MONAGHAN CDB PEACE III PARTNERSHIP

MINORITY FAITH CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT

RESEARCH REPORT

FEBRUARY 2013

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. Introduction

1.1   Co-operation Ireland was appointed to deliver the Minority Faith Capacity Building Project by the Monaghan CDB PEACE III Partnership. The project was commissioned under Priority 1 of the Monaghan PEACE III Action Plan 2011-2013, which aims to 'support and facilitate enhanced levels of cross community/cross border participation and networking'.

1.2   The overall aim of the project is to develop skills and confidence among the Protestant community in Monaghan to network and collaborate with others, both internally and on a cross-community/cross-border basis. In order to inform development of the project, and to ensure its relevance, an initial baseline study of attitudes, needs, and priorities among the Monaghan Protestant community was undertaken in January and February 2013.

2. Methodology

2.1   In preparing this research study we were conscious of the diversity which exists in the Protestant community across Co. Monaghan. Our priority was to include as broad a range of voices as feasible within the time and resources available, rather than aim for a statistically representative profile of the community. A qualitative approach was therefore selected as most appropriate and effective for achieving the research aims.

2.2   Data was collected through a number of strands, including desk research, key informant interviews, focus groups, and peer-to-peer interviews. The latter was a key element of the study, with peer research established as an effective approach for accessing the experiences and perspectives of minority populations, including, in particular, harder to reach groups.

3. Key Findings

3.1   Overall, the Protestant community in Monaghan was seen to have progressed and strengthened in the past decade. Key developments included improved access to funding, with this seen to have had a positive impact on the vibrancy of community life. The community was also seen to have grown in confidence and to be have become more vocal about its needs and views.

       The other major change reported in the past decade related to a greater openness to engagement with the wider community. There was seen to be a greater willingness to take part in cross-community activities and less concerns about opening up Protestant halls for community events.

3.2   The key challenges facing the community today, apart from the general economic situation, related to maintaining a distinct Protestant identity and the implications of population decline for the future. The impact of funding cutbacks on the viability of Protestant schools and access to a Protestant ethos education was repeatedly raised.

       The other main challenges identified related to barriers to development within the Protestant community. Fragmentation, limited co-operation, and a leadership gap, with few new leaders emerging to replace an older generation, were seen as limiting capacity for progress.

3.3   Relations between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Monaghan were generally seen as good, but with some qualifications. People from all backgrounds were seen to participate together in common interest organisations such as the IFA and ICA and many positive examples of co-operation were highlighted. In general, incidents of sectarianism were seen as rare but on-going problems were noted in one area. Relations were seen to have improved significantly in recent years, with more respect and understanding between communities and greater engagement.

       While relations overall were good, it was noted that there remained a minority, in both communities, with negative attitudes and that, in the Protestant community, some groups and individuals continued to be resistant to involvement in joint activities. It was also

suggested that there were limits to interaction between the communities and that, in different areas, there were different levels of inclusion and participation. Despite recent improvements, a small number of participants also noted that outstanding issues remained to be addressed.

3.4   The most common challenges identified to improving engagement between Protestant and Catholic communities in Monaghan related to the need for greater understanding and respect for different religions and cultures. Limited appreciation for religious differences was highlighted, including, in particular, the importance attached to observing the Sabbath by Protestant denominations and churches. Majority community perceptions of Protestant culture and, in particular, the Loyal Orders were also raised, with strong views among some participants that there was still limited understanding or acceptance for the Orange tradition in the county.

The legacy of the conflict was also seen as an important issue to be addressed, with on-going fears and distrust among sections of the community and unresolved hurts. In particular, the need for acknowledgement and discussion of the impact of the conflict on the Protestant community was highlighted.

3.5   By far the most common barrier identified to greater Protestant participation in cross-community activity was the holding of events on a Sunday, with religious values also preventing involvement in specific activities. The small size of the Protestant community, and the limited time available to people with existing commitments in their own community, also regularly emerged as a key constraint. Negative attitudes towards engagement were also commonly highlighted as an issue, including lingering inclinations to 'keep the head down', defensiveness and an unwillingness to participate.

Additional barriers or constraints to emerge included the challenge of gatekeepers, the importance of community leaders bringing their community with them, and concerns over negative reactions from within the community. A reluctance to be formally labelled as 'Protestant' in activities and doubts over the benefits of cross-community work among some groups were also highlighted.

3.6   Fear of assimilation and loss of identity were the greatest concerns identified by participants in relation to further cross-community engagement. People feared that greater integration would lead to a loss of their culture and traditions and an erosion of their distinctiveness. Despite changing attitudes, concerns still remain over mixed marriages and losing young people from the community.

While fears around the opening up of Protestant halls may be reducing, concerns remain that, for example, acceptance of PEACE funding will lead to a loss of control. Some groups also feared that their beliefs and values would be compromised by participation in cross-community activities. Concerns over possible negative experiences in cross-community settings were also raised by some participants, including being in a minority, not being accepted, and not having their opinion respected.

3.7   In general, participants in the research were supportive of the need for further engagement between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Monaghan. Potential benefits of greater interaction included better community relationships, with greater respect and understanding, improved communication, and less concerns over mixing. Greater co-operation could assist the development of the Protestant community by giving groups a voice, raising confidence, and encouraging wider participation in community activities. It could also deliver practical benefits such as facilitating access to funding and sharing resources and skills.

3.8   Participants identified a range of supports to develop greater networking and collaboration within the Protestant community in Monaghan. Funding and training were most commonly raised, with other suggestions including development support such as assistance with funding applications, community infrastructure supports, and networking/social opportunities.

3.9   Participants also identified a range of interventions to support greater involvement by Protestant groups in cross-community and good relations activities. Again funding and

training were most commonly raised, with other suggestions including single identity preparation, community infrastructure supports, and opportunities for inter-community learning and discussion. The importance of ensuring appropriate design of cross-community activities, with, for example, balanced representation, was also highlighted.

3.10   An extensive range of subjects and themes of interest were identified through the research to inform development of future activities under the Minority Faith Capacity Building Project. The principal areas to emerge included study visits, social opportunities, history and culture, arts and music, sport, youth activities, community development, good relations, and training. Advice and insights were also gathered to help ensure effective delivery of the programme, with guidance given on how best to attract participants and on the design and organising of activities.

4.   *Concluding Statement*

4.1   The challenge faced by the Protestant community in Monaghan is common to many religious and cultural minorities. There is a growing recognition of the need for, and perhaps inevitability of, greater integration with the majority, as falling numbers call into question the viability of maintaining single identity community and educational facilities. However, for a small minority population, greater engagement risks dilution of their culture and, in time, assimilation. This is a real and pressing fear for many in the community, who, nonetheless, remain well disposed to greater co-operation with their Catholic neighbours. While this tension will not be easily resolved, particular barriers lie in the perceived lack of knowledge and sensitivity to religious differences among the majority community and continuing ambiguity in majority attitudes towards Protestant culture. Progress in these areas could give confidence that it is possible to deepen integration between communities while retaining a distinct, and respected, identity. More generally, and despite recent progress, the Monaghan Protestant community faces significant internal challenges for the future, including overcoming lingering attitudes towards isolation, developing the next generation of leaders, and promoting greater collaboration between groups and denominations.

1. BACKGROUND

Co-operation Ireland was appointed to deliver the Minority Faith Capacity Building Project by the Monaghan CDB PEACE III Partnership. The project was commissioned under Priority 1 of the Monaghan PEACE III Action Plan 2011-2013, which aims to 'support and facilitate enhanced levels of cross community/cross border participation and networking'.

The overall aim of the project is to develop skills and confidence among the Protestant community in Monaghan to network and collaborate with others, both internally and on a cross-community/cross-border basis. In order to inform development of the project, and to ensure its relevance, an initial baseline study of attitudes, needs, and priorities among the Monaghan Protestant community was undertaken in January and February 2013.

Building on the project terms of reference, the overall aim of the baseline study was to:

Identify current interests, needs, and priorities among the Protestant community in relation to networking, both among themselves and with the majority community, and to good relations in order to inform development of the capacity building project and future programmes

Specific research questions to be considered under the baseline study included:

➤ What are the current needs and priorities of Protestant communities in Monaghan? What challenges are facing groups and communities in the county?

➤ How is the current level of cross-community engagement in Monaghan, and cross-community relations in general, perceived by the Protestant community?

➤ What barriers and challenges exist to greater cross-community engagement in Monaghan?

➤ What contribution, if any, can cross-community and cross-border engagement make to the development of Protestant communities in Monaghan?

➤ What supports do Protestant communities in Monaghan identify as needed in order to enhance networking and collaboration among themselves?

➤ What supports do Protestant communities in Monaghan identify as needed in order to deepen their participation in peace building and cross-community/cross-border engagement?

➤ What delivery mechanisms, themes and subjects would be most effective in attracting the participation of groups and individuals from the Protestant community in capacity building and cross-community activities?

In developing the research strategy, our priority was to include and explore as wide a range of opinion as possible from the Monaghan Protestant community. Data was collected through a number of strands, including desk research, key informant interviews, focus groups, and peer-to-peer interviews. The latter was a key element of the study, with peer research established as an effective approach for accessing the experiences and perspectives of minority populations, including, in particular, harder to reach groups.

Section 2 provides a detailed description of the methodology. The report then proceeds to set out the policy context for good relations in Monaghan and provide a brief overview of previous research in Section 3. Section 4 presents the main findings from the study, with responses presented separately for each strand of the research. Finally, Section 5 draws together the evidence from the different research strands and summarises the overall findings for each of the questions we set out to address.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

In preparing this research study we were conscious of the diversity which exists in the Protestant community across Co. Monaghan. Our priority was to include as broad a range of voices as feasible within the time and resources available, rather than aim for a statistically representative profile of the community.

A qualitative approach was therefore selected as most appropriate and effective for achieving the research aims. This allowed flexibility to respond to emerging themes and issues, while maintaining a focus on generating new understandings and insights into current needs, priorities and perspectives in the Protestant community. Multiple data collection methods were used to allow tailoring of the research to different audiences and, by enabling comparison between the different strands, to ensure the robustness of findings.

In considering the findings of the study, a number of limitations should be noted:

➢ As highlighted above, the focus of the study was on capturing and describing the range of views in the Monaghan Protestant community rather than developing a statistically representative sample. Therefore, while clear majority and minority perspectives emerge from the findings, the degree to which participants' views are representative of the wider community cannot be conclusively established. However, this limitation has been addressed by including a diverse as possible range of participants and by comparing findings from the different research strands to give confidence in the validity of the findings.

➢ In total, 75 people participated in the research. While comparable to previous studies, these numbers did not allow for meaningful comparison between different sub-groups.

➢ While efforts were made to include as diverse a range of voices as possible, the research only achieved limited participation by members of minority Christian churches. It was recognised during the research that engaging 'harder to reach' groups would require a longer lead-in time and more extensive outreach than was possible in the current study.

