



**Evaluation of the work carried out by  
Healing Through Remembering**

As funded by the Reconciliation Fund  
Of the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade

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## Executive Summary

This report is an Evaluation of the work carried out by Healing Through Remembering (HTR) funded by The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFA) in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) under the Reconciliation Fund.

1. The Project was funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFA) which aims to assist individuals and organisations involved in reconciliation work.
2. There has been considerable value in the support of the DFA for HTR and through this for the wider community.
3. People involved in various aspects of the project have reflected increased confidence, awareness of their community and willingness to engage in community activities addressing reconciliation.
- 4 The Project set out to deliver significant change in seven main areas of work. These were:
  - Membership;
  - Promoting The Everyday Objects Transformed by the Conflict exhibition;
  - Promoting community-based drama;
  - Promoting Hate Crime Awareness;
  - Facilitating significant conversations on dealing with the past;
  - Developing work on prosecution and amnesty ; and
  - Managing these activities in an appropriate manner.
5. Significant developments have been made in all areas of work. HTR is, through the Project, at the core of these positive initiatives and continues to deliver high standard community development.
6. The organisation's ability to do this has been greatly enhanced by the DFA funding. Feedback from community and statutory sources identifies the support as creating significant positive change.
7. A key component of the Project has been to allow HTR to facilitate conversations and get feedback on issues and potential ways forward from a range of stakeholders. This has promoted a bottom-up approach to addressing the past in and about Northern Ireland.
8. With the support of the DFA, progress across all of the areas of work has been considerable and contributed positively and significantly to the objectives of the DFA in promoting reconciliation between communities on the island of Ireland.

# 1 Background

- 1.1 The Good Friday Agreement endorsed the need for reconciliation between the traditions on this island and the promotion of a culture of tolerance at every level of society. The participants recognised and valued the work being done in this area by community-based organisations, which they see as having a critical role in consolidating peace and political stability. The participants in the Good Friday Agreement also undertook to “positively examine the case for enhanced financial assistance for the work of reconciliation.”
- 1.2 As part of assisting this process, the Reconciliation Fund (the Fund) was established in 1982 by the Irish Government. The Fund’s objectives are to assist individuals and organisations involved in reconciliation work and to encourage and facilitate better relations within and between the traditions in the North, between North and South, and between Ireland and Great Britain.
- 1.3 The Reconciliation Fund is operated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFA) and assists individuals and organisations involved in reconciliation work.
- 1.4 The types of areas within which the Fund supports activity include:
  - Reconciliation through education; dialogue and culture;
  - Development and maintenance of meaningful cross-border links;
  - Promotion of improved Anglo-Irish relations;
  - Promotion of cross-community and inter-denominational activities;
  - Promotion of tolerance and acceptance of cultural diversity;
  - Academic research aimed at promoting reconciliation; and
  - Contribution to political reconciliation.
- 1.5 Healing Through Remembering (HTR) is an extensive cross-community organisation made up of a range of individual members holding different political, social and religious perspectives who have come together to focus on the issue of how best to deal with the past relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.
- 1.6 HTR’s success relies on an inclusive and bottom-up approach which facilitates the development of innovative mechanisms and best practice to help address the legacy of the past.
- 1.7 As a central part of this work, HTR has developed a number of resources to promote discussion, reflection and activities which help organisations, individuals and communities address the past and thus inform the future.
- 1.8 HTR applied for, and was successful in receiving, funding from the DFA under the Reconciliation Fund for support in developing these key areas of work.
- 1.9 This evaluation will assess the range and input of the Project delivered by HTR with funding from the DFA. It will also seek to identify lessons learned from the Project and make recommendations for further work.

## 2 Methodology

2.1 The following methods of gathering information were used to evaluate The Project.

2.2 Interviews were held with the following:

- The Chairperson of HTR;
- Management Committee members of HTR;
- Project staff of HTR;
- Representatives of partner organisations; and
- Individuals involved in the Project.

2.3 Assessment of written information pertaining to The Project. This includes:

- The DFA Project aims and objectives;
- The HTR funding application;
- Publicity for the Project;
- Reports to the DFA;
- Minutes of internal meetings of the Project;
- Statistical information;
- Feedback/evaluation forms; and
- Financial information.

