



ALL-ISLAND Convening Report



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Introduction

The All-Island Fund

The All-Island Community Fund is the result of a unique partnership between The Community Foundation for Ireland and the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland. Launched on a pilot basis in 2021, the fund seeks to ensure that women, young people, LGBTI+ and migrant communities, as well as all others, have their say in promoting equality, combating gender-based violence and fighting poverty. Its aim is to support active collaboration between voluntary, community and charitable groups, North and South so that all voices are heard. By sharing knowledge, expertise and research, more progress is made on key issues, and a stronger and more engaged civil society is the result.

The All-Island Community Fund is a coming together of people, funders and Ireland's foremost community foundations to encourage communities on both sides of the border to work together. It provides concrete support for partnerships between leading advocates allowing for strategic actions in the promotion of rights across the Island. Thirty such partnerships were formed between organisations North and South under this special fund last year. They have been working together with a joint vision since then, and the Convening was an opportunity for all these groupings to meet under one roof for two days to share their progress to date, learning and visions for the future.

Civil society groups and advocates have sometimes focussed on advancing rights in only one jurisdiction at a time. The result has been an opportunity not grasped to share experiences, knowledge and expertise which could have benefited communities greatly. The All-Island Fund was developed to access the potential and energy that working together can bring to a shared mission of equality for all, in thriving communities.

The All-Island Convening 27th and 28th of September, 2022

The purpose of the Convening was to bring together staff from projects supported by this unique fund along with change-makers and thought leaders, to discuss their triumphs, challenges and learnings with each other and with funders. It was organised over two days, with four thematic strands and parallel workshops. These were interspersed with short videos featuring the work of six separate organisations that formed partnerships under the fund.

The following report aims to give a flavour of the energy, passion, relationship-building, hope and optimism that was evident over the two days of the Convening, as well as reporting on some of the work being done with the support of the fund and the progress that is being made.

Official Opening and Opening Remarks

Mike Gaffney, Chair, Community Foundation for Ireland, was the first speaker of the day, welcoming all to the special convening on behalf of the Community Foundations for Ireland and Northern Ireland, noting that the next two days would be spent marking the achievements of the 30 civil society, cross-border partnerships that were made possible by the All-Island fund and working to advance an equality agenda on both sides of the border. He spoke of the excitement of watching the journey of this unique fund unfold, from its launch on Good Friday 2021 to the announcements of grants one year ago to the current point where the achievements of those involved are now visible.

The Chair of the Community Foundation for Ireland thanked the US Ambassador to Ireland, Claire Cronin, for attending and agreeing to officially open the Convening. He spoke of the great support given by the United States to the peace process in Ireland and how they were an unwavering ally, noting, in particular, the contribution made by Senator George Mitchell in the lead-up to the Good Friday Agreement. He also acknowledged the support shown to Ireland by successive US administrations, contributing greatly to the position we are in today, which, although not without challenges, is largely in peace.

The introduction to Ambassador Cronin spoke of her as having a passion for advancing civil and human rights, coming from an American family with proud Irish roots and having public service as its cornerstone. Ambassador Cronin's legislative career has been marked by advocacy for increased education funding, improving access to mental health and substance abuse services, increasing protections and services for victims of domestic violence, and advancing civil rights. The values and visions inspiring the Ambassador's work are shared and mirrored by both the Community Foundations and the grantees at the Convening.



Chair of the Community Foundation for Ireland, Mike Gaffney, US Ambassador to Ireland Claire D Cronin, Chair of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, Dr Adrian Johnston.

Ambassador of the United States of America, Claire Cronin congratulated the attendees on their vital work, including programmes to increase access to high-quality education, advance the civil rights of marginalised people, work with victims of domestic violence, and address the issue of human trafficking. The Ambassador pointed out that all these issues cross borders and require us to seek solutions in a collaborative way. Most of today's global threats and problems do not respect borders and are themselves borderless. Relationships are paramount in addressing social ills; when you know people better, it's easier to move ahead, achieve consensus and create real change. The Ambassador stressed the importance and value of coming together in a forum like the Convening, where needs, hopes and dreams are discussed. She commented that the passion the groups bring to their communities is palpable and that real change is underway. The US embassy is willing and able to help, and the Ambassador reiterated her support here by saying the Embassy has an open-door policy and asking that people make use of it.