➢ Research participants tended to be drawn from older age groups, with 63% (n=29) aged 50 and over. While not unexpected, given the Protestant community tends to have an older age profile in some areas, we were conscious of the need to include younger voices in the research. Therefore, in response, one focus group was organised specifically with younger people in the 18-25 age group.

2.2 DATA COLLECTION

The research study was carried out using the following methods:

➢ Desk Research

➢ Peer Research

➢ Key Informant Interviews

➢ Focus Groups

2.2.1 Desk Research

A review was conducted of relevant previous research and polices in relation to the Protestant community and good relations issues in Monaghan to provide a context for the baseline and to inform further development of research questions. It did this by:

➢ Collating statistical data, public policies and previous research to present a summary profile of the Monaghan Protestant community and establish the context for good relations in the county;

➢ Reviewing previous research to identify perspectives on community relations in the county, including assessments of the extent of, and barriers to, cross-community engagement;

➢ Identifying the needs and priorities among the Protestant community in Monaghan which had emerged from previous studies

The scope of the desk research included:

➢ Demographic and other data on the Monaghan Protestant community available in local and national statistics;

➢ Local policies, strategies and initiatives in Monaghan, relevant to addressing sectarianism and promoting good relations;

➢ Previous research relating to the experiences, perspectives, and priorities of the Protestant community in Monaghan, and the wider border region

2.2.2 Peer Research

Peer-to-peer interviews formed a key element of the study. Peer research has been demonstrated to be an effective approach for accessing the experiences and perspectives of minority populations, including, in particular, hard to reach groups. Given the high degree of diversity in backgrounds and experiences among the Monaghan Protestant community, this approach was selected to help ensure that as broad a range of voices as possible was included.

Four peer researchers from the Protestant community were identified through the Project Steering Group, based on criteria of community knowledge, access, and networks. Each researcher was to conduct a minimum of 10 interviews, with the emphasis on participants' personal and local perspectives. Questions to be explored included: perceptions of community relations; previous involvement, attitudes, and experiences in relation to cross-border/cross community activities; perceived barriers to engagement; current issues, interests and priorities in the Protestant community; and support and training needs for good relations and networking, both internally and cross-community.

Co-operation Ireland delivered an induction/training session for the researchers and provided a flat payment per interview to recompense the researchers for their time and expenses. The interview schedule was prepared by Co-operation Ireland, with input from the researchers. This consisted of a set of open questions with a short survey to gather profile/demographic information on participants.

Potential participants for interview were nominated by the Steering Group and by the researchers, with an emphasis on ensuring inclusion of different areas, denominations/churches, interests, perspectives, and experiences within the Protestant community. During the course of the research, a small number of nominated participants proved unreachable/unwilling to take part and replacements were identified by the researchers from their own networks.

In total 46 interviews were completed (against an initial target of 50), with fieldwork taking place over January and February 2013. The profile of participants was as follows:

➢ **Sex:** 27 were male and 19 were female;

➢ **Age:** 63% (n=29) of participants were aged 50 and over. (3 were aged 25-34; 13 were aged 35-49; 18 were aged 50-64; and 11 were aged 65 and over) (one participant did not offer their age);

➢ **Religion:** 41% (n=19) of participants belonged to the Church of Ireland and 46% (n=21) to the Presbyterian Church. The remaining six participants were from smaller denominations and churches including Free Presbyterian, Baptist, Evangelical/Gospel Hall, and 'Christian', with one participant not practicing any religion.

Based on existing knowledge of the distribution of the Protestant community in Monaghan and guidance from the Steering Group and peer researchers, the county was divided into the following areas: North Monaghan/Monaghan Town; West Monaghan, Mid-Monaghan (Ballybay, Castleblayney, Clontibret), and South Monaghan (Carrickmacross).

As set out in Figure 1 below, participation was relatively balanced from different areas of the county (with one participant living outside the county but working in Monaghan for many years).

Figure 1: Peer Participants by Area
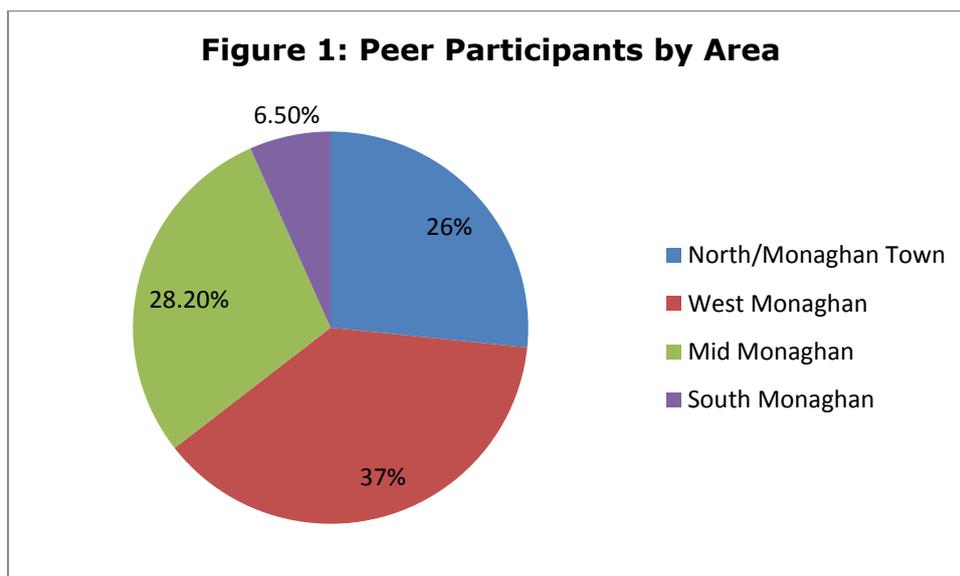
The majority of participants were from West Monaghan (37%, n=17), followed by Mid Monaghan (28.2%, n=13), North Monaghan/Monaghan Town (26%, n=12), and South Monaghan (6.5%, n=3). Just over 75% of participants had been born in Monaghan, with all bar four of those born elsewhere living in the county for 20 years or more.

Profile information was also gathered on participants involvement in community life and cross-community/cross-border activities. As set out in Table 1 below, the vast majority (87%, n=40) were members of church-based groups, with just over two fifths members of Protestant cultural groups such as the Orange Order (41.3%, n=19). About 70% of participants had taken part in both organised cross-community activities in Monaghan (71.7%, n=33) and organised cross-border activities (69.6%, n=32).

Activity Type	Yes		No	
	Frequency	*%*	*Frequency*	*%*
Membership of Protestant Cultural Groups	19	41.3%	27	58.7%
Membership of Church-based Groups	40	87.0%	6	13.0%
Membership of Secular Groups	31	67.4%	15	32.6%
Participated in Cross-Community Activity	33	71.7%	13	28.3%
Participated in Cross-Border Activity	32	69.6%	14	30.4%

Table 1: Peer Participant Involvement in Community Activities

2.2.3 Key Informant Interviews

Co-operation Ireland conducted 10 interviews with key informants who were selected on the basis of their ability to provide an overview of issues in the Monaghan Protestant community. Interviewees were drawn from cultural groups, community development organisations, the churches, and relevant statutory stakeholders. It was agreed that interviewees would not be identified in this report to address any concerns about participation.

The interviews explored the current state of community relations in the county, perceived barriers and challenges to engagement, current developments and challenges in the Protestant community, and emerging issues and support needs in relation to networking and collaboration, both internally and cross-community. The Key Informant interviews also considered how supports could most effectively be delivered to the Protestant community in Monaghan.

2.2.4 Focus Groups

Three focus groups were organised to enable more in-depth discussion of the research questions. Details on the sessions are set out in Table 2 below:

Area	Venue	Date	No. of Participants
West Monaghan	Market House, Newbliss	January 16th	6
Monaghan Town	Private residence	January 30th	8
Mid-Monaghan	Castleblayney First Presbyterian Church	February 11th	6

Table 2: Focus Group Details

Participants were recruited through existing organisations and local contacts. Questions considered included: perceptions of community relations; attitudes and experiences in relation to cross-community engagement; and current priorities, interests and support needs in relation to good relations and cross-community/cross-border networking. The focus groups also considered what delivery mechanisms and subjects/themes would be most effective and attractive for providing capacity building and good relations activities to the Protestant community.

2.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Data gathered through the different strands was collated and analysed to identify emerging themes and issues. The peer interviews were also analysed by participant sub-categories (e.g. age group, area of residence) based on the profile information provided. However, few patterns emerged and, given the small numbers involved, it was decided it was not appropriate to report on this analysis.

Themes and issues emerging from the three strands were then compared and contrasted to produce overall findings and conclusions. In general, findings were broadly consistent across the different strands.

In reporting these findings, we have aimed to be as inclusive as possible in presenting different viewpoints. However, on many questions, there are clear majority positions with only a handful of participants holding contrary views. In interpreting research of this nature, judging the correct weight to ascribe to minority positions is a particular challenge. Based on comparison between the different data collection strands, there are good grounds for confidence in the validity of the majority viewpoints and, while minority voices are presented here in the interests of inclusivity, it is important that their relative weight is considered when interpreting the findings.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

The **Monaghan Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan (2011-2013)** provides the key policy framework for the promotion of good relations and integration between different communities in the county. The overall aim of the plan is 'to build positive relations at the local level', with specific objectives including:

➢ To support and facilitate enhanced levels of cross community/cross border participation and networking;

➢ To support our children and young people reflect on the learning arising from the conflict and build a peaceful future;

➢ To provide different types of supports (including diversity awareness, anti-sectarianism and anti-racism training) to facilitate enhanced peace building in the county; and

➢ To promote activities that support wider participation in local community life

Within this overall framework, the Plan specifically addresses the position of Protestant communities in the county, recognising the need for minority voices to be heard and for a greater appreciation and understanding of difference and different cultures.

The Plan provides for a series of actions directly addressing engagement of the Protestant community and promoting good relations, including capacity building for minority faith organisations, networking opportunities, and a funding programme for activities to support peace building and celebrate diversity.

The **Monaghan County Development Strategy 2002-2012** also provides policy direction for the promotion of good relations in the county. Priority 9 of the Plan directly addresses inter-community relations and peace building, setting as goals:

➢ To foster peace and reconciliation in the island among all backgrounds and traditions;

➢ To develop cross-border linkages;

➢ To build on opportunities arising from peace

These are to be pursued through a range of actions including: research and events to raise awareness of key issues; creating opportunities for contact and discussion, including inter-faith dialogue; developing cross-border linkages through the themes of arts, education, sport and agriculture; encouraging youth participation in cross-border activity; and identifying opportunities for people to participate in community development activities which foster peace and reconciliation. This priority also seeks to target areas and groups most affected by the conflict, with anticipated results including the regeneration of border towns and villages and development of support groups.

