

NIC/ICTU PEACE PROGRAMME

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FROM : GAIL MCKIBBIN  
22 DECEMBER 1994

Departmental Co-ordinator - (through Private Office)	DFP DED DHSS
Mr T Canavan	CCRU
Mr C Maccabe	PAB

THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PEACE PROCESS

Roisin McDonough, NICVA wrote to the Secretary of State on 14 December 1994 enclosing two major NICVA reports on the peace process. She has asked the Secretary of State if NICVA could meet with him to discuss concerns which include the implementation of the EU's special support programme, allocation of NI budgets especially in respect of the TSN initiative and strengthening the role of the voluntary and community sector in decision-making, partnerships etc. A copy of the letter and the two reports are attached.

This note therefore commissions advice from Departments on whether the Secretary of State should agree to meet with NICVA. I would also be grateful if Departments would also supply advice and, if necessary, draft paragraphs for inclusion in a response to Roisin McDonough, on NICVA's two reports, their residual concerns and any ongoing major issues which NICVA could raise at their suggested meeting. If a meeting is agreed to detailed briefing will be requested at that stage.

Input from Departments should be with me by noon Tuesday 10 January 1995.

Gail McKibbin

GAIL MCKIBBIN  
CENTRAL SECRETARIAT

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22 DEC 1994  
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**DEVELOPING THE PEACE PROCESS -  
BUILDING THE LONGTERM FUTURE IN  
NORTHERN IRELAND**

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Produced by:

Northern Ireland Council for  
127 Ormeau Road  
Belfast  
BT7 1SH



November 1994



1. BACKGROUND AND THE CURRENT POSITION

1.1 The community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland strongly welcomes the developing peace process and the cessation of violence implemented by paramilitary groups. The absence of violence is of such enormous significance that it is difficult for society to absorb its full impact and the resultant possibilities. For too many years people attempted to live normal lives in an abnormal situation. It is the view of the voluntary and community sector that Northern Ireland must capitalise swiftly on its new found peace and the external assistance that is willingly offered and which could form the core of a "Marshall Plan" for Northern Ireland.

1.2 Northern Ireland has a unique opportunity and must be ready to make choices that will govern its longterm future and the well being of all its citizens. Aid has been offered principally from the European Union, United States of America and to a lesser extent from some other countries such as Australia. This aid must form the starter motor for longer term development.

1.3 In terms of poverty and deprivation, Northern Ireland scores highest in the UK in whatever form of indices are chosen for measurement. This problem is primarily caused by long term unemployment and a low wage economy. Tackling poverty, deprivation and social exclusion must be a central theme for development in Northern Ireland. To accompany this strategy there must also be consideration on how to build communities that have been damaged by 25 years of violence and separation. There is little doubt that in many areas of Northern Ireland large sections of the population suffer social exclusion, are demotivated and feel alienated from the democratic process. It is a two-speed society, with some sustaining a high standard of living with access to all the latest consumer durables and



others living in relative poverty. To correct this imbalance we require integrated economic and social development. Social goals must be superior to economic ones - the economy should be the vehicle for achieving the well-being of citizens.

1.4 The region has a population of 1.5 million people and does not occupy a large geographic area. It is the argument of community and voluntary organisations that it lends itself to a large scale pilot programme or model action that could be developed for other areas of conflict around the globe. On the economic front the delivery of a high number of jobs with decent wage levels is of crucial importance for the future wellbeing of our citizens. The target should be 100,000 jobs.

2.0 THE IMPORTANCE OF JOB CREATION

2.1 Establishing jobs in Northern Ireland is singularly important for two reasons. Firstly, the economy of Northern Ireland needs to be improved and its high level of dependence on government support tackled. Without the high number of jobs in the public sector and support for jobs in the voluntary, community and private sector, the situation would be much worse than at present. It is in the interest of everyone that government encourage inward investment and the expansion of new indigenous industries that would be export orientated. These jobs, known as "real jobs" to ordinary people, are essential for sustained development in Northern Ireland.