2.4 The evaluator would like to thank all of those who contributed to the evaluation and gave freely of their time and expertise.

## 3 Development of the Project

### Healing Through Remembering

- 3.1 HTR is a membership-based organisation set up to address issues about the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.
- 3.2 In order to continue to expand its existing work and to develop new work, HTR undertook a wide-ranging consultation among members and with key organisations and individuals in the wider community.
- 3.3 From this consultation a number of key themes emerged. These were:
- Membership;
  - Facilitating significant conversations on dealing with the past;
  - Promoting The Everyday Objects Transformed by the Conflict exhibition;
  - Promoting community based drama;
  - Promoting Hate Crime awareness;
  - Developing work on prosecution and amnesty ; and
  - Managing these activities in an appropriate manner.
- 3.4 The effectiveness of the development of the work under these key areas will now be considered. Each area of work will be reviewed in the context of the objectives set against them as part of the application to the Fund.

### Membership

#### *Objective:*

*Over 100 people involved in dialogue on dealing with the past*

- 3.5 HTR has a wide and varied membership which encompasses a wide range of members of society. This includes:
- Former services personnel;
  - Ex-combatants;
  - Political representatives;
  - Individuals;
  - Community representatives;
  - Journalists; and
  - Academics.
- Membership, while largely from Northern Ireland, also includes members from the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and beyond.
- 3.6 Given its broad range of members, it is important that HTR maintain close contact with them in order to facilitate discussion and to gather opinion upon which decisions can be made about future work. Continuing to support the membership of HTR ensures that there is a consensus in regard to the work into the development of activities.
- 3.7 The voice with which HTR speaks represents a range of input from diverse political and ideological backgrounds. It is a key strength of the organisation that it can both bring this diversity together and achieve consensus across a range of activities and interventions. HTR is viewed as an organisation which widely discusses, debates and informs issues concerning the conflict. HTR is therefore regarded as a key organisation in promoting peace and a shared future.

- 3.8 HTR held a number of planning events, both as part of this project and in connection with other initiatives. These were complemented by regular on-going consultations with the membership. In addition, HTR operates an open-door policy which allows immediate access to the organisation's information and staff. This approach demonstrates the range of ways of contacting and engaging members and including them in dialogue.
- 3.9 HTR easily surpassed the target of engaging over 100 members in dialogue. In addition, a number of more public activities which brought together members and non-members in debate complemented the internal dialogue within HTR. These events included public seminars, conversations on the past and contributions to international study visits.
- 3.10 The range and scope of its activities indicates the high regard in which the organisation is held across Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and beyond by a range of different constituencies. The support of the DFA helped in the general development of dialogue and activities within HTR. It also helped to develop dialogue and debate with other groups, organisations and individuals as well as with specific aspects of this project.
- 3.11 External areas where this support has had a particularly significant impact were in:
- The From Prison to Peace Project (work with ex-combatants);and
  - The Maze/Long Kesh development.

### **Facilitating significant conversations on dealing with the past**

#### *Objective*

*Hold three events with 30-80 people where views are expressed by key stakeholders on issues on dealing with past.*

- 3.12 A number of debates, seminars and conversations were held which promoted significant conversations focusing on addressing issues in local society. These included a debate on the Day of Reflection hosted in the Linen Hall library. This was an open event which encouraged members of the public to join in the discussion.
- 3.13 A further range of private sessions was held in the HTR offices to facilitate sensitive discussions on a range of private and contentious issues. These included parades, flags and emblems. These discussions included community activists linked to Loyalism and Republicanism as well as other organisations and individuals involved in peace building.
- 3.14 These discussions allow individuals to discuss difference and try to reach consensus in what is viewed as a neutral, safe space. This facilitation of dialogue in a safe space is seen as important by participants who view the role of HTR as vital in developing trust and dialogue. These discussions are on-going.

Overall, the objective to hold events reaching up to 80 people was far exceeded.