Under the theme of social inclusion (Priority 2) the plan aims that 'all the people in Monaghan are equally accepted and valued for their talents and experiences'. Under this priority, objectives include 'to ensure participation and equality for members of minority groups and the recognition of diverse cultures'. This is to be taken forward by a range of actions including the development of an intercultural awareness programme and provision of a development worker to support participation by isolated minority denominations in community development and civil society.

Priority 6 of the Plan, Arts and Culture, includes as a goal to 'foster pride in, and understanding of our rich and diverse culture'. This is to be pursued through the objectives of keeping 'alive our traditions, customs, and practices' and ensuring that 'the county's diversity of cultures are each afforded the opportunity to live and grow'. Proposed actions include initiating programmes and events which value, accept and encourage the expression of our many traditions, and organising cultural events which enable people to understand the benefits and opportunities of a multicultural society. Anticipated results include greater understanding and acceptance of different religious cultures in the county.

3.2 PROFILE OF THE PROTESTANT COMMUNITY IN MONAGHAN

Demographic Context

The demographic story of the Protestant community in Monaghan is, until relatively recently, one of steady decline. Census data highlights the dramatic decrease in the size of the Monaghan Protestant community from the end of the 19th century. In 1891, there were 11,247 Church of Ireland members and 10,876 Presbyterians in Monaghan.[1] Today, these denominations have decreased to 1911 and 2449 persons, falls of 83.0% and 77.5% respectively. Overall, the Protestant proportion of the county's population decreased from 26.6% in 1861 to 11.1% in 1971 (Harvey et al, 2005). Decline was particularly severe during the period of political and civil turmoil between 1911 and 1926, and between 1946 and 1961.

However, numbers have stabilised and began to recover somewhat in recent years, helped, in part, by inward migration, with the Church of Ireland community increasing by 12.2% between 2002 and 2011. This has been broadly in line with an overall increase of 15.0% in the population of Monaghan in this period.

In proportional terms, 86.7% of people living in Monaghan in 2011 were of Roman Catholic faith, 4.0% were Presbyterian, 3.2% were Church of Ireland, with 2.9% belonging to other stated religions, including 58 persons belonging to the Methodist/Wesleyan denomination.

While Protestant communities are spread throughout Monaghan, the strongest concentrations of the population are in the west of the county.

Diversity in the Protestant Community

There is a high degree of religious and cultural diversity within the Protestant community in Monaghan. In addition to the larger Church of Ireland and Presbyterian denominations, there are numerous smaller churches including Free Presbyterian, Elim Pentecostal, Methodist, Brethren and Baptist congregations.

Culturally, some Monaghan Protestants see themselves as similar to the majority community and do not wish to maintain a separate heritage. Others would associate closely with the Orange and Ulster Scots traditions, with the Orange Order estimated to have around 300 members in Monaghan (O'Reilly et al, 2010) and nine marching bands active in the county.

3.3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH

While a range of sources provide background information and commentary on issues relating to the experiences and concerns of Protestants in Co. Monaghan, little previous research has been identified which deals specifically with this community. A number of studies have been carried out with the Protestant community across the southern border counties but findings have generally not been published for individual counties, and, given the diversity in the community's experiences across the region, must be interpreted here with caution.[2]

Impact of the Northern Ireland Conflict (1969-1994)

Historically, Monaghan had experienced high levels of communal tension in the years preceding partition. The Ulster Covenant was strongly supported by local unionists opposed to Home Rule and both the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish National Volunteers were active in the county, with reports of disturbances throughout 1914.[3] The civil unrest in the following years had a strong sectarian element, contributing to many Protestant families leaving Monaghan for Northern Ireland or further afield. For many in the Monaghan Protestant community there was a strong sense of

---

[1] All statistics taken from www.cso.ie and Monaghan County Development Board, Update on Census Data for November 2012 SIM Meeting, available at:
http://www.monaghan.ie/en/media/monaghanie/content/files/pdf/communityenterprise/MonaghanCensusData.pdf

[2] Respondents from the Monaghan Protestant community comprised 13% and 18.4% respectively of the two main studies carried out with southern border Protestants, Locus Management (2005) and Logue et al (2007).

[3] See Harvey et al, 2005 for a summary account of the pre-partition period in Monaghan.

betrayal over Ulster Unionist acceptance of their exclusion from Northern Ireland and a sense of being left 'on the wrong side of the border' (Harvey et al, 2005).

The more recent Northern Ireland conflict impacted significantly on Monaghan and, in particular, on the Protestant community. Economic and social life were severely disrupted in border areas by road closures and the county had direct experience of violence, with bomb attacks, killings, and incidents of hijacking and intimidation.[4] Districts in the north and west of the county have been identified as particularly affected, including Rockcorry, Drum, Newbliss, Clones, Connons, Emyvale, Tyholland, and Knockatallon, with conflict impacts still apparent in these areas. (Monaghan CDB PEACE III Partnership, 2008).

Fears and suspicion generated by the conflict led to increased marginalisation and isolation of the Protestant community, particularly in border areas, with sectarian incidents and attacks on Protestant halls (Locus Management and Walsh, 2005). During the height of the conflict, significant numbers of Protestants moved across the border to Northern Ireland to feel more secure (Monaghan CDB PEACE III Partnership, 2008). While experiences differed around the county, the conflict is seen to have damaged relations between the Catholic and Protestant communities. In some areas relations are reported to have become more polarised (op cit) and there was a reluctance among some Protestant groups across the region to become involved in wider community activities (Locus Management and Walsh, 2005).

Community Relations

Previous studies provide limited assessment of community relations in Monaghan. Research carried out across the southern border region was broadly positive about relations between Protestant and Catholic communities.[5] For example, about two-thirds of participants in the *Border Protestants Perspectives* research (op cit) reported that relations were either good or excellent. Good interpersonal relations with Catholic neighbours are repeatedly stressed in previous work, with participants speaking of their 'generosity and decency' (Logue et al, 2007) and giving examples of how the majority community supported their own community activities through contributing to fund raising (Locus Management and Walsh, 2005).

However, there remains a degree of segregation between the communities in Monaghan, with religion still a influencing factor in choices around education, and social, sporting and cultural activities. While the divisions are 'more subtle' than those found in urban areas of Northern Ireland, these barriers continue to limit interaction and impact on attitudes and behaviour (Monaghan County Council, 2011).[6] Consultations carried out in preparation of the Monaghan PEACE III Peace and Reconciliation Action Plans (Phase I and II) suggested that 'covert' sectarianism, in terms of attitudes and avoidance, remains an issue in Monaghan (Monaghan CDB PEACE III Partnership, 2008, 2011). However, previous work carried out by the Border Minority Group and by Monaghan Community Network in 2003/2004 (cited in Harvey et al, 2005) also reported on-going incidents of 'overt' sectarianism including intimidation and attacks on Orange Halls in the county.

Concerns have also previously been raised about the freedom of the Protestant community to express a distinct cultural identity in the county, with open displays of identity such as Loyal Order parades still seen to attract intolerance and distrust (Op cit). More generally, there is seen to be a lack of understanding and awareness among Catholics of the cultural and religious practices of the Protestant community (Monaghan CDB PEACE III Partnership, 2008).

Issues of political representation and perceived discrimination in employment, particularly in the public sector, were also raised in previous research across the southern border region, with, for example, just over 50% of participants in the study carried out by Logue et al (2007) agreeing that there are certain jobs where 'Protestants are not welcome' (against this, nearly half believed there was no job discrimination against Protestants in the border counties). Past studies have also

---

[4] See Monaghan CDB PEACE III Peace and Reconciliation Partnership (2008) for overview of impact of the Northern Ireland conflict on Co. Monaghan.

[5] However, there is also evidence for difficulties in communal relationships, with, for example, 23% of respondents to the *Border Protestant Perspectives* study reporting negative experiences because of their religious identity (Locus Management and Walsh, 2005).

[6] See also Bell et al, 2010 which discusses the impact of on-going segregation between Protestant and Catholic communities on the southern side of the border.

reported perceived inequalities in accessing public funding, with participants contrasting rejection of grant applications for church halls and community facilities with the success of Catholic-associated groups (Harvey et al, 2005).

Barriers to Engagement

The most common barriers identified in previous research to greater engagement between communities in Monaghan related to religious beliefs and practices. Harvey et al (2005) discuss how efforts by the majority community to involve the minority often did not take account of 'Protestant sensitivities' and have not recognised the importance of issues such as when events are held and where they are advertised, and the use of lotteries to raise money. The difficulties created by holding events on a Sunday (O'Reilly et al, 2010) – contrary to Protestant beliefs about observing the Sabbath – and by activities which are incompatible with anti-gambling values (Monaghan CDB PEACE III Partnership, 2011) are frequently raised. This lack of understanding among the Catholic community of the Protestant faith can unintentionally lead to exclusion.

Additional barriers identified include fear in the Protestant community that greater integration will dilute their culture, historical tensions based on past conflict (O'Reilly et al, 2010), and random incidents of low level intimidation and violence (Monaghan CDB PEACE III Partnership, 2011). Research carried out across the southern border Protestant community (Locus Management and Walsh, 2005) has highlighted fears of losing control of Protestant halls, including, for example, being required to open up management committees by certain funding schemes, and concern that seeking to pursue issues specific to the Protestant community would be seen as sectarian.

A number of specific barriers to engaging in peace building activities have also been reported, including fear of engaging with difference (op cit), and concern that community relationships could be damaged by raising the past or discussing sensitive topics (Monaghan County Council, 2011; O'Reilly et al, 2010). It has also been suggested that terms like 'peace' and 'anti-sectarianism' can deter people from attending events (Monaghan CDB PEACE III Partnership, 2011).

Issues and Needs

The Protestant community in the border communities is generally seen to have become stronger and more confident in recent years, with a reduction in fear and isolation following the end of the Northern Ireland conflict and a greater willingness to engage in wider community activities (Locus Management and Walsh, 2005). In particular, groups have benefited from access to new sources of public funding,[7] and have increased their involvement in local community development.[8] The establishment of the Border Minority Group in 2001 has been particularly significant in raising confidence and capacity and reducing marginalisation among Protestant groups.

However, previous studies suggest the Protestant community remains fearful for its future survival and sustainability. A 2004 publication from the Border Minority Group noted a lack of confidence in the future of the community (cited in Harvey et al, 2005) and concerns have been raised that Protestant beliefs and traditions will eventually be diluted and the community will lose its distinctiveness (Monaghan CDB PEACE III Partnership, 2011).

The PEACE II-funded Celebrating Difference project carried out a baseline analysis of the Protestant community in Monaghan and identified issues including "lack of confidence, a feeling of fragmentation within the denominations, [and] feelings of resentment and frustration at their inability to drawn down funds" (project evaluation quoted in Logue et al, 2007). The issue of lack of capacity and experience in applying for funding has been frequently raised, including, in particular, challenges in accessing PEACE funding (Locus Management and Walsh, 2005; Monaghan CDB PEACE III Partnership, 2011).

