

Response to "New TSN – the Way Forward" Consultation Document Phase 2

**ADM/CPA
August, 2005**

ADM and CPA (ADM/CPA) are jointly responsible for the implementation of ten measures of the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2000-2004 (Peace II) in the border region of Ireland. ADM/CPA also has responsibility for four cross border measures. Two of these measures are delivered in partnership with the Community Foundation of Northern Ireland and Co-operation Ireland. Two others are delivered in partnership with the Department of Agriculture Northern Ireland. ADM/CPA also implements a rural development measure of the Interreg IIIA programme, and in collaboration with Co-operation Ireland, implement the social/community infrastructure measure of Interreg IIIA.

The joint partnership structure, known locally as ADM/CPA is based in Monaghan. ADM/CPA reports to the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, and ultimately to the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

ADM/CPA welcomes the revised New TSN proposal as the basis of an anti-poverty strategy for Northern Ireland. As pointed out in the Combat Poverty Agency's original submission to the consultation, a coherent strategic approach to combating poverty on both sides of the border, in the context of the EU social inclusion strategy, will help to underpin the work of the EU Peace Programme and of peacebuilding at a wider societal level.

We welcome in particular, the co-ordination of the revised strategy through a Ministerially-led interdepartmental/inter sectoral anti poverty forum and an action plan incorporating specific targets will ensure that the strategy is more effective.

The format of the Action Plan is to be consistent with the UK Action Plan and with National Action Plans as recommended by the European Commission. While this is of course very welcome, it is disappointing that no specific mention is made of the Irish government's Anti-Poverty Strategy and that co-ordination with the Irish APS is implied only at the level of the Open Method of Co-ordination at EU level. We would see it as essential that there be mechanisms for co-ordination of both policy and practice between the two strategies, particularly in relation to communities in the border region and social groups and individuals most affected by the conflict.

We are however, disappointed at the lack of analysis linking poverty and the conflict in Northern Ireland. The revised consultation document fails to address either the relationships between poverty and conflict and in particular the specific impacts of the

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conflict upon disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals and communities. The criticism made by the Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network in the first round of consultation, that “it does not confront social need arising out of conflict,” remains true of the revised document.

A recent research study commissioned by Combat Poverty noted that,

“... armed conflict has had a much greater impact on Irish society than is generally acknowledged. It is argued that there has been a high level of denial surrounding the causes and consequences of armed conflict in Ireland, the most important result of which is to make it difficult to stabilise political institutions and to achieve social reconstruction.”¹

The revised anti-poverty strategy for Northern Ireland by not explicitly addressing the relationships between poverty and conflict, is not only a lost opportunity, but could also inadvertently contribute to reinforcing some of the negative impacts of the conflict on the most vulnerable members of society.

There are two references to “conflict” in the document four times. The word “conflict” appears twice in the diagram on page 78. However, there is no narrative in the document to explain how the key components of the strategy, “capacity building” and “creating employment opportunities” are related to “conflict” as an area or community.

The other reference is in the section of the document which includes responses to issues raised in the consultation on the first draft of the consultation document.

“ISSUE

Impact of conflict on poverty in Northern Ireland must be recognised.

RESPONSE

It is recognised that Northern Ireland remains a divided society, with many ingrained patterns of division. The causes of this division include fear, mistrust and, in many cases, a weary acceptance of patterns of living that have developed over many years in response to conflict. This division is costly in both social and public resource terms. For example, divisions in Northern Ireland society have resulted in high levels of segregation in many communities imposing additional costs on a range of public programmes.”²

The relationship between poverty and conflict is a complex one. Nevertheless, there is widespread agreement that poverty, underdevelopment and high levels of inequality are all high risk factors for armed conflict. It is not easy to disentangle where poverty has been a cause or effect of conflict in Northern Ireland over the past thirty years.

¹ Paddy Hillyard, Bill Rolston and Mike Tomlinson, *Poverty and Conflict in Ireland: An international perspective*, Combat Poverty Agency, Dublin, 2005.

² New TSN – The Way Forward Towards an Anti-Poverty Strategy. A Consultation Document Phase 2.

Nevertheless, an anti-poverty strategy for Northern Ireland should be framed within the context of a conflict-sensitive analysis. Not to consider the impact of the conflict on the nature and extent of poverty and social exclusion and the contribution of inequalities and poverty to the conflict.

As the CPA study points out,

The impact of the conflict has been considerable and there is strong evidence to suggest that it has had an adverse effect on the weakest and most deprived sections of the community. The number of deaths and injuries has been greatest in the most disadvantaged areas, and those who have perpetrated a large proportion of the violence have originated from these areas. A new analysis shows the strong relationship between poverty and the conflict. Yet most anti-poverty policies fail to acknowledge the conflict.³

The revised document also lacks clarity on the causes of differentials between the two main religious communities and how social and economic inequalities can be addressed.

Transcending poverty and conflict in Ireland, north and south, presents major challenges across all sectors of society. In terms of social and economic reconstruction, very little has changed for people living in the most economically marginalized areas. Many communities – both nationalist and unionist – have not yet benefited from an economic 'peace dividend'. The primary challenge for all sectors is to tackle poverty and social exclusion in the communities most affected by decades of armed conflict. The Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Strategy therefore should ensure the 'mainstreaming' of peacebuilding and conflict resolution by first, explicitly recognizing the relationship between poverty and conflict and a specific analysis of how these relationships have been manifested in the Northern Ireland context. Secondly, the strategy should set out clear measures for addressing the poverty-linked impacts of the conflict.

³ *Poverty and Conflict in Ireland: An international perspective, op. cit.*