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2.2 Secondly, putting people back to work will have enormous social benefits that will help to stabilize society in the future. But how will jobs be delivered? In terms of inward investment we believe that Northern Ireland at peace will become a more attractive place in which international companies might locate. However, it is likely to take some

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time to pass through corporate planning and it could be a number of years before there is a significant impact. Employers also have a difficulty about the employability of the long term unemployed.

2.3 There are three aspects to any proposed new job creation. There are new possibilities in the creation of community employment through the development of the social economy. This would provide socially valuable jobs in support of community infrastructure such as childcare, environmental schemes, care of the elderly, advice and information, and action for the socially excluded. It would involve job creation within the voluntary and community sector with trade union agreed wage rates and for socially necessary services. These jobs would be permanent and would stimulate the creation of local community enterprise. Enterprise flows from enterprising communities.

2.4 The second aspect of job creation is external investment from the private sector, for example the USA. Though these jobs are private there are many socially productive consequences to be achieved. These are the specific targeting of private business in areas of greatest social need, the development of 'on the job' training and local recruitment of labour. The creation of 'satellite' servicing industries supplementary to the main investment opportunity should be encouraged through the development of flexible venture capital to local entrepreneurs and the encouragement of small co-ops. An infrastructure of childcare services to support employment could be part funded by private investors and lead to new opportunities and training for job creation within communities. The development of 'Work Shadow' schemes to improve confidence and experience in individuals with ability, should also be considered. Private investment should be encouraged to adopt social responsibilities in an equitable fashion.



2.5 The third aspect of job creation could be government lead training and job creation initiatives. It is our opinion that government should take an imaginative step that would bring together the resources available for social security benefits with a desire to fund productive and real work in Northern Ireland. Voluntary and community organisations, District Councils, and others can provide the main vehicle for work with strong community benefit that will also increase the employability of the individual. This initiative could fill the three year gap that is likely in terms of private sector led job creation.

2.6 The central principle of the scheme would be to give the employee a real wage above the poverty line in return for real work and act as a bridge towards permanent employment. The scheme could be co-funded by the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Economic Development. It would require the transfer of financial benefits to the host employer from the Department of Health and Social Services and the provision of an adequate top-up from the Department of Economic Development. This could be combined to provide a living wage issued by the host employer. Other fringe benefits, eg housing benefits, would be guaranteed and retained by the employee. This scheme needs to be available to some 30 - 40,000 people, with other support and counselling systems.

3.0 COMPLEMENTARY AND SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

3.1 While tackling the problem of unemployment is the single biggest issue facing Northern Ireland, it cannot succeed on its own. It is noticeable since the announcements of an end to violence how the psychological scars inflicted on people over the last 25 years are beginning to surface. When the conflict was ongoing people buried their problems. They are now coming to the fore amongst the bereaved and segregated communities which have lived apart for 25 years.



People speak of the breakdown of law and order at community level and how the parents of today's children have known nothing but conflict. To deal with all the problems which we feel will surface during the peace, we propose the following initiatives:-

**(i) The Development of Childcare Support**

There is massive employment potential as stated before in the creation of an infrastructure for childcare services. This would also improve life skills and employment opportunities for young people by giving an early "head-start" through good quality provision which would stimulate personal growth. An additional spin-off would be the development opportunities created for women and in particular lone parents. Society as a whole would benefit from a projected decrease in anti-social behaviour and educational disadvantage. Local communities would benefit through greater social cohesion which would better equip them to participate in political processes and contribute to future peace initiatives. Cost benefit analysis of early year programmes in the USA have found that over time they repaid the investment in them seven times over. We support the proposal on "Growing Young People" recently submitted to the Task Force by a Northern Ireland inter-agency childcare group and believe that great benefits will be gained through investment in people at the earliest stages of life.