Monaghan Community Network, in their submission to the consultation on the Monaghan PEACE III Action Plan (2011-2013) highlighted additional issues and needs in the community, including lack of capacity, poor committee skills, and poor community infrastructure (Monaghan CDB PEACE III Partnership, 2011).

---

[7] On the impact of funding on community confidence, see address by Drew Nelson, Grand Secretary of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland to Seanad Éireann, July 3, 2012. (Seanad Éireann Debate Vol. 216, No. 7)

[8] For example, see RTE documentary 'Picking Up the Pieces: Episode 5 Borders'. Available at http://www.rte.ie/radio1/pickingupthepieces/ [Accessed January 4, 2013]

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section sets out the main findings from the study, with responses presented separately for each strand of the research. It should be noted that while there was a broad degree of common ground in the views of participants, there were minorities with diverging opinions on some questions. We have aimed to be as inclusive as possible of different voices and highlight below where opinions or views were offered by only small numbers of participants.

4.2 THE PROTESTANT COMMUNITY IN MONAGHAN TODAY

4.2.1 Recent Changes and Developments

Peer Interviews

Participants in the peer research were asked to reflect on the most significant changes or developments that had occurred in the Protestant community in their local area over the past ten years. The most common changes noted by participants related to a decline in population. People spoke about the impact of emigration, particularly on younger generations, and some highlighted falling numbers attending local churches and Protestant schools.

Against this, some participants reported that the community had gotten stronger in recent years. Improved access to funding was highlighted, including, in particular, for refurbishment of Orange halls. Individual participants spoke of increased confidence in the community, a greater interest in issues of cultural identity, and a greater willingness to speak out. The recognition of the Orange tradition in the county through Government funding was seen as an important advance.

Many participants also highlighted more openness to engagement with their Catholic neighbours among the Protestant community. Examples of greater interaction were highlighted, including increased willingness to participate in (cross-) community events and attend venues associated with the Catholic community. The opening up of Protestant halls to the wider community was noted in one area. A small number of participants also believed that mixed marriages/relationships were not as much of an issue as they used to be.

Other significant developments described included a reduction in fear with the end of the conflict, in particular in relation to crossing the border. One participant spoke of how bands and lodges could now travel more freely to events in Northern Ireland and invite northern groups to their functions.

More general changes in society were also noted, including the impact of the economic situation and rise in unemployment.

Developments in the Monaghan Protestant Community over the Past Decade		
Peer Interviews	*Focus Group*	*Key Informants*
Population decline	Greater willingness to apply for funding	Greater confidence
Improved access to funding		More vocal
	Positive impact of funding on community life	
More openness to engagement		Greater willingness to apply for funding
Reduced fear (e.g. cross-border travel)	Improved engagement with the wider community	Positive impact of funding on community life
		More openness to engagement

Focus Groups

The two main changes identified by participants in the focus groups related to funding and engagement with the wider community. In general there was now seen to be a greater willingness

among Protestant groups in the county to apply for funding and a greater awareness of opportunities. It was suggested that in the past groups would not apply because they did not believe they would be successful. Participants highlighted the benefits of new sources of funding for Orange/Protestant halls in particular, with one group describing how this had given 'a massive boost to the community' and reduced the sense of isolation felt by some. The refurbishment of the halls had led to greater community activity, with people more willing to run events in the improved facilities, and to better networking and links with other groups, as they could now be invited to events.

The focus groups also described improvements in engagement with the Catholic community, with some participants linking this to a younger generation coming to the fore. However, some groups were seen as more willing to engage than others and, while it is 'fading', the attitude of 'head down' is not gone away.

Key Informant Interviews

For the Key Informants, the past decade had seen the Protestant community develop in terms of its own capacity and in its openness to engagement. The community was seen to have grown in confidence and was now 'more able to find its voice'. There was less fear now and people were more willing to tell their story. There was now a greater willingness to apply for public funding, with groups who up to recently would not have considered this beginning to explore opportunities. It was suggested that previously groups did not apply due to concerns that accepting funding, in particular under the PEACE Programme, would require an opening up of halls and facilities to the whole community and a possible loss of control. With new sources of funding and local initiative, community facilities had been improved and, as described by participants in the focus group, this had led to greater use by the community and new activities. Some Key Informants also spoke of raised capacity in the community, in particular around preparing grant applications.

Key Informants also described how there was now a greater openness to engaging with the wider community, with greater participation by groups in cross-community activities and support organisations. There were also seen to be less fears about opening up church halls for community events. More generally, some described greater take-up of opportunities across the Protestant community.

4.2.3 Current Challenges and Concerns

Challenges facing the Monaghan Protestant Community		
Peer Interviews	*Focus Group*	*Key Informants*
Unemployment/emigration	Declining population/ sustainability of infrastructure	Maintaining distinct identity/ threat to Protestant ethos schools
Maintaining a distinct identity		
	Barriers to community development – fragmentation, leadership, volunteers	
Threat to Protestant ethos education		Declining population/ sustainability of infrastructure
	Threat to Protestant ethos education	
Declining population/ sustainability of infrastructure		Barriers to community development – fragmentation, leadership
	Access to information on opportunities	
Minority status		Economic situation
	Reluctance to apply for funding	
	Unemployment/emigration	

Peer Interviews

The challenges most frequently identified by participants in the peer research related to the current economic situation and were common to the entire community in Monaghan. Unemployment and emigration were regularly highlighted, with the lack of jobs for young people a particular concern.

In terms of challenges specific to the Protestant community, the most common concerns related to maintaining a distinct identity and falling numbers. Maintaining a Protestant culture and identity in the county was seen as a key challenge by a large number of participants. For some, the challenge was about how to engage in wider community life without losing their community's distinctiveness. The impact of government cutbacks on Protestant schools in the county was frequently raised, with participants concerned that in future young people would not have access to a Protestant ethos education. A couple of participants believed that the cutbacks were indirectly diluting institutional ethos by leading schools to take in larger numbers of students from other denominations and cultures in order to remain viable.

Population decline was also frequently mentioned, with participants concerned at falling numbers in their community. A number of participants highlighted decreasing church attendance, particularly among younger people, and the impact of emigration. Related to population decline, concerns were also raised at the future sustainability of community infrastructure, including local schools, churches and halls, and cultural groups such as bands and lodges.

A group of six participants raised concerns related to the Protestant community's minority status. Individual participants identified challenges such as perceived inequality of opportunity for Protestants (e.g. in accessing public jobs), lack of inclusion, and fear of their culture not being recognised. A further group of three participants highlighted issues around representation for the Protestant community, with individuals concerned at not having anyone to speak up for them and of the community not having its voice heard.

Focus Groups

The main challenges identified by participants in the focus group related to sustainability and barriers to development in the community. Similar to the peer participants, concerns were raised over the implications of falling congregations and population decline on the sustainability of church buildings and community organisations. The impact of young people leaving the area was highlighted as a particular concern, leading to the loss of the next generation.

A number of barriers were identified as holding back development in the Protestant community. Participants in one session spoke of how fragmentation between Protestant groups was a significant constraint. It was suggested that groups tended to be focused on their own areas and issues and that it was difficult to get them to work together. The small size of the community was also highlighted as a weakness, with it being difficult to start new groups with only a handful of people and existing groups quickly becoming unviable if a few members leave. Other barriers to development identified by participants included the absence of new leaders emerging in the community, a lack of volunteers, and, among some people, a lack of confidence.

A number of additional challenges facing the community were also identified in individual focus groups. Participants in one group raised the impact of cutbacks on access to Protestant ethos education – the loss of opportunity for young people to attend Protestant ethos schools was seen to threaten the 'dilution' of the community. In another group, participants discussed difficulties in accessing information on opportunities and activities in the wider community. One issue was the lack of a single information channel for all Protestant churches (with individual churches having their own newsletter). The advertising of events and programmes by the County Council was also raised, with some participants reporting that information was not reaching the Protestant community. This group also reported that there was still reluctance to apply for funding among some groups. In some cases, this was based on a belief in self-reliance *('we do things ourselves, we don't go looking for money')* and, in others, on a fear that PEACE money comes '*with strings attached'*.

Participants in the focus groups also highlighted general challenges facing the entire community, including unemployment and emigration.

Key Informant Interviews

The main challenges facing the Monaghan Protestant community identified by the Key Informants related to maintenance of identity, declining population, and issues of capacity. The threat to Protestant ethos education, and its implications for maintaining a distinct community identity, was highlighted as a particular concern. Small rural schools were seen as especially vulnerable but there were also concerns about the long-term future of Monaghan Collegiate, as the only second-

level Protestant ethos school in the county. A number of participants reported that, rightly or wrongly, the cuts appear discriminatory and there is a perception of being targeted.

Falling numbers in the community was also identified as a key challenge. The impact of young people leaving the area for college and work was highlighted – while this was not unique to the Protestant community its impact was more keenly felt due to their smaller numbers and there was a sense that they were *'losing the next generation'*. Decline in religious practice was also noted, especially among younger generations and, together, these challenges posed questions about the upkeep and viability of churches and other community facilities.

A range of challenges were identified relating to capacity for development in the Protestant community. Concerns over leadership in the community were identified by a number of participants, with a gap emerging as an older generation of leaders are not being replaced. The community was also seen as fragmented, with a lack of cohesion and difficulties in getting groups to work together raised by some participants. Other barriers identified to development by individual participants included limited skills and confidence, lack of awareness among some groups of the need for capacity building, and a lack of motivation to apply for funding.

Common challenges relating to the economy and the need for investment were also raised.

4.3 RELATIONS BETWEEN PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES IN MONAGHAN

4.3.1 Current Relations between the Protestant and Catholic Communities

Peer Interviews

Peer participants were asked to assess the current state of relations between the Protestant and Catholic communities in their local area. Four relatively distinct positions emerged among their responses. By far the largest group of participants believed relations between the communities were good – most describing them as 'good', four people believing them to be 'quite good', and seven reporting they were 'very good'. This group highlighted examples of co-operation and positive experiences in their interaction with the other community, with some pointing out they had never personally encountered any problems.

A second, much smaller, group qualified their belief that relations overall were good. They highlighted differences among people's views, with some more accepting of difference and more willing to move on than others, and limits to interaction. For example, one participant described how they had a good relationship with their Catholic neighbours but they both *'take a step back'* when it comes to church-related activities. Another participant felt that while relations were good there remained *'two distinct cultures living side by side',* with little acknowledgement of issues that divide them.

A group of four participants made negative comments about the state of community relations. Two of these believed that while relations had improved on the surface, sectarian attitudes and unaddressed issues remained – *'behind the scenes and beneath the surface things haven't really changed'*. Another participant highlighted examples of the Protestant community not being included in their local area.