Ambassador Cronin ended by echoing US President Biden's words in saying we stand at an inflexion point in history and urging those at the Convening to continue to create a space for justice, fairness, development and equality.

Denise Charlton, CEO, Community Foundation for Ireland, was unable to attend due to a family bereavement, however, the Chair of The Community Foundation for Ireland read from notes to her address. These spoke of the hugely positive impact that community and charity work is having on the ground, but with the knowledge that true solutions and answers require a much broader view. A little more than a stones-throw away and certainly within sight of the front door of the venue of the Convening lies the border between the two jurisdictions which share the island. It represents a point where political systems, laws, currency and even how distance and speed are measured, change. What does not change, however, are the issues facing people, families and communities. The ever-present threats of climate change and the biodiversity emergency do not stop at the border, nor does the inequality which pushes many voices to the sidelines of society. Whether in Derry or Kerry, there are mothers and fathers sending children hungry to school this morning without proper clothing because they cannot pay the bills.

Worryingly, the extremist and hateful language and voices of the far-right are also being heard in both jurisdictions, undermining the rights of individuals and entire communities on both parts of the island. The language, messaging, and tactics they use are borrowed from other countries where the right already has a grip on power. It was this recognition that the issues for people North and South are often the same which brought the Community Foundations together to launch the All-Island Fund on a pilot basis. The fund opened for grant applications immediately, and the response spoke volumes about the thirst to share, learn and campaign on a cross-border basis. Most of the island's civil society organisations use all their valuable resources to address an immediate need in their local area or attempt to influence policy in their jurisdiction. The pressure is immense. Even with this, groups acknowledge without exception that it is in no one's interest for one jurisdiction to move forward on equality while leaving their neighbours behind. At the outset, what was impressive was the broad range of issues on which groups wanted to come together and cooperate. To grow LGBTI+ and Migrant Rights, to end human trafficking for sexual exploitation, to increase access for girls and women to careers in engineering, to look at the complexities of policing, to combat poverty and, of course, to take on the biggest challenge of all by taking on climate action.

The CEO of the Community Foundation for Ireland went on to give a foretaste of some of the work the attendees would be hearing about during the Convening. The criminality which lies at the very centre of human trafficking takes advantage of borders, often switching operations from one jurisdiction to another to avoid justice and to continue abusing the rights of their victims. What we are seeing is research and evidence to support a complete refocussing of policing and laws in relation to human traffickers to address the actions of pimps and those who create demand. She drew attention to the work of the Sexual Exploitation Research Programme at UCD together with Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid and their hugely influential partnership which is changing the policing of these crimes. The partnership is also focussing on creating exit routes so that those who are being exploited can be supported and offered a fresh start.

As Brexit became reality it raised concerns about possible unforeseen implications for Children's Rights. It was in this context that The Children's Rights Alliance and The Children's Law Centre NI came forward to form a partnership to protect those rights. This is work which is just as important now as increasing numbers of children are growing up in poverty. No child should be growing up in a home where the choice is to have the light on for homework – or food on the table.

The rise of the far-right has emboldened the voices of hate in both jurisdictions. They may be small in number, but they are louder, and the evidence tells us they are growing. We see physical attacks on migrants, members of the LGBTI+ community and many others. This evil is evident too online, where hate speech is often spouted with little or no repercussions. The Convening keynote speaker Eric Ward, will speak of his experience in challenging far-right voices in his many decades of civil and human rights work in the United States.