### **The Everyday Objects Transformed by the Conflict Exhibition**

#### *Objectives:*

*Approximately 100 people, including collectors (from national museums, organisational museums and private collectors), to be engaged in planning. Engagement with six venues would include places most affected by the conflict in the Republic of Ireland.*

- 3.15 'Everyday Objects Transformed by the Conflict' is a multiple perspective exhibition on the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. It includes, for example, objects such as a bin lid used primarily by women as a street communication tool and as a means of protest, a coffee jar explosive, a quilt produced to communicate peace and healing, as well as a platform shoe used to smuggle items into prison. Other exhibits have stretched the definition and challenged the visitors to the exhibition to think about conflict-related objects transformed into everyday objects, such as security search devices and a plastic bullet.



- 3.16 The exhibition is intended to stimulate an interest in the original collections lending the objects, inform the debate on a Living Memorial Museum and dealing with the past, and also create a network of communication between the collections. Discussions about the challenges involved in staging a shared exhibition and how best to develop a process that would allow such an event to take place are central to the project. This process is as important as the exhibition itself. When the exhibition is displayed in various locations around Northern Ireland, the border counties and beyond it acts as a catalyst to help open up a platform in which diverse voices and experiences of the conflict can be heard by all members of the public.
- 3.17 The exhibition opened in the County Museum Dundalk on 20 February 2013 and continued until 4 April 2013. Over 40 people attended the launch event. Local and national politicians were present, including the former Minister for Foreign Affairs (David Andrews) and the Chair of Dundalk Town Council (Jennifer Green).
- 3.18 Discussions with collectors on the future development of the exhibition are continuing in order to ensure that it reaches as wide an audience as possible. To date these discussions have engaged over 90 people. In addition, discussions have been held with two cross-border initiatives both supported by Peace III projects. These are the Aftermath Project and the Calipo Theatre Company. Discussion has also resulted in the exhibition being invited to be part of the City of Culture programme in Derry/Londonderry. It is anticipated that this will attract a substantial cross-border attendance, particularly from Donegal.
- 3.19 The exhibition has also been discussed with the Dundalk Institute of Technology and Trinity College Dublin, both of which have expressed an interest in hosting it.
- 3.20 HTR has met the targets and objectives set out under this part of the DFA project and continues to promote the project across the border area with different organisations. For example, exploratory talks are currently taking place with the South West Peace III partnership which includes Fermanagh District Council.
- 3.21 As an additional resource, HTR also provides, at no charge to the hosts of the exhibition (since they are funded by Peace III monies), a range of workshops to explore issues emerging from the themes of the Everyday Objects exhibition.

## Community-based drama

### Objective

*To explore options for the cross-border locations for the community-based staging of a drama on dealing with past which HTR has commissioned to assist dialogue and debate.*

- 3.22 HTR has commissioned a drama piece called 'Those we pass in the street', which explores historical perspectives and the changing face of current society. This sets the platform for facilitated discussions about addressing the past and developing the future of a society emerging from conflict.
- 3.23 There have been several informal discussions with groups, including with Calipo Theatre Company, the Aftermath Project and the County Museum Dundalk, on using the drama as a way of dealing with the past. These are on-going. There has been some interest in taking this further, but no firm agreement has been reached.
- 3.24 This is largely because venues and organisations have expressed more interest in the drama being staged in different venues such that the potential venues would then host cross-community discussions emerging from the drama rather than host the drama itself.
- 3.25 In order to take this work forward, HTR may consider participation from groups and individuals in the border counties area as more important at this time than securing a venue in the border counties area. This will ensure a more inclusive, appropriate process which engages communities and individuals.
- 3.26 Conversations on this potential approach have already been held with the Border Roads Peace III project and a Sinn Fein representative in County Sligo.