**(ii) A Newstart for Children and Young People**

Every young person in Northern Ireland under the age of 25 has lived his or her life in the midst of political conflict, community division and violence. In the most socially excluded and deprived parts of our cities and in isolated rural areas most have witnessed political violence on their own streets or in the homes of relatives or neighbours. Many of



these children and young people have not benefitted from the education services available while others have no employable skills or access to the labour market. In recent years groups of parents and local people have begun to recognise the extent of the needs of children and young people. In North and West Belfast some of them have co-operated with the Belfast Action Team in producing a Policy Framework document which argues for a New Deal for children and young people. This would involve the establishment of a partnership investment programme targeted at areas of greatest need in Northern Ireland. The programme should aim to ensure that children and young people in areas of disadvantage achieve a level of educational attainment comparable to the average for Northern Ireland. It should also support the development of an infrastructure for young people including peer education, health and counselling projects, centres for personal and group development and programmes of activity which divert them from harmful or criminal behaviour. The New Deal programme would include a Newstart employment and training initiative. This six year initiative would guarantee three years of continuous employment, in a skills - enhancing community development setting, for all young people between the age of 16 and 25 in targeted areas of deprivation. The Newstart initiative would thus ensure that by the year 2000 the participants would have obtained qualifications, experienced the world of employment which would otherwise be unavailable to them and have begun to build the sense of security in their personal lives which has been absent for 25 years. By the year 2000 young people who have benefited from the Newstart initiative will thus be in a position to obtain employment in the expanded labour market created by new investment.



**(iii) Support for Community Development**

Social exclusion is rife in Northern Ireland with a large section of the population feeling that they have no influence on the decisions that affect their lives. There is a need to invest in community development, community leadership and capacity-building that will help communities across Northern Ireland to develop their ideas, link with government and statutory organisations and have a significant impact on their local environment. There are many areas across Northern Ireland where community organisations if they exist are at the most basic levels with limited funds, limited resources and little knowledge as to how they might play a part in local development. There is a crying need to resource these communities through mechanisms like community resource centres (of which there are only a handful in Northern Ireland and most notably lacking in rural areas outside Belfast) as well as funding other schemes or initiatives that would tackle the areas of crime, community policing and legitimising involvement in democratic political activity. 'Training for democracy' is not too grand a claim, nor too grand an ambition.

**(iv) Developing Women's Groups**

A key element which links directly into all the previous initiatives is the growth of an infrastructure of women's groups. Such groups have not flourished at all levels and have a major contribution to make in development and reconstruction. Over the last ten years we have seen the emergence of local women's groups in many of the most disadvantaged areas. They have contributed positive benefits on a number of fronts, from personal development of individuals, through the provision of a new impetus for local development in their areas. Another significant aspect of these organisations has been



their ability to network across Northern Ireland and, in particular, across divided communities. A co-ordinated investment in women and women's groups should be a major priority for any additional funding as this area has traditionally been starved of serious resources.

**4.0 INCLUDING THE MARGINALISED**

**4.1** Disadvantage and division are rife in Northern Ireland. While those seriously disadvantaged make up one third of the population there are a number of major sub-headings that could be used to target measures that could lead to a significant improvement. Action needs to be focused on people with disabilities, Travellers, lone parents and those in isolated rural communities. These are examples of particularly disadvantaged groups that comprise significant minorities in Northern Ireland. For example, disabled people comprise 17.4% of Northern Ireland's population and are four times more likely to be unemployed than non-disabled people. They are not, as a rule, included in women's groups, community groups or other non-disabled organisations. Disabled people, like other groups who find themselves excluded, must be central to any social inclusion programme. This should assist in integrating those affected at every level within society.

As a principle people must be the subject of development, not the object.

**5.0 RECOVERY AND RESPITE FOR VICTIMS AND CARERS**

**5.1** When the violence ended the relatives of those killed and injured and those who care for the maimed and the bereaved were left with their pain and isolation. The trauma and hurt which they have carried for so long no longer has a wider context; they are left with one question - why us? -



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and with a feeling of guilt for asking it. The political and communal nature of the 25 years of conflict means that many of these victims do not feel they can use counselling services provided by the State. For others the inadequacies of the limited services which the state provides make access very difficult. The peer educator approach to health and personal development pioneered by the World Health Organisation in some of its projects is a model which can be applied to meet the needs of victims. The approach recognises that issues of personal development and well-being have a cultural context and that people learn most from their peers. The tradition of self-help groups and supportive communities in Northern Ireland is a firm foundation for implementing such an approach. A peer counselling programme could be supported and implemented through a self help process at local area level supported by a partnership of voluntary and government social welfare bodies. The programme should include a respite measure which would enable carers, who are otherwise isolated, to form mutual support groups and have substitute respite carers available to them during, for example, holiday periods and times of particular stress for them.