In the final group, four participants were more uncertain in their views. While face-to-face relations were generally seen as good, they had suspicions about people's true attitudes – *'behind your back you never know'*.

Participants were also asked to assess the extent to which people and groups from different backgrounds worked together in their area. In general, the communities were seen to work very well together, with many examples of co-operation highlighted, in particular around farming and times of personal need/crisis. Examples of co-operation in church and community life were also reported, including, for example, expanding a church choir for community events and bands from the different traditions coming together for tuition.

A small group of nine participants suggested limits to co-operation. Some noted that there remained groups and individuals who were resistant to involvement in joint activities and others believed co-operation was confined to certain contexts. One participant noted that while the

communities worked well together in their area, up-coming events were being advertised in the Catholic church newsletter only.

<u>Focus Groups</u>

Across the three focus groups, relations between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Monaghan were generally seen as good, but with some qualifications. Participants reported examples of effective community co-operation, including, for example, cross-community support for the building of a new Protestant ethos primary school in one area. Common interests were seen to bring people together, and positive experiences of involvement in organisations such as the IFA and local groups were noted.

However, while relations on an everyday basis were seen as positive, one group noted that difficulties could arise dealing with more sensitive or contentious issues. While there was a good level of mutual respect between the communities, there remained minorities on both sides with negative attitudes. It was also noted that, while incidents of sectarianism were very rare, when they did occur they can have a negative impact on people's perceptions. The burning down of an Orange hall across the border in Inver, Co. Fermanagh was noted to have had a negative impact on local attitudes.

Participants also noted that there was a range of views across the community on the state of relations and that people's personal experiences can influence their perceptions.

<u>Key Informant Interviews</u>

In general, Key Informants believed that there were good relations between Protestant and Catholic communities in Monaghan. There was seen to be good cross-community participation in organisations such as the ICA and IFA and examples of co-operation were highlighted, including contribution to fund raising for a local COI church, assistance with obtaining funding for refurbishment of a Protestant hall, and genuine inclusion of Protestant representatives on a local mart committee. Examples of good relations between different churches and denominations were also discussed, with, for example, clergy from different denominations reported to work well together in arranging joint/inter-church services.

However, there were some qualifications to the generally positive view of relations. While most participants reported few incidents of sectarianism in the county, especially in recent times, one interviewee reported on-going problems in a particular area. Incidents included vandalism, painting of slogans, attacks on Orange halls and church properties, and verbal abuse. There were also seen to be different levels of inclusion and participation around the county. In some areas, the Protestant community were not seen to be involved in general/cross-community organisations (with the exception of the IFA) and to tend to keep to their own groups and church activities. Religion was still seen to influence sporting choices, with Protestant involvement in local GAA, while increasing, remaining at a low level.

There were also seen to be different attitudes towards cross-community activity across the Protestant community, with some groups and areas seen as more open to participation than others. For example, it was reported that some bands are happy to take part in local St Patrick's Day parades while others will not. More generally, it was suggested that in some cases people were happy to work together as individuals but were more reserved about 'formal' cross-community activity where they would be 'badged' as Protestant.

A number of participants, while positive overall about relations, were still conscious of the Protestant community's minority status. One spoke of having to be aware of the majority community's perceptions in organising cultural events while another discussed how they would not be comfortable expressing their support for the Ulster rugby team or wearing an Ulster rugby shirt in the local town.

4.3.2 Changes in Community Relations

<u>Peer Interviews</u>

The overwhelming view among the peer research participants was that relations between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Monaghan had improved over the past ten years.

Participants identified a range of changes including greater respect and understanding, greater awareness, and greater interest in learning about each other. A number of participants suggested the majority community were developing a more positive view of Protestant culture, with cross-community interest reported in Highland dancing and a local pipe band.

Participants also highlighted improved interaction in community life and through the churches, with greater willingness in both communities to attend the other's place of worship for services and events. A couple of participants spoke of improved communication, with a greater freedom to discuss their opinions. It was also suggested by one participant that there was less token representation of Protestants on committees, with more genuine inclusion.

A small group of six participants felt there were limits to improvement. While relations had gotten better among some people, there were still unresolved issues and further healing was required. A final group of 11 participants believed that relations had stayed the same during the period but, of these, all bar one believed relations were already good.

Focus Groups

There was a broad consensus across the focus groups that relations between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Monaghan had improved over the past decade. There was seen to be a greater understanding of the Protestant community and its culture, linked in part to greater openness by Protestant groups. This extended to the County Council, who were seen to have gained a better knowledge of issues and viewpoints on the ground in the Protestant community. There was also suggested to be an increased interest in Protestant culture, with reports of greater cross-community attendance at the annual picnic in Drum. It was reported in one focus group that people felt more comfortable identifying themselves as Protestant today and, in another group, that sectarian graffiti had reduced and that there was perceived to be a greater willingness among the majority community to address the problem when it did occur.

Participants in two of the focus groups also discussed a greater openness to cross-community activity, with groups which would previously have attracted membership from one community only now having mixed participation. People were seen to be more willing to attend services in other churches (previously, for example, people would have stood outside for funerals) and it was reported that young people had more opportunities for organised cross-community contact through school activities.

However, while relations have improved significantly, some participants believed that a small minority still held sectarian attitudes and that outstanding issues remained to be addressed, particularly among older generations. It was noted in one group that Orange parades and events were still confined to rural areas and could not, it was believed, be held in local towns.

Key Informant Interviews

Key Informants were broadly positive about the changes which had occurred in relations between the Protestant and Catholic communities in recent times, with some emphasising the contribution of the PEACE Programme. A number of interviewees highlighted a reduction in fear among the Protestant community with the end of the Northern Ireland conflict which was enabling greater engagement. During the conflict there had been feelings of insecurity and distrust among some sections of the community, particularly nearer the border, but these were being overcome.

Individual interviewees highlighted greater recognition of Protestant culture, greater tolerance and understanding, more acceptance of mixed marriages, and the rarity of sectarian incidents such as attacks on Orange halls as signs of improving relations in the past decade. Greater attendance at services in other churches and greater openness among clergy to joint services was also discussed. Local efforts at improving community engagement were highlighted, such as opening up church bowls tournaments to all comers. One interviewee felt strongly that greater efforts were being made to include the Protestant community, with greater awareness and understanding of their past experiences as a minority in the county. Two interviewees stressed that relations had either always been good in their area or had been improving for a long time.

However, limits to improvements in community relations were also noted. Issues remained to be addressed and there was still work to be done. One interviewee described how sectarian attitudes could still be present, with, for example, references to 'black' people or 'black' areas (i.e.

Protestant). It was also suggested that the overall environment had not warmed to Protestant culture, with Orange parades still seen as unwelcome in local towns. Some felt it would take at least one generation before the legacy of the conflict is overcome, with those who suffered directly having a longer road to healing.

4.3.3 Experiences of Cross-Community Activity

Peer research participants were asked about their experiences of taking part in activities and groups with the majority community in Monaghan. While 33 of the 46 interviewees had previously participated in organised cross-community or 'good relations' activities, most people highlighted examples of involvement in everyday community activities. Examples ranged from community development and membership of local committees and boards to more social and recreational activities such as sports and drama. A small number of participants discussed involvement in more structured cross-community or inter-cultural activities, including peace building projects.

Nearly all those who commented on their experiences described them as very positive, with people describing being made welcome and working well with others. Participants identified a range of personal benefits including greater understanding and insight into other cultures, wider contacts and new friendships, knowledge of other communities, access to information, and a sense of satisfaction from making a contribution to the community. Asked to reflect on the benefit of such activities for the Protestant community, participants highlighted the development of greater respect and understanding for different cultures and religions, greater recognition for Protestant groups, bringing the two communities closer together by building better relationships, the encouragement of wider Protestant involvement in the community, and improved access to funding.

Few negative experiences were reported but a small number of participants discussed disappointments. These included a lack of support from within their own community, the unwillingness of some groups and individuals to participate in activities, and an unwillingness among some people, on both sides, to understand other points of view.

4.3.4 Barriers to Improved Community Relations

Peer Interviews

Participants in the peer research identified a range of barriers or issues which needed to be addressed for improved relations between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Monaghan. The most frequent themes related to the need for better understanding of other cultures and religions and to ensuring respect for cultural and religious distinctiveness. Specific issues raised by participants included the need for greater education and awareness around differences in faith, history and identity and the need to respect religious differences, in particular around Protestant observance of the Sabbath.

Smaller groups of participants raised the need for improved communication between the communities, with greater openness and deeper dialogue around issues, and the need to deal with the legacy of the conflict. Individual participants called for the hurt on both sides to be addressed and for past violence against the Protestant community to be acknowledged. The need to address minority concerns about engagement was also highlighted, including fears that cross-community events would be dominated by the majority community and that the voice of the Protestant community would not be heard. Concerns were also reported over mixed marriages, including, in particular, about the religion in which children would be reared.

Other barriers and issues identified by small numbers of participants related to current levels of engagement between the communities. The need for more participation by the Protestant community in general community life was highlighted, with some groups still seen as reluctant to take part. One participant felt that greater efforts towards inclusion were needed from the majority community, including, for example, by inviting Protestant groups to participate in events. Access to funding was raised by another participant, with the requirement for cross-community participation in some schemes seen as a deterrent. Four participants stated that there were no issues or barriers which needed to be addressed.

Focus Groups

A lack of knowledge of other religions was the main barrier to improved community relations identified by participants in the focus groups. It was suggested in one group that different religions need to be 'demystified' and that people would benefit from opportunities to sit down and discuss what their faith means to them and how they practice it in their lives.

Other issues to emerge in the discussions included the negative attitudes of a minority in both communities and an on-going sense of division between the communities. It was suggested that further south the Protestant community were fully integrated into society but, because of the legacy of plantation, there continued to be a sense of 'two tribes' in the border counties.

Perceived discrimination against the Protestant community was also raised as an issue to be addressed for improved relations. In one focus group an extensive discussion took place on the issue of Protestant employment in the public sector, with some participants believing Protestants faced barriers to employment and promotion in An Garda Síochána. There was no consensus in the group on the issue, with some participants querying the extent to which the perceived under-representation of Protestants in the Guards and other state bodies, including local authorities, was the result of an unwillingness to apply for such jobs. In another focus group the issue of equality of access to state funding was raised. While one participant believed that Protestant groups did not receive their fair share, this was challenged by other participants who highlighted the unwillingness of Protestant groups to accept lottery funding and, at least in the past, the failure of groups to actively seek funding.