## Promoting Hate Crime Awareness

### Objective:

*Engagement with at least six Councils and community groups in the border region.*

- 3.27 This objective relates to identifying organisations which would be interested in using the anti-hate crime training resource created by Healing Through Remembering with Belfast City Council. The programme, entitled 'Talking the Talk', allows for safe discussions on all aspects of discrimination. It reflects both historical religious/political/cultural differences in Ireland and emerging issues such as race, immigration and sexuality.
- 3.28 Talking the Talk is an anti-racism/anti-sectarianism pack which promotes good practice in addressing hate crime incidents. The focus is on engaging community leaders as well as formal or informal 'authority figures'. It was developed through a process of wide consultation with statutory and community organisations.
- 3.29 Three seminars have been held (two with the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) and one for a wider invited audience including independent funders and the police) to highlight the particularly insidious nature of sectarianism and how it impacts on communities across the island of Ireland. Bob Hughes – an international expert on anti-sectarianism and anti-racism, particularly in regard to children and young people - acts as an international advisor for this programme. These seminars resulted in HTR being invited to make a presentation to a European Union-led international event in Dublin in April 2013. This is part of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) for the European Union. This, in turn, has led to HTR being invited to give one of the keynote inputs at an international conference in Berlin in October 2013.
- 3.30 With the support of DFA, the training has been rolled out across a number of agencies and widely promoted to statutory and voluntary partners. Training has taken place within a number of organisations, particularly in the voluntary and community sectors. For example, it has been used to promote good practice and community leadership in the Greater Whitewell areas of North Belfast. This was with a cross-community partnership of seven local community groups which focused on staff, volunteers and voluntary youth leaders in the area. The approach was also promoted through a group of young emerging leaders who are linked into another DFA-supported project called 'Let's Celebrate'.
- 3.31 The training has also been promoted through the 2028 Vision which is a major project managed by Intercomm and supported by The Atlantic Philanthropies. This project links statutory, voluntary and community sector partners from all sections of the community in North Belfast. Talking the Talk has been rolled out to a number of groups from all backgrounds.
- 3.32 The project has also been delivered to a range of diverse organisations, most notably the SOS Bus which provides support for young people at the weekends during the night-time economy. A further number of sessions have taken place with the Women's Tech which promotes integration of foreign national women into the community.
- 3.33 Talking the Talk has also been promoted at a range of wider events including:
- The Community Foundation: From Prison to Peace conference on addressing diversity; and
  - The South West councils: Promoting Peace III, conference on addressing integration and dealing with the past.

Both of these engage considerable border area constituencies representing councils and community organisations, including both Loyalism and Republicanism.

- 3.34 HTR continues to target local and district councils through creating links with Peace III Officers across Northern Ireland and the Border Counties. Considerable work has taken place with Dungannon and South Tyrone District Council and the Peace III Officer is promoting the Talking the Talk training through her contacts in other councils. The information is also being circulated through the Southern Area cluster of councils which includes Magherafelt, Cookstown and Fermanagh.

In summary, there has been significant engagement in regard to hate crime prevention with HTR continuing to engage with councils and other bodies as appropriate.

## Developing work on prosecution and amnesty

### Objective

*To work with the School of Law at Queens University to bring community views into planned research on prosecution and amnesty.*

- 3.35 HTR and the School of Law at Queen's University Belfast (QUB) held meetings with victims groups, the Victims' Commissioner and groups representing ex-combatants (34 people in total). Further meetings have been scheduled.
- 3.36 The two organisations held a joint conference in May 2013 entitled 'Dealing with the Past in Northern Ireland: Law, Prosecutions and Truth Recovery'. There were in excess of 200 delegates and speakers representing both academia and the wider community. As part of HTR's contribution to the conference and on-going work, the organisation presented previous commissioned work on 'The Viability of Prosecution based on Historical Enquiry' which set a legal and historical context for current work. The significant impact of HTR's promotion of community engagement in conference planning and targeting was that over 50% of the delegates were from the voluntary and community sectors.
- 3.37 This conference was followed up by highly sensitive work with The Hubb and EPIC, organisations which represent ex-combatants from the UVF. EPIC requested workshops on truth recovery to reflect issues developing among their membership about the Historical Enquiries Team.
- 3.38 HTR continues to be linked to on-going research while community engagement is now a significant part of the on-going partnership with QUB. This work includes bringing forward messages from the conference about how amnesty might look in Northern Ireland, whilst drawing on international precedents. The work will continue within the context of ensuring that the project informs further debate that allows people to express opinion and make decisions from a position of knowledge. It will continue to explore areas of interest including the needs of victims, the public interest in decision making and the effect of different approaches on different groups within Northern Ireland society.
- 3.39 HTR has developed a reputation as a key 'past-related' non-governmental organisation working across communities and sectors in Northern Ireland. This partnership between the technical and international experience of the academic team and the grass-roots credibility of Healing Through Remembering has made a significant contribution to this important public debate.