**5.2 Reintegration of politically motivated offenders**

There are currently nearly 1,200 prisoners in Northern Ireland prisons either convicted of or awaiting trial for "terrorist" offences. The successful social and economic reintegration of these people into the community will play a significant part in ensuring the stability of the peace in Northern Ireland. This particular group of people have special needs within the wider objective of social cohesion. They will need support in accessing mainstream opportunities for reintegration including education, training and employment. In addition to this there will be a need for support in the process of re-establishing personal and family relationships. Coming to terms with

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the aftermath of a conflict is difficult for everyone. For those who have been actively involved the process can be particularly fraught. However it will be in the interest of the whole community to ensure that divisions are healed and that everyone is given the opportunity to contribute positively to the future.

## 6.0 PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

6.1 An injection of capital from the European Union and from the United States of America is welcome but inevitably short term. Government in Northern Ireland must turn its attention to domestic priorities vital to the long-term future of the community. Public expenditure in Northern Ireland is in the region of £7.5 billion per annum and conservative estimates suggest that fairly immediate savings could be made from police overtime and capital spend budgets, other parts of the security and compensation budgets, prison service and probably other areas. We estimate conservatively that £250 million could be transferred over fairly quickly from existing budgets. Coupled with an imaginative redirection of a portion of the social security budget, the Northern Ireland Office should have significant funds to resource continued development. This obviously requires a fairly robust defence of the Northern Ireland budget against any "peace dividend" that the Treasury might also wish to seek. The assistance of others is very welcome but the greatest contribution for sustaining peace must come from the government itself. Government, at Cabinet level, should consider requirements for public expenditure cover for European money and remove it. This would enable truly additional monies to be made available to departments in Northern Ireland.



## 7.0 MONITORING AND PROOFING POLICIES

7.1 It is essential that mechanisms are put in place to monitor and proof the effectiveness of new spending in Northern Ireland. It is crucial that all policies and programmes developed, in response to the peace process, are proofed for impact on disadvantaged groups including women, people with disabilities, rural communities etc. The effectiveness of the Government's policy of targeting social need is now more important than ever. If it can be implemented with rigour across all departments, then it can make a difference. While we in NICVA are fully supportive of the TSN policy, we have questioned its implementation and therefore its effectiveness in the past. Now we have the opportunity to turn aspiration into reality. Finally, if we are to create any form of new departure in Northern Ireland it is essential that Government takes the lead in building a cohesive society with a unity of purpose. Its requirement will be transparency and openness, consultation and involvement, joint monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.

## 8.0 SUMMARY

8.1 To develop the peace process and build a long-term future in Northern Ireland we need a targeted programme on Social Inclusion. This would help create the development of a strong community infrastructure to facilitate the growth of citizenship, political development and the involvement of communities in a new 'bottom-up' democracy.

8.2 There should be an innovative mixed economy approach to job creation which would recognise the contribution of all social partners - the NGO sector, the private sector, unions, and government agencies.



8.3 There should be a re-prioritisation of domestic public expenditure in order to tackle poverty and long-term unemployment in a targeted way. There should be reconsideration of the requirement for public expenditure cover for European monies currently available through the Structural Funds.

November 1994

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The voluntary and community sector in Ireland is a microcosm of society. In every area of human activity on this island, where adversity rears its head, a voluntary group can usually be found: in local housing estates, tenants groups and community associations are formed; in cases of serious illness or disease, support groups are formed; in others have tackled rural and economic development - the list is endless. The President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, on her first visit to Belfast as President in February 1992, during a meeting with community representatives, asked "What is the 'X' ingredient" that makes for vibrant, confident and capable community groups?