The address ended by noting that none of this work would be possible without the support of donors, many of whom have travelled to see at first-hand the programmes which have been undertaken with the support of the All Island Fund, and to consider what the next steps may be. THE Community Foundation for Ireland CEO encouraged those present to share their experiences, to maximise combined knowledge and to once again learn from each other

Dr Adrian Johnston, Chair, the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland spoke next, offering his remarks on the opening of the Convening. Dr Johnston started by welcoming all attendees to what he hoped would be the first of many such gatherings of the All-Island Fund. Having been part of the fund- almost since its inception -and being in the lucky or unlucky position of being on the assessment panel, Dr Johnson reported that he was allowed a small glimpse into the potential opportunity that these 30 projects and partnerships presented. Being able to support work dealing with a wide range of complex, and topical issues important to the shared well-being of all on the island was he felt an immense privilege.

Dr Johnston looked forward to hearing more about the innovative work of the grantees throughout the course of the Convening and how they are continuing to advance an equality and, more importantly, an equity agenda both North and South of this island.

Collaborating North and South and East/West on this fund has been a new venture for both Community Foundations. They have so much to share with each other, and reflecting on this collaboration, Dr Johnson expressed his immense pride in how, together, they have been able to circumvent some of the structures, processes, politics and policies that are often barriers to collaborative working.

It is phenomenal to think that the collective grant-making of the Community Foundations on the Island of Ireland over the past 40 years exceeds £200m. They have been working independently on community development across a wide range of issues, helping funders, (many of whom were attending), turn aspirations into community investments in both grassroots organisations and larger charities. With many partners looking for opportunities and ways to work in an All-Island context, on issues that know no borders such as health, working with migrants, climate justice and victims of trafficking for example, it made sense to launch the All-Island Fund, to pilot partnerships, share our learnings and support collaborations and more importantly, change. In fact, the drive and need that started the Fund still remain as prevalent today, if not more, as they were when it was first talked about in 2020.

During what can only be described as a period of political turmoil and uncertainty, it is vital not to underestimate the positive impact the All-Island Fund has had, in both ensuring that the cross-border partnerships it has awarded grants to have been able to support each other and fostering increased mutual understanding. Furthermore, whilst the lack of a functioning Executive and Assembly in Northern Ireland has been identified as a challenge by many of the partners, there is evidence that partners re-orientated their work, increased cross-border understanding and developed cross-border approaches to policy, meaning these partnerships will be well placed to maximise their impact once political stability has been restored.

In closing, Dr Johnston expressed the hope that in this first convening, attendees could together highlight and address the challenges which affect us all, irrespective of which jurisdiction we come from.

Róisín Wood, CEO, Community Foundation for Northern Ireland was unable to attend the Convening, however Dr Johnston read some remarks on her behalf and began by commenting on what makes the fund distinctive. It's explicit focus, encouraging partners to think about how they are working as cross-border partners as well as what they are working on together.

There were 98 applications for funding received from lead partners across the Island; 30 were awarded funding in support of shared issues, the establishment of new partnerships and amplifying existing relationships.

The two foundations are hearing a desire to continue collaborations working beyond the lifetime of the respective projects, and they are particularly keen to hear from the attendees at the Convening about the potential and the opportunities that could and should be facilitated in the short, medium and long term.

In closing Dr, Johnston on behalf of the foundations thanked the donors to the fund and announced that 11 further grants of up to £20,000 will be available to further develop current partnerships. He added that the foundations are even more ambitious for this fund and the impact it is making in our communities, and asked attendees to reflect further on the role of philanthropy in this all - island context.

Thematic Strands

Panel discussions across four thematic strands took place after the welcome and opening speeches.

Tackling Poverty

This panel discussion, including Bernadette McAliskey, Fergal Landy and moderated by Avila Kilmurray, dealt with the reality of poverty on the ground in communities across Ireland. It provided an opportunity to hear about its impact and the rising cost of living on people, families and communities on both parts of the island. The panellists shared their expertise not only on the consequences of poverty but also on how sharing knowledge and expertise on a cross-border basis could benefit all. The discussion was timely in the context of the cost of living crisis protests that have taken place on both sides of the border in recent weeks

Bernadette McAliskey is one of the most recognised human rights campaigners on the island. She is a lifelong social justice advocate whose activities have ranged from neighbourhood organising, through to national protest movements and parliamentary representation. She currently co-ordinates the activities of STEP (South Tyrone Empowerment Programme), established in 1997. STEP is a rights-based community development organisation based in Dungannon, Co. Tyrone that in 2001 rose to the challenge of equitable integration of new migrant workers.