## Managing these activities in an appropriate manner

### Objective

*All aspects of the project would be overseen by the Board of HTR and would include feedback from the membership.*

- 3.40 Management responsibility for the Project was by HTR staff on a day-to-day basis. Overall responsibility was with the Board of HTR.
- 3.41 The process was underpinned by regular meetings between different partners for different aspects of the project, to discuss planning, identify further need and to monitor progress.
- 3.42 There is clear evidence of regular formal Board meetings to discuss both this project and the wider work of HTR. All are clearly minuted and show that membership comments were considered and helped to shape decision-making within the organisation.
- 3.43 This is, for example, demonstrated by the increased input into truth recovery which was identified as a need by members and partners. This helped shape both conferences and follow-up bespoke training within specific communities.

## Overall

- 3.44 HTR delivered the DFA project within the timescales identified and within budget. The work of the Project was linked to other funded work so as to maximise project impact. There is evidence of activities beyond the project parameters which have benefitted from the support of DFA resources thereby making the project good value for money. Thus the Project has set the ground for future progress and development in these difficult areas.

## 4 Conclusion

- 4.1 There has been considerable value in the Project. It has supported HTR in its efforts to bring together a range of different organisations and stakeholders to address aspects of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.
- 4.2 The effectiveness of the intervention is in no small measure due to the drive and commitment of the management, staff, consultants and volunteers in HTR. Without this intervention, it is clear that the different aspects of the project would have had a more limited impact in the community.
- 4.3 It is evident also that the resources provided by the DFA project have had an important impact on the area and will continue to do so. The Project has clearly promoted reconciliation between communities and addressed the objectives of the DFA's Reconciliation Fund.
- 4.4 The development of a range of inputs relating to areas as different as conflict management, diversity, drama and addressing the past through structured conversations has left a lasting legacy within the community. Many more people are skilled and confident in regard to taking part in wider community activities. For example, feedback from ex-combatants indicates that support from HTR has empowered them to join positively in debate about the Historical Enquiries Team.
- 4.5 A further positive outcome of the project was to link participants into other existing programmes, thereby using resources appropriately and widening the range of people accessing these support and services from HTR. Examples of these include links to the 2028 vision, the From Prison to Peace project, the Border Roads project and The Aftermath Project.
- 4.6 The programme set out to deliver significant change in seven main areas of work. These were:
- Membership;
  - Promoting the Everyday Objects Transformed by the Conflict exhibition;
  - Promoting community based drama;
  - Promoting Hate Crime Awareness;
  - Facilitating significant conversations on dealing with the past;
  - Developing work on prosecution and amnesty ; and
  - Managing these activities in an appropriate manner.
- 4.7 Significant developments have been made in all areas of work. HTR is, through the project, at the core of these positive initiatives and continues to deliver high standard community development.
- 4.8 A key component of the project has been to allow HTR to facilitate conversations and get feedback on issues and potential ways forward from a range of stakeholders. This has promoted a bottom-up approach to addressing the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. Engaging with communities at a grass roots level is vital to creating sustainable change and this project demonstrates good practice in ensuring these voices are heard.

### Numbers

- 4.9 The project has met its qualitative targets with only minor amendments to the specific targets. All of these were made only after the appropriate analysis of areas of need and opportunity was carried out. In addition, these amendments have been more than compensated for by the level of alternative activities which complemented the project.

## Accountability

- 4.10 There were robust management and partnership approaches in place which maintained a positive direction for the Project, including the changes mentioned at 4.9 above. There are clear lines of accountability and evidence of good governance processes from both staff and committee.

## Conclusion

- 4.11 HTR has clearly demonstrated its ability to make strategic and long-term positive change for the community in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The organisation has met the targets set out under the project while the interventions achieved will leave a positive legacy for the future.
- 4.12 Thanks to the support of the DFA, progress across all areas of work has been considerable. The result is a significant and positive contribution to the objectives of the DFA in promoting reconciliation between communities on the island of Ireland.

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