1.2 There are many answers to the question but the basic optimism that exists in people on this island must be at its heart. People believe they can make a difference and they have great depths of endurance that allows them to respond to life's setbacks. They also have the ability to come together and develop and build with imagination making a positive contribution to the development of society itself. The promotion of peace and reconciliation in Ireland requires the spirited involvement of voluntary and community organisations. People must be the subjects of their development, not the objects.

1.3 During the conflict in Northern Ireland, the voluntary sector quite often kept a bridge open between the two communities, not just for symbolic reasons, though that would be good enough in itself, but to maximise the concept of self-help in areas of social and economic development. Voluntary and community organisations could cross the divide because they had a reason to do so and that was to learn, help and develop programmes that were mutually beneficial.



1.4 The voluntary and community sector has also made significant strides in developing North/South links. The rationale to this was also based on the importance of sharing knowledge and learning and of developing strategies of mutual benefit. These links are well developed in border region initiatives and in projects based on special interest co-operation. More recently the links have developed an institutional character with three principal themes emerging:-

(a) policy focused links. The joint initiative of NICVA and the Community Workers Co-operative in relation to Structural Funds in Ireland, described in this submission, is one important example.

(b) institution building links. The voluntary and community sector has increasingly participated in a range of policy making arenas North and South. This has led the sector to focus on its own internal structures and its ability to represent its interests as a sector. Major conferences in Kilkenny (hosted by the Community Workers Co-operative) and in Newry (hosted by NICVA) have focused on institution building within the sector. Both conferences raised the important issue of a North/South dimension to this challenge. This will be pursued in a joint conference in the new year.

(c) a niche for the voluntary and community sector in any emerging "island economy". The benefits of the "island economy" were focused on at a joint NICVA and Community Workers Co-operative conference in June 1994 in Dublin Castle. Voluntary and community sector involvement has much to offer the type of "island economy" that would emerge.

1.5 The Forum for Peace and Reconciliation is charged, among its various terms of reference with exploring "ways in which new approaches can be developed to serve economic interests common to both parts of Ireland, including in



the framework of European Union". Its purpose is defined as "identifying and clarifying issues which could most contribute to creating a new era of trust and co-operation on the island".

This present submission from NICVA and the Community Workers Co-operative is designed to contribute to these ends. Its focus is the EU Structural Funds in Ireland given the central dynamic they give to economic development North and South. It builds on important commitments made in the joint chapter contained in the National Development Plan of Ireland and the Structural Funds Plan for Northern Ireland. It provides a concrete example of joint action in pursuit of common goals which is the essential pre-requisite for joint institution building.

1.6 The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action is an umbrella body for voluntary and community organisations operating within Northern Ireland. It is a membership organisation with approximately 300 member organisations. NICVA's key roles include supporting voluntary groups by offering day to day support in terms of training, information and other services especially tailored to their needs. NICVA promotes the common interests of voluntary groups enabling them to come together and provide a sectoral voice on generic issues. The organisation also identifies and responds to new needs as society changes.

1.7 The Community Workers Co-operative is a National Network made up of over 300 members engaged in a broad range of community based projects and initiatives. The Community Workers Co-operative aims to service its membership through access to a range of information and skills development resources. It seeks to provide a national platform from which members can pursue common interests as well as the interests of the sector as a whole. A sub-group within the Community Workers Co-operative has been working on Structural Funds issues since 1988.



Other sub-groups provide a focus on women, voluntary and community sector developments, rural development and international affairs.

2.0 NORTH/SOUTH CO-OPERATION

2.1 Colin Stutt, previously with KPMG, in an evaluation presented to the Chambers of Commerce of Ireland annual conference on Structural Funds, identified four issues in relation to North/South co-operation: -

- Examples of effective co-operation are limited
- Co-operation should not be seen in terms of a series of disjointed projects but in terms of a lasting framework for co-operative action.
- Co-operation needs to expand beyond local border area issues to include Irish or island issues.
- There is an absence in Ireland of institutions or thinking leading to strategic rather than tactical co-operation.