Barriers to Improved Community Relations		
Peer Interviews	**Focus Group**	**Key Informants**
Need for better understanding of other cultures and religions	Lack of knowledge of other religions	Fear and distrust
Need to ensure respect for religious and cultural distinctiveness	Negative attitudes of a minority in both communities	Legacy of the conflict
Need for improved communication	Perceived discrimination	Majority community attitudes towards Protestant culture
Legacy of the conflict		Limited participation in cross-community activities
Need to address minority concerns about engagement		Lack of understanding of religious differences
Limits to current engagement		
Unwillingness of some to participate		

Key Informant Interviews

Despite the progress of recent times, issues of fear and distrust were identified by Key Informants as among the main barriers to improving community relations in Monaghan. While fear among the Protestant community had reduced with the end of the conflict, it had not gone away and, at least for some, there was still a sense that the Troubles remained 'lurking behind the scenes'. It was suggested that some believe the conflict could return and doubt the sincerity of efforts to engage the Protestant community. Some people were also reported to be uneasy with the rise of Sinn Féin in the county. The need for on-going investment in peace building and good relations work was stressed, with underlying issues remaining and the potential existing for relations to regress, particularly if a major incident were to occur again in the region.

Linked to these fears, the legacy of the conflict was itself seen as a barrier to improved relations – at least in certain areas and for older generations. The failure to acknowledge the impact of the conflict on the border Protestant community was raised. One interviewee described how issues such as displacement, fear of crossing the border, murder of friends and family, and safety

concerns for relatives in the security forces when they attended family events, had not been recognised. Another interviewee raised the sense of grievance which existed over the lack of accountability for events during the conflict. Existing peace building work was not seen to be capable of addressing the underlying hurt which remained, especially among those individuals and families who had been directly affected. It was suggested that no mechanism existed to resolve people's personal trauma or to give them an opportunity to tell their stories.

Majority community attitudes towards Protestant culture was also seen as an issue to be addressed. In particular, it was suggested that the Loyal Orders continued to be viewed and portrayed very negatively in the county. Orange bands and parades were *'demonised'* and branded as sectarian. People had little understanding of the Loyal Orders, including, for example, of differences in the Orange tradition across Ulster and of the Orange Order's charitable role, and had no interest in learning. It was still not seen as acceptable to be a member of a Loyal Order and, it was perceived, even to talk about Protestant culture can lead to a person being branded sectarian. One interviewee described how there needed to be a *'warming up'* for Protestant cultural groups and it was necessary to get to the point where people in Monaghan were not just tolerant but proud of the county's Orange tradition.

Other barriers identified by the Key Informants included limited participation in cross-community activities and lack of understanding of religious differences.

4.3.5 Barriers to Protestant Involvement in Cross-Community Activity

<u>Peer Interviews</u>

Peer research participants were asked to consider if there were any specific barriers or issues which might prevent people from the Protestant community getting involved in cross-community activities. By far the most common issue identified was the holding of events on a Sunday, with observance of the Sabbath remaining as an important value for many Protestants. Other religious beliefs and values were also identified as barriers to participation in certain activities, including, in particular, any activities associated with gambling such as lotteries and raffles. One participant discussed how personal religious beliefs meant they would not participate in community life in general. Another participant felt community events tended to be dominated by Catholic religious practices, with, for example, events in their area often starting with mass.

The design and delivery of cross-community activities was also raised by a number of participants. There was seen by some to be an imbalance in the structure of events, with individual participants believing that activities were more focused towards the Catholic community and required greater compromise by Protestants. Other participants raised concerns about Protestants being greatly outnumbered in some activities, about not having their voice heard, and about ensuring different cultures are respected. More generally, labelling activities as 'cross-community' was seen as a turn-off by one participant and another was concerned that activities should focus more on what different religions have in common rather than their disagreements. The extent to which activities were advertised in the Protestant community was also raised, with one participant noting that upcoming events were mentioned in the Catholic mass bulletin but were not being included in Protestant church newsletters.

Protestant attitudes to engagement were also identified as a barrier by some participants. The legacy of 'keeping the head down' still lingered, and, for some, there remained a defensiveness about greater interaction and a reluctance to move outside their own community. Some people were unwilling to engage in cross-community activities and it was felt, by one participant, that their choice should be respected.

The legacy of the past was raised as a barrier by three participants, with individuals discussing how memories of halls and churches being burnt were still fresh in some areas and concerns highlighted at the involvement of Republican ex-prisoners/ex-combatants in activities. A number of individual participants highlighted additional barriers, including discomfort in certain situations, the over-engagement of some individuals in small communities, and time pressures, with people's priority on their own community's activities in the limited time available.

The most common barriers identified by focus group participants to Protestant involvement in cross-community activity related to the small size of the community and the time pressures on those involved in community life. Small and declining numbers in the Protestant community limited capacity for participation in cross-community work, and in community activity in general. Those people who were active in their local community tended to be involved in a lot of groups and, with work and family commitments, had limited time for additional activities. There was a strong concern among some participants that involvement in cross-community activity would be at the expense of their existing work.

Issues around the legacy of the conflict emerged in two of the groups. In one session, some people in the community were still seen as cautious as a result of events and experiences during the conflict. For example, it was discussed how up to recently people would have been concerned about having relatives serving in the Northern Ireland police or security forces coming back to the area for family events. These fears influenced attitudes towards cross-community engagement. In another group it was felt that a degree of distrust remained between the communities, based largely on lack of knowledge and understanding. The impact of growing political support for Sinn Féin was also raised, with some seeing it as threatening while others drew a distinction between motivations for voting Sinn Féin today compared to those during the conflict.

Other barriers to be identified by focus group participants included a reluctance to be labelled as Protestant, with people sometimes happy to participate in activities as individuals but uneasy at being badged and highlighted as a 'Protestant representative', and doubts among some groups over the benefits of cross-community activity. Peer pressure was also raised as a barrier, with one group discussing how people taking part in cross-community activity can be branded as *'less Protestant', 'wishy washy',* or *'not as Protestant as they should be'*.

Barriers to Protestant Involvement in Cross-Community Activity		
Peer Interviews	*Focus Group*	*Key Informants*
Holding events on a Sunday	Small size of the community	Holding events on a Sunday
Religious beliefs and values	Limited time available with existing community commitments	Religious beliefs and values
Issues around design and delivery of cross-community activities	Legacy of the conflict	Limited time available with existing community commitments
Negative attitudes towards engagement	Reluctance to be labelled	Negative attitudes towards engagement
Legacy of the past	Doubts over benefits of cross-community	Doubts over benefits of cross-community
	Peer pressure/negative reactions to involvement	Challenges of community leadership

Key Informant Interviews

The main barriers identified by Key Informants to Protestant involvement in cross-community activity concerned religious beliefs and the limited time available with existing community commitments. Holding events on a Sunday was highlighted as a major barrier for Protestant participation, with the majority community not appearing to understand or appreciate the importance of observing the Sabbath for many in the community. An example was given of a 'cross-community' event which was not only scheduled for a Sunday but was timed to coincide with the main Sunday services. The organising of games on a Sunday was also identified as a barrier to greater Protestant participation in the GAA. Religious values can also, for some, prevent involvement in particular activities, including any form of gambling and practices based on other belief systems such as yoga or meditation. While other religions might see the latter as uncontroversial, they were off-putting for some Protestant groups.

There is a considerable level of single identity activity within the Protestant community, frequently centred on the church, and those who are active in community life tend to be involved in a range

of groups. This takes up a lot of people's time and limits their capacity for taking part in additional cross-community activities. Interviewees stressed that this did not represent intentional isolation or an unwillingness to engage, but was a practical constraint on involvement. Related to this, and the small size of the community, those groups and individuals who do engage in cross-community activity were seen as over-used and over-burdened. More general issues of capacity were also raised, including issues of confidence, resistance to change, and apathy among some sections of the community.

A number of interviewees also identified negative attitudes among some in the community which acted as barriers to involvement in cross-community activity. Some groups and individuals remained resistant to engagement, with some people more comfortable to be *'among their own'*. It was suggested older generations can be more reluctant to engage. The perceptions of some groups also acted as a barrier, with some seeing involvement in cross-community as threatening to their ethos and identity. It was also suggested that some groups queried the benefit of cross-community work, feeling self-reliant and strong in themselves and, with the refurbishment of halls in recent years, having less incentive to engage.

A range of additional barriers emerged less frequently in the interviews. The legacy of the conflict was raised, with those directly affected by the violence needing time to heal and some people in the wider community still concentrated on past events. More recent incidents, including cross-border sectarian attacks and activities of anti-agreement Republican groups could also make people more reluctant to engage.

Key informants also discussed a number of issues around community leadership which acted as barriers to engagement. Lack of local leadership and resistant gatekeepers can limit involvement in cross-community activities, with, for example, the participation of bands and groups largely determined by the attitudes of their leaders. Those involved in cross-community work had to be very careful to bring their community with them and not get *'too far ahead'* – people in the past had received negative reactions for *'moving too fast'* and had been personally criticised for taking the lead in projects.

Other barriers included concern over risks to community relations, with greater reluctance to take part in 'formal' peace building projects as people were worried about the consequences of *'raking up the past'* and highlighting differences. Practical barriers to involvement also included lack of knowledge in the community about events, with people not being proactive about seeking out information, and access to funding. Concerns over accepting lottery funding was seen to have left some Protestant groups uneasy about applying for any source of public funding, with people suspicious of a lottery link. Bureaucracy and negative perceptions also created barriers to accessing PEACE funding for some groups.

4.3.6 Fears and Concerns About Greater Cross-Community Engagement

<u>Peer Interviews</u>

The concerns most frequently identified by peer research participants about greater cross-community engagement related to loss of identity and assimilation. People were reported to be afraid that greater interaction would lead to Protestant culture and identity dying out and the erosion of their distinctiveness – as expressed by one participant, *'our identity will get lost, we will end up extinct'*. Concerns were also frequently raised about mixed marriages, in particular about the religion in which children would be raised, and about losing young people from the Protestant community.

Smaller numbers of participants were worried about cross-community interaction leading to negative experiences. Individual participants were concerned at their opinion not being respected, of having to discuss sensitive issues, of not being accepted, of being used for funding purposes, and of the possible reaction of non-involved peers in their own community. Others were concerned that their beliefs and values would be compromised, by, for example, being asked to participate in activities on a Sunday. Three participants raised possible dangers of greater contact, including fear of not knowing who you would meet and, by getting too close to the Catholic community, risking a return of the 'Troubles' – the nature of this 'risk' was not spelled out but appeared to reflect concerns over disagreements and breakdown of trust.

Some participants stated that no fears existed, with others reporting that there were none once certain conditions were met, including respect for the ethos and opinions of others.

Focus Groups

Participants in the focus groups highlighted a number of concerns about greater engagement. Fear of *'dilution'* was raised in two of the groups, with concerns that greater interaction would lead to the Protestant community becoming assimilated into the majority. Concerns around assimilation were traced back to the legacy of the Ne Temere decree. Some groups were also reported to still fear losing control of their halls if they accepted funding (for example, under the PEACE Programme), with concerns that they would be required to open up their committees to outsiders and that their ethos would be eroded by forced inclusion of members from the Catholic community.

