and development issues at academic and policy levels.

Christine Bell

Legal expert based in Northern Ireland; expert on transitional justice, peace negotiations, constitutional law and human rights law advice. Trainer for diplomats, mediators and lawyers.

Cengiz Çandar

Senior Journalist and columnist specializing in areas such as The Kurdish Question, former war correspondent. Served as special adviser to Turkish president Turgut Ozal.

Yilmaz Ensaroğlu

SETA Politics Economic and Social Research Foundation. Member of the Executive Board of the Joint Platform for Human Rights, the Human Rights Agenda Association (İHGD) and Human Rights Research Association (İHAD), Chief Editor of the Journal of the Human Rights Dialogue.

Dr. Salomón Lerner Febres

Former President of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Perú; Executive President of the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights of the Pontifical Catholic University of Perú.

Professor Mervyn Frost

Head of the Department of War Studies, King's College London. Previously served as Chair of Politics and Head of Department at the University of Natal in Durban. Former President of the South African Political Studies Association; expert on human rights in international relations, humanitarian intervention, justice in world politics, democratising global governance, just war tradition in an Era of New Wars and ethics in a globalising world.

Martin Griffiths

Founding member and first Executive Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Served in the British Diplomatic Service, and in British NGOs, Ex -Chief Executive of Action Aid. Held posts as United Nations (UN) Director of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Geneva and Deputy to the UN

Emergency Relief Coordinator, New York. Served as UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Great Lakes, UN Regional Coordinator in the Balkans and UN Assistant Secretary-General.

Dr. Edel Hughes

Senior Lecturer, University of East London. Expert on international human rights and humanitarian law, with special interest in civil liberties in Ireland, emergency/anti-terrorism law, international criminal law and human rights in Turkey and Turkey's accession to European Union. Previous lecturer with Amnesty International and a founding member of Human Rights for Change.

Avila Kilmurray

A founder member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and was part of the Coalition's negotiating team for the Good Friday Agreement. She has written extensively on community action, the women's movement and conflict transformation. Serves on the Board of Conciliation Resources (UK); the Global Fund for Community Foundations; Conflict Resolution Services Ireland and the Institute for British Irish Studies. Avila was the first Women's Officer for the Transport & General Workers Union for Ireland (1990-1994) and became Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in 1994. Avila was awarded the Raymond Georis Prize for Innovative Philanthropy through the European Foundation Centre.

Professor Ram Manikkalingam

Visiting Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, served as Senior Advisor on the Peace Process to President of Sri Lanka, expert and author on conflict, multiculturalism and democracy, founding board member of the Laksham Kadirgamar Institute for Strategic Studies and International Relations.

Bejan Matur

Renowned Turkey based Author and Poet. Columnist, focusing mainly on Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature, and women's issues. Has won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. Former Director of the Diyarbakır Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).

Professor Monica McWilliams

Professor of Women's Studies, based in the Transitional Justice Institute at the University of Ulster. Was the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission from 2005-2011 and responsible for delivering the advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition political party and was elected to a seat at the Multi-Party Peace Negotiations, which led to the Belfast (Good Friday) Peace Agreement in 1998. Served as a member of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly from 1998-2003 and the Northern Ireland Forum for Dialogue and Understanding from 1996-1998. Publications focus on domestic violence, human security and the role of women in peace processes.

Jonathan Powell

British diplomat, Downing Street Chief of Staff under Prime Minister Tony Blair between 1997- 2007. Chief negotiator in Northern Ireland peace talks, leading to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Currently CEO of Inter Mediate, a United Kingdom -based non-state mediation organization.

Sir Kieran Prendergast

Served in the British Foreign Office, including in Cyprus, Turkey, Israel, the Netherlands, Kenya and New York; later head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office dealing with Apartheid and Namibia; former UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. Convenor of the SG's Executive Committee on Peace and Security and engaged in peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan, Burundi, Cyprus, the DRC, East Timor, Guatemala, Iraq, the Middle East, Somalia and Sudan.

Rajesh Rai

Rajesh was called to the Bar in 1993. His areas of expertise include Human Rights Law, Immigration and Asylum Law, and Public Law. Rajesh has extensive hands-on experience in humanitarian and environmental issues in his work with NGOs, cooperatives and companies based in the UK and overseas. He also lectures on a wide variety of legal issues, both for the Bar Human Rights Committee and internationally.

Professor Naomi Roht Arriaza

Professor at University of Berkeley, United States, expert and author on transitional justice, human rights violations, international criminal law and global environmental issues.

Professor Dr. Mithat Sancar

Professor of Law at the University of Ankara, expert and author on Constitutional Citizenship and Transitional Justice, columnist for Taraf newspaper.



11 Guilford Street
London WC1N 1DH
United Kingdom

+44 (0)203 206 9939

info@democraticprogress.org

www.democraticprogress.org