2.2 Voluntary and community organisations have been exchanging ideas, skills and people for many years throughout the island. Over the last four years this work has focused on attempting to create a framework for this co-operation. A number of organisations have been involved including the Community Workers Co-operative and the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action. The key objective has been to build in-depth partnership beyond superficial contact. This has been a useful process but still needs to be taken a step further in terms of developing joint work and a lasting framework.

2.3 It is clear from this analysis that a qualitative leap remains to be taken in relation to North/South co-operation if its benefits are to be realised. The



planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Structural Fund investments provide one important and appropriate avenue for such a leap. These actions bring together a range of key sectors North and South under the umbrella of partnership. The Structural Funds themselves have a key role to play in tackling social exclusion and addressing inequality. They also provide an important determinant for economic policy.

2.4 The voluntary and community sector has a key contribution to make in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of each of the two plans. In the South the sector will be active in and benefit from measures in five of the Operational Programmes. In the North the sector will be active in and benefit from five of the sectoral programmes. A significant element of the potential impact of Structural Funds, North and South, will depend on the voluntary and community sector. There are many parallels, both strategic and tactical, in the role to be played by the sector within each plan. North/South co-operation has therefore great potential for mutual benefit and for enhancing the overall contribution of the sector to the success of Structural Funds policies. The Joint Chapter in each plan provides a sound basis for this co-operation.

3.0 THE JOINT CHAPTER

3.1 In the Joint Chapter of the National Development Plan of Ireland and the Structural Funds Plan for Northern Ireland 1994 - 1999 it states:-

"This Chapter, which is common to the Development Plans of Ireland and Northern Ireland sets out the rationale for closer economic co-operation, reviews the progress which has already been made and examines the scope for developing collaboration further."



This gives official recognition to the views of many that economic co-operation between both parts of the island is desirable and mutually beneficial. Potential benefits have been seen by the CBI/IBEC, the wider business community and the voluntary and community sector.

3.2 The reference in the Chapter to 'equity and equality of opportunity' is particularly important:-

"Governments recognise the need for economic regeneration to proceed in harmony with the principles of equity and equality of opportunity and the need to secure social cohesion."

and:

"Voluntary and community groups have a long experience of working together, North and South of the border, to build human potential and community infrastructure.

and:

Such considerations will be an integral feature of the use of the Structural Funds in both parts of the island."

These are extremely important aspirations that need to be realised. To ensure this requires establishing performance criteria for the various operational programmes and sub-programmes. Much work needs to be done on these performance criteria to ensure that they are clearly defined and benefit from a policy of transparency. Here the experience of voluntary and community organisations gained over a long period can be put to use in co-operation with other partners.

3.3 It is our view that the aspirations laid out in the Joint Chapter should be promoted with rigour and are beneficial to both parts of the island in terms of promoting economic and social cohesion. The voluntary and



community sector is committed to co-operation which shares ideas, skills, training and experience and which benefits from economies of scale. Voluntary and community organisations with experience of cross-border co-operation support the idea of an "island economy" believing that it can bring added value in trade, jobs, confidence and cohesion and will even play its part in longer term political development.

- 3.4 The Community Workers Co-operative and NICVA have taken a leading role in organising the voluntary and community sector response to the Structural Funds plans in both parts of the island. The individual work of both organisations could now usefully be drawn together as part of each organisation's commitment to a broader and deeper North/South co-operation in the voluntary and community sector and to the participation of the sector in emerging North/South institutions.

#### 4.0 POTENTIAL OF THE JOINT CHAPTER

- 4.1 The Joint Chapter provides a broad basis for co-operative action. Five areas, each with significant potential, are identified for enhancing co-operation.

- The development of infrastructure networks in transport, communications and energy.
- Safeguarding the environment.
- Promotion of tourism and provision of tourism infrastructure in the island of Ireland.
- Rural development in cross-border areas.



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- The promotion of mutually beneficial co-operation in the development of industry, trade and marketing, commerce, technological R & D, the enhancement of human resources and the development of community infrastructure.

4.2 The Voluntary and Community Sector has a broad interest in all five of the areas proposed for enhanced co-operation. This stems from the challenge of bringing the "equity and equality of opportunity" perspective, which is identified in the Joint Chapter, to bear on the strategies and actions developed in these areas.