In one focus group a number of concerns were raised about negative experiences in cross-community contexts, including a fear of the unknown and worries that Catholics did not have a good awareness and understanding of Protestant religious beliefs and values. It was also suggested that attitudes towards cross-community events could be influenced by the venue in which they were held.

Fears and Concerns About Greater Cross-Community Engagement		
Peer Interviews	*Focus Group*	*Key Informants*
Loss of identity/assimilation	Assimilation	Loss of identity/assimilation
Having negative experiences of cross-community interaction	Losing control of halls	Losing control of halls
Beliefs and values being compromised	Having negative experiences of cross-community interaction	Beliefs and values being compromised
Risks of greater engagement for community relations		Having negative experiences of cross-community interaction
		Tokenism

Key Informant Interviews

The concerns about greater cross-community engagement most frequently identified by Key Informants related to loss of identity and to community survival. There was a fear that greater interaction would lead, in time, to integration and assimilation, with a loss of Protestant culture and identity. In particular, there was concern about mixed marriages, with fears that the children would be more likely to be brought up in the Catholic religion. It was suggested that for a minority *'it is easy to be swallowed up'.* Some groups were reported to believe that peace work involved *'making everyone the same'* and removing any aspect of identity which might give offence, with, for example, some Orange lodges concerned that banners in their halls would have to be removed if they opened up to the wider community. Groups were also reported to be concerned that getting involved in cross-community activities, and, in particular, the PEACE Programme, would lead to losing control of their halls and facilities and, in time, to activities taking place there which were contrary to their religious beliefs.

More generally, there were fears that cross-community activity risked comprising beliefs and values of the Protestant community. There were concerns among some groups that acceptance of PEACE funding might require dilution of core beliefs or that they would be asked to get involved in activities of which they did not approve. This concern was compounded by a fear of giving offence to their Catholic partners if they declined to take part in a particular event because of their beliefs. Key Informants also highlighted concerns around negative experiences in cross-community settings, with some people afraid they would feel uncomfortable at cross-community events, that they would not be accepted, or that there would only be a few Protestants there and they would feel acutely aware of their minority status. It was also suggested that some members of the Loyal Orders did not want to be publicly identified through participation in high profile activities or media coverage as they feared the consequences, including, for example, the reaction of work colleagues from the majority community.

Other fears identified around engagement related to concerns at tokenism, with people worried that invitations to participate were not genuine and they were just being included to *'tick boxes'* or to meet cross-community criteria for funding.

4.3.7 Further Engagement Between Protestant and Catholic Communities in Monaghan

Peer Interviews

A clear majority of participants in the peer research believed that further engagement was needed between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Monaghan, with some describing how there would always be room for improvement and a need for on-going work to nurture relations. A smaller group of 11 participants believed that the current level of engagement was sufficient, with most of these appearing to have a positive view of relations between the communities. Four participants clearly stated that engagement should go no further. For some of this group, priority was attached to preserving and strengthening Protestant identity, with the proper scope of cross-community relations limited to mutual respect and practical co-operation.

Participants who were supportive of the need for greater engagement identified a range of possible benefits, both for the Protestant community and society in general in Monaghan. Greater engagement had the potential to improve further community relations, helping to increase respect and understanding and to build better communication, and to strengthen the Protestant community, by giving groups a voice, encouraging wider participation, facilitating access to funding, raising confidence, and addressing fears about interaction. Greater engagement could also deliver practical benefits for both communities such as sharing of resources and skills.

Focus Groups

In general, participants in the focus groups believed there was always room for improvement in relations between the Protestant and Catholic communities. A number of ways were identified by which greater engagement could contribute to the development of the Protestant community including delivering social and economic benefits through co-operation and widening involvement in activities organised by Protestant groups by introducing them to a wider pool of participants. Enhanced engagement could also improve community relations by deepening mutual understanding and addressing fears and anxieties.

4.4 DEVELOPING FUTURE ACTIVITIES WITH THE MONAGHAN PROTESTANT COMMUNITY

4.4.1 Supporting Networking and Collaboration within the Protestant Community

Participants across the different strands of the research were asked to consider what kinds of supports would be useful to develop greater networking and collaboration within the Protestant community in Monaghan. The following were the key themes and issues raised, with funding and training most commonly identified (a full summary of responses is presented in Appendix A):

- ➤ Funding (including for building refurbishment, equipment, and activities);
- ➤ Development support (including assistance with funding applications, leadership development, and animation of participation/networking);
- ➤ Community infrastructure supports (including an umbrella organisation for Protestant groups, more youth/community workers, and a community newsletter);
- ➤ Training (for example, IT skills, First Aid, farm safety);
- ➤ Networking/Social opportunities (including youth activities, church events, music and crafts)

4.4.2 Supporting Cross-Community and Good Relations Activities

Participants were also asked to consider what kinds of supports would be useful to develop greater involvement by Protestant groups in cross-community and good relations activities. The following were the key themes and issues raised, with, again, funding and training most commonly identified (a full summary of responses is presented in Appendix B):

- ➤ Funding (including for building refurbishment, equipment, and activities);

- Single identity preparation (including confidence building, raising awareness of own culture and history, and assistance with funding applications);

- Community infrastructure supports (including support workers to develop cross-community activities, a community database, and community newsletter);

- Opportunities for inter-community learning and discussion (including history and cultural programmes, and discussion forums);

- Training (for example, cultural diversity, leadership, and mediation);

- Ensuring appropriate design of cross-community activities (including ensuring equality of representation, initial explanation of the programme, and a gradual progression to dealing with more sensitive issues)

4.3.3 Areas of Interest for Future Activities

A key aim of the research was to identify subjects and themes of interest to the Protestant community in Monaghan which could inform development of the Minority Faith Capacity Building Project and future programmes. An extensive range of topics and activities were suggested and these are summarised in Appendix C. The following were the principal areas to emerge:

- Study visits (for example, trips to historical and cultural sites);

- Social opportunities (for example, walking groups, dancing, and ploughing matches);

- Community development (for example, tourism development activities);

- History and culture (for example, genealogy, heritage, and local history);

- Arts, music, and drama;

- Sport (for example, bowling, table tennis and community sports events);

- Youth activities (for example, dances, music lessons, road safety training);

- Good relations (for example, discussion forums, exploration of other religions and faiths);

- Training (for example, IT skills, farming issues, first aid)

4.4.4 Supporting Protestant Participation in Capacity Building and Good Relations Activities

Key Informants and participants in the focus groups were asked for their advice on how capacity building and good relations activities could be most effectively delivered to the Protestant community in Monaghan. Guidance was given in two broad areas: (i) attracting participation; and (ii) project design and delivery.

Participants provided extensive advice on how best to attract participation in activities. Key suggestions included:

- Activities need to be enjoyable, beneficial, and relevant to people's interests and needs;

- People are reluctant to attend events labelled as 'peace building' or 'community development/capacity building';

- Practical activities are more likely to attract participation than 'theoretical' programmes;

- Common interest activities are effective in attracting initial participation in programmes;

- Groups can be wary of the time commitment involved in 'training' programmes;

- Providing incentives to take part in cross-community or cross-border activities can help to engage groups;

- Development of trust, inter-personal relationships and a track record of delivery by workers is important for attracting participation in activities;

- In issuing invitations, it is important to identity the most appropriate contacts in groups;

- Working through local clergy is an effective way of accessing the community and encouraging participation;

- Organising activities for children/young people is an effective way of reaching their parents;

- ➤ Clear information should be provided on the content of programmes and the commitment entailed;
- ➤ The scheduling of programme events should not overlap with local activities in the community;
- ➤ Activities should be tailored to specific groups to attract participation

A small number of suggestions were also made to guide design and delivery of activities. These included:

- ➤ Activities should involve a gradual progression and proceed through small steps;
- ➤ Skilled facilitators are needed to deal with unexpected issues which can arise;
- ➤ Activities should be additional and complementary to the work of existing groups in the community and should avoid duplication;
- ➤ Events should be held in local venues to provide investment back into the community

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the current needs and priorities of Protestant communities in Monaghan? What challenges are facing groups and communities in the county?

Overall, the Protestant community in Monaghan was seen to have progressed and strengthened in the past decade. Key developments included improved access to funding, with greater willingness to apply for public funding and new sources of funding becoming available. This was seen to have had a very positive impact on community life, leading to refurbishment of halls and other facilities and encouraging the development of community activities. The community was also seen to have grown in confidence and to be have become more vocal about its needs and views.

The other major change reported in the past decade related to a greater openness to engagement with the wider community. There was seen to be a greater willingness to take part in cross-community activities and less concerns about opening up Protestant halls for community events.

While there was a broad degree of consensus across the three data collection methods, the most common changes identified by participants in the peer research related to population decline. The official census figures, as discussed in Section 3, report an increase in the Church of Ireland population of over 10% (187 people) between 2006 and 2011 (with Presbyterian numbers decreasing by 1% in this period) but the perception and reported experience on the ground, at least in some areas, is of falling numbers and declining attendance at local churches and schools. While beyond the scope of this research, there is a need for further analysis on population change among the Protestant community at a local level across the county.

The key challenges facing the community today, apart from the general economic situation, related to maintaining a distinct Protestant identity and the implications of population decline for the future. The impact of funding cutbacks on the viability of Protestant schools and access to a Protestant ethos education was repeatedly raised. Falling numbers called into question the sustainability of community infrastructure, including churches, schools, and halls, and of Protestant social and cultural groups. The numbers of young people leaving the area for work and education was seen as a particular concern.

The other main challenges identified related to barriers to development in the Protestant community. Fragmentation, limited co-operation, and a leadership gap, with few new leaders emerging to replace an older generation, were seen as limiting capacity for progress.

There was strong consensus across the research strands on the prominence of concerns over maintenance of identity and the impact of population decline. However, a range of additional issues emerged in different strands, including concerns over minority status – in particular, issues around representation – and access to information about events and opportunities.

How is the current level of cross-community engagement in Monaghan, and cross-community relations in general, perceived by the Protestant community?

Relations between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Monaghan were generally seen as good, but with some qualifications. People from all backgrounds were seen to participate together in common interest organisations such as the IFA and ICA and many positive examples of co-operation were highlighted, including, in particular, in areas of community life, farming, and personal times of need. People's experiences of cross-community involvement were overwhelmingly positive, with very few negative experiences reported. In general, incidents of sectarianism were seen as rare but on-going problems were noted in one area.

Relations were seen to have improved significantly in recent years, with more respect and understanding between communities and greater engagement. It was also suggested that awareness and respect for Protestant culture were developing although this needs to be qualified by concerns elsewhere in the research that groups such as the Orange Order are still viewed negatively.

While relations overall were good, it was noted that there remained a minority, in both communities, with negative attitudes and that, in the Protestant community, some groups and individuals continued to resist involvement in joint activities. It was also suggested that there were limits to interaction between the communities, with, for example, some people more hesitant about participation in inter-church activities or in formal cross-community work. Different levels of inclusion and participation were also noted in particular areas. Despite recent improvements, a small number of participants also noted that outstanding issues remained to be addressed.