Fergal Landy, is CEO of the Family Resource Centre National Forum which represents the current 121 Family Resource Centres across the country, Ireland's largest National Family and Community-based support programme.

Avila Kilmurray has worked in the community sector and philanthropy in Northern Ireland since 1975. She has a particular interest in women's issues and anti-poverty work and was a founder member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition.

The discussion started with a question about what poverty looks like in 2022. Bernadette McAliskey responded that in Northern Ireland, to an extent, it looks like poverty everywhere in that it's not new and it wasn't caused by Brexit. In 2018 before the Covid pandemic, the population in the North was roughly 2 million, and there were 370,000 people living in persistent poverty, this means they were falling below the threshold that allowed people to live safely and survive. Of this number, 120,000 were children, and this was at a time when the UK was ranked the 5th wealthiest country in the world. It is currently ranked 6th wealthiest, having been overtaken by India. This was already happening then, in the UK in the 21st century. To be classified as living in persistent poverty, you have to be in that situation for 3 out of the previous 4 years. When Covid came, poverty increased, and it continues to increase through the cost-of-living crisis. Brexit has not helped and nor has the protocol issue. There's a new layer of people living in poverty, not classified (yet) as persistently poor because they're new to the experience, but it's a new level of poverty that their grandparents knew.

In a frightening way, in the North of Ireland, poverty is creeping up a level to the vocal centre. It is no longer only reaching poor immigrant populations or the cleaner in the public service office or the minimum wage worker. It's now also affecting middle-income people. In some cases, wages are simply not meeting the cost of living. Any household with a net income of less than £25,000 a year will have difficulty surviving the winter without state intervention. Poverty has now reached the average household income. However, it is not equal, its impact on the people at the bottom

is far more severe. Travellers, immigrants, and people reliant on benefits will be worst affected. Precarious people will be most affected. Those whose vulnerability comes and goes. There will be a significant increase in death over the winter. That's where we are.

In regards to the South of Ireland, Fergal Landy reported that there are a lot of similarities there to the situation in the North. Half a million people are living in poverty in the republic, 120,000 of whom are children. There is a category of 'working poor' there also now. Without a social protection system, 4 in 10 would be in poverty. Again, some groups are feeling the impact more than others. One-parent families are being hugely affected, and are having to make stark choices about what to pay for – food or fuel. Family Resource Centres in the republic are now much more involved in food banks than they would have been previously. People are forgoing optical and dental care so they can meet the costs of day-to-day living. School bags and school uniforms are a big issue, again this is particularly the case for lone parent-headed families, but it has become more frequently the case that other family types too, even those who are in employment, have difficulty affording school supplies. This brings a heavy burden in terms of mental health issues. Some feel an acute sense of shame that comes with poverty, particularly. Fergal gave an example of this shame that is felt by people struggling with the cost of living - a woman involved with a local FRC, having been approached to talk with the media about her situation and difficulties making ends meet, initially agreed to speak to RTE about her experience, but subsequently pulled out after her daughter asked her not to because she didn't want her classmates to know their situation. Poverty can have a really pernicious impact on children and their ability to live in dignity. Fergal finished this comment by pointing out that in family situations, if social services suspect or find evidence of significant neglect, there is an intervention from the state, but in the situation where the neglect is a result of economic policy, who intervenes on the government?

When asked to describe some of the efforts to tackle poverty in their communities. Fergal responded that their members are constantly dealing with the dilemma of whether they act as a charity or as a community development organisation. Do you fight for change or treat the immediate problem? The decision of the Family Resource Centres group was that they must do both. Mixing a model of contracted service delivery and response with a community development model.

