

Belfast Interface Project

Annual Report July 2003 – June 2004

Objective 1

To identify the components of a regeneration strategy

BIP has:

- a) Continued, alongside Mediation N.I. and Tides Training, to work closely with interface community representatives in East Belfast in order to design and implement a conflict transformation project there.
- b) Drawn up a policy document, 'A policy agenda for the interface' with which to prompt further debate and lobby for increased support in the regeneration of Belfast's interface communities.
- c) Participated in a number of conferences and seminars including 'Housing – a shared future' and a series of Incore 'Interface Policy Forum' meetings, amongst others.

Objective 2

To enhance and develop the knowledge base

BIP has:

- a) Designed and assisted in delivering a new 'Working with Diversity' module, as part of the University of Ulster's Certificate in Community Youth Studies course. This builds on the success of a previous pilot 'Youth and Community Work in an interface context' half-module, also designed and delivered by BIP.

The module addresses issues related to: the formation of identity; the nature and reproduction of prejudice; equity, rights and justice issues; features and patterns of conflict, and approaches to conflict transformation/resolution. As far as we are aware, this represents the first time that such content has been formally included within UUJ's youth and community work training curriculum.

- b) Commissioned a piece of research, involving interviews with representatives of approx 20 statutory agencies. This work illustrates

how the statutory agencies view their role in the social and economic regeneration of Belfast's interface areas.

c) Delivered a number of presentations and workshops including:

- 'Building Healthy Communities - Lessons from the interface' - at Stormont Hotel;
- Peace-building workshop with MNI to mixed group of Macedonians;
- Delivery with MNI of description of East Belfast work to Mr Guzman, president of East Timor and to Tides interns;
- Interface issues presentation to Scottish anti-sectarianism workers at Ulster Peoples' College;
- Staffed a stall at Belfast City Council's 'Community Safety Day' on May 13th;
- Spoken briefly on residential segregation and the need for dialogue on BBC TV's 'Heaven & Earth';
- Spoken at an Incore-sponsored seminar, attended by South East Asian politicians, academics and lawyers, alongside MNI, CAJ and the Parades Commission.

Objective 3

To influence change that is of practical benefit

BIP has:

a) Assisted in drawing up and implementing a joint protocol with PSNI in relation to the viewing of East Belfast PSNI CCTV interface footage.

b) Continued membership of the Oversight Group, which has taken on the role of overseeing the implementation of recommendations stemming from the review (which we also chaired) of the Interagency Working Group on Displaced Families.

c) Been represented on a number of funding advisory panels, including the Community Foundation's Peace II measure 'Developing weak community infrastructure' and the 'Communities in Transition' funding programme as well as the Community Relations Council's core funding scheme for Victims and Survivors groups.

d) Been represented on the executive decision-making bodies of Community Dialogue, the Stewartstown Road Regeneration Project, the Institute for Conflict Research, the Community Relations Council and

the advisory group of the 'Parenting in a Divided Society project' (Barnardo's).

Objective 4

To consult, develop and support the membership of Belfast Interface Project

BIP has:

- a) Fundraised and recruited a Communications and Membership Support Worker (Paul Donnelly) and a Support Worker (Marnie Kennedy), bringing our total staff complement to three including our director (Chris O'Halloran).
- b) Drawn up a joint one-year pilot project, together with Community Dialogue, whereby participating BIP members can begin to exchange perspectives with people from a range of other areas and backgrounds – including nationalist, unionist and 'other'.
- c) Carried out a survey of the needs of our membership.
- d) Held our first annual conference, at which we presented the findings of both the scoping study of issues for statutory agencies and the survey of membership needs and provided an opportunity for discussion of these.
- e) Produced and disseminated 2000 copies of the first edition of our news-sheet – 'Interface' – which aims to promote good practice in the social and economic regeneration of Belfast's interface communities. We aim to produce 3 issues per year.
- f) Continued to support a range of approaches to conflict management and transformation, including the Suffolk/Lenadoon Interface Group, LNBCC's mobile phone network, the Protestant Interface Network (PIN), and others.
- g) As always, fielded a range of requests and contacts from the media, statutory and voluntary organisations, referring these to appropriate interface area groups, agencies, projects and individuals.
- h) Continued to promote the benefits of BIP membership.
- i) Recruited 5 new members.

j) Supported the development of a Short Strand community relations project.

k) Held a team-building residential for management committee and staff at the Tullylagan House Hotel, Cookstown. This was both an enjoyable and a useful event which generated positive ideas for future work.

Objective 5

To become an independent project

BIP has:

a) Moved to, and equipped, new larger office premises on the second floor of Glendinning House, in order to accommodate the larger staff team.

b) Instituted new wages, finance and accounting systems.

c) Approached Community Evaluation N.I. in order to design and implement regular monitoring & evaluation systems.

d) Agreed and implemented new terms and conditions and pension arrangements.

e) Drawn up and implemented staff support, supervision and appraisal systems.

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