Participants across the three strands were largely in agreement in their assessment of the state of relations between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Monaghan. However, a handful of eight participants in the peer research had either negative views of relations or were uncertain and suspicious of people's true attitudes.

What barriers and challenges exist to greater cross-community engagement in Monaghan?

The most common challenges identified to improving engagement between Protestant and Catholic communities in Monaghan related to the need for greater understanding and respect for different religions and cultures. Limited appreciation for religious differences was highlighted, including, in particular, lack of recognition of the importance attached to observing the Sabbath by Protestant denominations and churches. Majority community perceptions of Protestant culture and, in particular, the Loyal Orders were also raised, with strong views among some participants that there was still limited understanding or acceptance for the Orange tradition in the county.

The legacy of the conflict was also seen as an important issue to be addressed, with on-going fears and distrust among sections of the community and unresolved hurts. In particular, the need for acknowledgement and discussion of the impact of the conflict on the Protestant community was highlighted.

Beyond these, there was little consensus across the different strands of the research with a wide range of issues raised. These included the need for improved communication, the need to address minority concerns about engagement, limited participation (at least, by some) in cross-community activities, and the negative attitudes of a minority in both communities.

By far the most common barrier identified to greater Protestant participation in cross-community activity was the holding of events on a Sunday, with religious values also preventing involvement in specific activities. The small size of the Protestant community, and the limited time available to people with existing commitments in their own community, also regularly emerged as key constraints. Negative attitudes towards engagement were also commonly highlighted as an issue, including lingering inclinations to 'keep the head down', defensiveness and an unwillingness to participate.

Additional barriers or constraints to emerge included the challenge of gatekeepers, the importance of community leaders bringing their community with them, and concerns over negative reactions from within the community. A reluctance to be formally labelled as 'Protestant' in activities and doubts over the benefits of cross-community work among some groups were also highlighted.

Fear of assimilation and loss of identity were the greatest concerns identified by participants in relation to further cross-community engagement. People feared that greater integration would lead to a loss of their culture and traditions and an erosion of their distinctiveness. Despite changing attitudes, concerns still remain over mixed marriages and losing young people from the community.

While fears around the opening up of Protestant halls may be reducing, concerns remain that, for example, acceptance of PEACE funding will lead to a loss of control. Some groups also feared that their beliefs and values would be compromised by participation in cross-community activities. Concerns over possible negative experiences in cross-community settings were also raised by participants, including being in a minority, not being accepted, and not having their opinion respected.

These fears were common across all three strands of the research. Additional concerns over engagement were raised in individual strands, including fear of tokenism, where people are invited to participate simply to meet cross-community funding criteria, and fears about the possible impact on community relations if something went wrong.

What contribution, if any, can cross-community and cross-border engagement make to the development of Protestant communities in Monaghan?

In general, participants in the research were supportive of the need for further engagement between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Monaghan. Potential benefits of greater interaction included better community relationships, with greater respect and understanding, improved communication, and less concerns over mixing. Greater co-operation could assist the development of the Protestant community by giving groups a voice, raising confidence, and encouraging wider participation in community activities. It could also deliver practical benefits such as facilitating access to funding and sharing resources and skills.

While there was general support across the research for greater engagement, there was a minority view among 11 peer participants that the current level of engagement was sufficient, with most of these appearing to have a positive view of relations between the communities. Four further participants believed engagement should go no further, with two believing the focus should be on preserving Protestant cultural identity.

What supports do Protestant communities in Monaghan identify as needed in order to enhance networking and collaboration among themselves?

Participants identified a range of supports to develop greater networking and collaboration within the Protestant community in Monaghan. Funding and training were most commonly raised, with other suggestions including development support such as assistance with funding applications, community infrastructure supports, and networking/social opportunities.

What supports do Protestant communities in Monaghan identify as needed in order to deepen their participation in peace building and cross-community/cross-border engagement?

Participants also identified a range of interventions to support greater involvement by Protestant groups in cross-community and good relations activities. Again funding and training were most commonly raised, with other suggestions including single identity preparation, community infrastructure supports, and opportunities for inter-community learning and discussion. The importance of ensuring appropriate design of cross-community activities, with, for example, balanced representation, was also highlighted.

What delivery mechanisms, themes and subjects would be most effective in attracting the participation of groups and individuals from the Protestant community in capacity building and cross-community activities?

An extensive range of subjects and themes of interest were identified through the research to inform development of future activities under the Minority Faith Capacity Building Project. The principal areas to emerge included study visits, social opportunities, history and culture, arts and music, sport, youth activities, community development, good relations, and training. Advice and insights were also gathered to help ensure effective delivery of the programme, with guidance given on how best to attract participants and on the design and organising of activities.

5.2 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The challenge faced by the Protestant community in Monaghan is common to many religious and cultural minorities. There is a growing recognition of the need for, and perhaps inevitability of, greater integration with the majority, as falling numbers call into question the viability of maintaining single identity community and educational facilities. However, for a small minority population, greater engagement risks dilution of their culture and, in time, assimilation. This is a real and pressing fear for many in the community, who, nonetheless, remain well disposed to greater co-operation with their Catholic neighbours. While this tension will not be easily resolved, particular barriers lie in the perceived lack of knowledge and sensitivity to religious differences among the majority community and continuing ambiguity in majority attitudes towards Protestant culture. Progress in these areas could give confidence that it is possible to deepen integration between communities while retaining a distinct, and respected, identity. More generally, and despite recent progress, the Monaghan Protestant community faces significant internal challenges for the future, including overcoming lingering attitudes towards isolation, developing the next generation of leaders, and promoting greater collaboration between groups and denominations.

REFERENCES

Bell, John, Neil Jarman, and Brian Harvey, 2010. *Beyond Belfast: Contested Spaces in Urban, Rural and Cross Border Settings*. Belfast: Community Relations Council.

Harvey, Brian, Assumpta Kelly, Sean McGrearty, and Sonya Murray, 2005. *The Emerald Curtain: The Social Impact of the Irish Border*. Carrickmacross, Monaghan: Triskele Community Training and Development.

Locus Management and Kathy Walsh, 2005. *Border Protestant Perspectives: A Study of the Attitudes and Experiences of Protestants Living in the Southern Border Counties*. Belfast: Locus Management.

Logue, Paddy, Karen McGillion, and Pete Shirlow, 2007. *The Border Protestant Community and the EU PEACE Programmes*. Belfast: SEUPB.

Monaghan CDB PEACE III Partnership, 2008. *Monaghan Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan (2008 – 2010)*

Monaghan CDB PEACE III Partnership, 2011. *Monaghan Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan (2011 – 2013)*

Monaghan County Council, 2011. *Peace Building Toolkit: Building Good Relations in Local Communities*.

Monaghan County Development Board, 2002. *Monaghan County Development Strategy 2002-2012*

O'Reilly, Fiona, Killian Forde, Tinu Achioya, Elizabeth Little, and Carol Murphy, 2010. *County Monaghan: A Profile of Cultural Diversity*. Monaghan: Monaghan County Council.

Supporting Networking and Collaboration within the Protestant Community

Theme	Suggested Supports		
Funding	Building refurbishment Equipment Activities	Bands (music tuition) Bands (instruments) Bands (uniforms)	Events Travel expenses Running costs of halls
Development Support	Nurturing of new leaders Confidence raising Knowledge of charity legislation Supporting collaboration between churches Raising awareness of need for networking Audit of Orange halls	Leadership training Funding application skills Financial management skills Discussion Forums for Protestant community Encouraging participation Train the trainer programmes	Insurance cover for events Knowledge of funding opportunities Networking skills Management/organisational skills Mobilisation of existing resources Assistance with funding applications
Community Infrastructure Supports	Development workers Youth workers Umbrella organisation for Protestant groups	Sports trainers (schools) Community newsletter Networking organisation	Music trainers (schools) Community database
Networking/Social Opportunities	Church events Intergenerational activities	Youth events Music	Crafts Choirs
Training	First Aid Child protection Band (accredited)	IT skills Training for youth workers	Farm safety Mediation

Supporting Cross-Community and Good Relations Activities

Theme	Suggested Supports		
Funding	Building refurbishment Activities Training	Equipment Travel Insurance cover	Cross border exchanges Catering
Opportunities for Learning and Discussion	History and culture programmes School dramas exploring aspects of history	Discussion forums Addressing myths and stereotypes	
Community Infrastructure Supports	Newsletter Networking organisation	Better distribution of information on activities and opportunities Support worker to develop cross-community activities	Community database Sports facilitators
Single Identity Preparation	Confidence building Support for existing leaders Address fears of assimilation	Raising awareness of own history and culture Motivating engagement Building capacity to look outwards	Assistance with funding applications
Training	First Aid Leadership Cultural diversity	IT skills Mediation	Child protection Project delivery
Ensuring Appropriate Design of Cross-Community Activities	Equal representation	Gradual progression	Initial explanation of programme

APPENDIX C: SUGGESTED FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Areas of Interest for Future Activities in the Protestant Community

Theme	Suggested Activities		
Study Visits/Excursions	Agricultural shows (e.g. Balmoral) Dáil Eireann/Stormont Edinburgh Tattoo National Archives/PRONI Somme	Battle of the Boyne site Derry/Londonderry Walls Highland Show Rugby match in the Aviva Ulster Folk Park	Brownlow House History tour of Dublin Garden of Remembrance Rossnowlagh RDS Horse Show
Social Opportunities	Walking groups Crafts Food events Vintage rallies	Keep fit Sewing/Knitting Ploughing match Go-karting	Dance classes Dances Social activities for older people Baking/cookery course
Training	IT skills Farming issues	Traditional skills Marshalling	Training for youth leaders First aid
Good Relations	Discussion forums	Exploring other religions and faiths	Story telling
Community Development	Support projects for older people Neighbourhood Watch Developing information signs at local historical sites	Safe cycling routes Tidy Towns Charity event Suicide awareness	Castleblayney May Day Parade Development of forest trails Gathering event for Fermanagh Protestants with family roots in ROI
History and Culture	Genealogy Commemoration of WW1 casualties from Monaghan Decade of centenaries	Heritage Cross-community music festival (e.g. pipe bands) Local history	Mapping local graveyards Ulster Scots cultural programme Cultural nights
Arts, Music and Drama	Drama Choir training Songs of Praise	Music (e.g. concerts, competitions) Photography Music tuition	Choir concerts Expand local pipe band competition Art

Theme	Suggested Activities		
Sport	Bowls/Bowling	Football	Community sports events
	Table tennis	Swimming	Athletics
	Cycling	Badminton	
Youth Activities	Sports	Adventure weekends	Afterschool Highland dance lessons
	Youth clubs	Disco/dance	Primary schools project
	Children and youth ministry	Music tuition	Road safety