One thing that worked well for a particular FRC was a Community Foundation funded local initiative to give grinds to children in a DEIS school. It was a local donor supporting a local community development project. The teachers found that the schoolchildren benefitted so much from the added support, that the school staff are now offering to expand it of their own volition. A really successful civil society response which involved reconciling meeting the immediate need with local resources, in other words using a community development model. The FRC hold the position that they won't be a plaster to problems in the public service. They engage in contracted service delivery, but only within a community development model. However, they continue to find it a challenge to coordinate responses at a local level while also hooking into a larger national level of strategising and collaboration. The difficulty is finding a way to legitimately operate in a political world without being overtly political or politicised. It means always walking a very tight line.

Bernadette McAliskey responded that a lot of what Fergal said also holds true in Northern Ireland. The STEP organisation sits in the mid-Ulster council area. The people who need solidarity and are in a position to offer it are not very far from each other at a local level. In community development organisations with limited resources, it's a challenge often to decide where you should be

working. In response to Fergal's dilemma about working with a community development model or as a contracted service provider, STEP's position is that you have to do both.

There's also a wider issue in the North which is related to the history of philanthropic funding in the area. When there were citizens of the US poorer than we were, we were spending US taxpayers' money. There may have been an element of being co-opted through the funding so that if you saw something that needed to be done rather than tackle it, you looked around to see who would fund it. We need to act beyond seeking funding, our critical judgements change. Nobody ever gives a donation with the intention that you waste it. People are giving you what they have to enable you to take forward what they approve of. They won't give you money and say, 'find yourself a good sharp stick to poke me with'.

(This analogy was used repeatedly throughout the two days to describe the tension felt sometimes by grantees who are contracted to supply state services and consequently feel themselves somewhat at the mercy of their funders.)

Bernadette McAliskey argued that we must at all times maintain a critical collaborative relationship when we're working. We can only work effectively with transparency, democracy and accountability. If we stick with these principles we can also meet short-term needs. Listen more, control less. We can't be all things to all people. I can help organise the distribution of food, but it's best handled by people who won't be coming out to campaign because they're not sure of the value of it. Experiential expertise should guide everything, it's built from the bottom. Local communities organise, and this conversation is a conversation of strengths, not deficits. This is similar to Gramsci's conception of intellectuals. Some may not know the intricacies of what the solution will be, but they know how it should work. We then discover what causes poverty - greed. It's not that we don't have enough resources, it's a matter of how they're distributed. It doesn't matter how you get there, the solution to poverty is politics. We have to hold governments to account. Make governments tax the rich. Capitalism is the cause of poverty.

In relation to a question on human rights and poverty, Bernadette McAliskey responded that STEP is fundamentally a human rights organisation. Its purpose is to ensure that the human rights of those who had been invisible throughout the war would not be invisible in the peace. Its approach is based on Boutros Boutros-Ghali's Agenda for Peace.

Quoting Eleanor Roosevelt's reply to a question on how we can measure the progress in human rights, 'where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world'. The pursuit of the vindication of human rights has a fundamental role to play at a local level. Human rights must have a real and practical meaning in the small places where human beings live their lives. If not meaningful and visible in the factory, or in the traveller population, for example, then they have no relevance.

In terms of contracted service delivery, STEP is contracted by a public procurement contract which is neither community work nor charity, it's business. However, it's always delivered within community development principles. If it can't be delivered in this manner then the organisation does not contract for the work. It also took a position that, as a company, it did not believe in manna from heaven, and determined right from the outset that it would at all times try to raise enough independent income to keep one hand waving free (the left hand!).



Israel Eguaoogie of Belfast City of Sanctuary with his All-Island partner Homayoon Shirzad of Places of Sanctuary Ireland

STEP is a charity that is a single shareholder in a community development organisation. Social justice work is independently and philanthropically funded by those who support the vision. The company decides what they want to do, and if they find a funder, they'll work with them. There is a constant cycle of internally revising and interrogating what STEP wants to do, not what the funder is doing. Then they reach out to allies who also want to support this work. The internal structure of the organisation has been changed on average every 3-5 years. The infrastructure has to carry the weight of the work. The realisation of human rights in the small places where people live their lives is the job of a community development organisation. If it outgrows the community it becomes 'society'. Regionalisation is not the way to go for community development.