The Voluntary and Community Sector has a particular interest in some of the proposed areas and this stems from the sector being an implementing agent in these areas. Safeguarding the environment, provision of tourism infrastructure, rural development, human resources and community infrastructure are all areas where the sector is active.

5.0 OPERATIONALISING THE JOINT CHAPTER

5.1 The Joint Chapter in both Plans has the potential to be extremely significant. It can act as a catalyst to pull both Plans together. Its language and aspirations must underpin the other more specific chapters of the Plans.

5.2 However, the Joint Chapter could be marginalised as there is no operational programme or budget for its implementation. Without leadership and technical assistance the joint chapter will remain at the level of aspiration.

It is possible that joint actions taken on a North/South basis could be resourced within the mainstream operational and sectoral programmes of each plan. However, if funding is confined to this basis, co-operation will remain at the level of disjointed projects



and will not evolve into the strategic partnerships necessary for real, ongoing and lasting benefits to be achieved.

5.3 The Voluntary and Community Sector wish to see the Joint Chapter used with imagination and creativity. This will require a budget of a technical assistance nature to be provided on a joint basis for this Joint Chapter. Such a budget could secure the emergence of strategic partnerships focussed on Structural Fund policies and measures in Ireland. It should resource the various sectors in developing actions leading to the institutional links required to maximise the potential benefits.

6.0 COMMUNITY WORKERS CO-OPERATIVE/NICVA INITIATIVE

6.1 NICVA and the Community Workers Co-operative have developed a joint initiative which seeks to operationalise the joint chapter for community organisations. The measures and actions are presented below. The initiative will provide important lessons in terms of North/South co-operation that is both policy led and strategic in nature.

6.2 The measures to be carried out within the joint initiative are -

- To promote and facilitate the transfer of experience and the establishment of best practice within the various Structural Fund measures that the Voluntary and Community Sector are or could be engaged in.

- To resource the Voluntary and Community Sector in accessing and developing its role of implementing, monitoring and evaluating Structural Fund policies and measures. In particular, back-up and support will be provided to Voluntary and Community Sector



- representatives on monitoring and review committees to ensure a coherent and well informed contribution and accountability back into the wider sector.
- To develop and promote the "equity and equality of opportunity" perspective within Structural Fund policies and measures in both Plans.
  - To examine the policy aspects of cross-border collaboration to identify incentives and remove barriers and to make a strategic input into Structural Fund policies on these issues.
  - To facilitate joint work and initiatives as promoted within the Joint Chapter.

6.3 Within these measures a programme of joint actions will be drawn up annually. These will include:-

- commissioning, publishing and disseminating research projects.
- developing and disseminating position papers.
- theme based seminars and conferences.
- developing and delivering training modules.
- publishing and disseminating information packages.
- exploring and sharing experiences with other cross border settings in the European Union.
- linking with other sectors and actors with Structural Funds policies and measures.
- support the further evolution of the North/South framework across the range of voluntary and partnership groups North and South.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The Community Workers Co-operative and NICVA are aware of the important contribution being and to be made by the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. The present submission has sought to identify key themes and to explore them through the practical detail of our work of



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North/South co-operation. We hope that this is a useful approach and that the submission makes a positive contribution to the deliberations of the Forum.

7.2 Central to the thrust of this submission is the importance of the contribution that could be made by the voluntary and community sector to a "new era of trust and co-operation on the island". This is a contribution that can only be made if the sector is a full participant in the planning and design of such a new era. It is a contribution that challenges the sector to review its work and its organisation. This is a challenge that the sector is already addressing. As such the sector can offer itself as a full participant ready to play its role in this important task.

7.3 The Structural Funds are presented as one important arena where trust and co-operation can usefully be tested and explored. Clearly there are other arenas. However the wide embrace of Structural Funds issues combined with the work done by various sectors in this arena on a North/South basis recommend this arena as a valuable starting point for concrete actions. Again it is important to stress that these actions and the benefits that flow from them can only be realised provided there is adequate political commitment and investment of resources.