Fergal Landy commented that there can be a measure of being covert in relation to how the contract work is conducted, or you may sometimes be allowed to do it in the way the organisation would want to. Some funders are more understanding than others. In terms of the difficulties inherent in working both in a community development model while engaged in contracted service delivery, you just do it. The organisation advocates for the people it works with. Human rights are practical and effective, not theoretical and illusory. Lots of FRCs are working in this way, but they are not independent of the funders, they started out with a dependency on external funding and are now trying to move to develop independence from them.

In relation to a question on the invisibility of travellers in human rights discourse in Ireland, Bernadette McAliskey commented that part of the traveller invisibility in NI is the nature of the north. Every new opportunity to find a new group of people to be hateful to has pushed the traveller community further down to the bottom. All day every day, they remain the most isolated and most abused grouping, and this treatment is tolerated by everyone else. Their situation is similar to the first nation population in the US. We need to recognise how pervasive and deep-seated this is in all of us.

There is also the problem of how small the traveller community has become. Once they're settled in housing, they become assimilated into a settled culture of fixed housing, and it's almost as if they have to trade traveller culture for that. Traveller support in NI is funded through health and social care, as though being a traveller were a disability or some form of special need. STEP works with travellers, but refuses to take a mediating position between travellers and the state. State representatives can find their own way to the halting site themselves.

The state has historically harmed travellers significantly in the North through the kinds of funding and support offered, not least in terms of their confidence in their cultural identity but in other ways also. NI is a region that has free education from ages 4 to 18 but has appallingly low numbers of traveller children achieving a basic accredited education.

When asked how much of a problem the lack of a fully functioning government was, Bernadette McAliskey replied that the executive in recent years has been useless in bringing change forward, so the absence is an opportunity to be creative and get things done.

There's more happening than we know. There are good things happening. History will record Boris Johnson took the single action that brought about the break-up of the UK.

If we do not put the human rights model in the centre of these conversations, no one else will. We will miss a historic opportunity in a very small part of the world to begin to build a society here. To build an infrastructure that will carry the weight of the future we envision. We are trying to catch up with the bus that's running out of road. Poverty is structural but also personal, therefore poverty is also political.

Tackling Gender-Based Violence

This panel discussion gathered leading campaigners, researchers and commentators. In a conversation moderated by Dr Salome Mbugua of AkiDWA, Noeline Blackwell of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre was joined by one of the All-Island partnerships - members of the Sexual Exploitation Research Programme (SERP) at UCD and the Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid who are working together to address the complex issue of human trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Dr Salome Mbugua is a researcher, gender equality activist and human rights advocate. She is the CEO of AkiDWA -The Migrant Women's Network Ireland and has over 20 years' experience of working with under-represented groups in particular women, children, and the youth, in Europe and Africa.

Noeline Blackwell is a human rights lawyer and CEO of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, a voluntary organisation which works to prevent the harm and heal the trauma of sexual violence. Prior to this, she was for ten years Director General of access to justice organisation FLAC, the Free Legal Advice Centres. She previously ran a solicitor's practice where she had a particular interest in refugee and immigration issues and in family law.

Noelle Collins has worked for Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid for many years. During this time, she has championed changes in legislation helping to support and protect women and children affected by domestic violence and abuse. Currently Noelle is the Women's Aid area manager for South and East Belfast. In this role she manages both the refuge and the community support for the South and East Belfast areas.

Ruth Breslin has over twenty years of research experience in both NGO and academic settings. She has an MSc in Social Research Methods (Social Policy) from the London School of Economics and Political Science. The focus of Ruth's work has been efforts to tackle and prevent violence against women and girls, and she has developed particular expertise in research and policy development on the interrelated issues of prostitution and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Ruth is regularly called upon to input into the development of evidence-based policy, legislation and practice in this regard.



Noeline Blackwell of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, US Ambassador to Ireland Claire D Cronin and Martin O'Brien of Social Change Initiative

Domestic, sexual and gender-based violence has moved to the top of the public and political agenda following spikes in reports during Covid-19 and high-profile violent incidents. Dr Mbugua opened the conversation by commenting on gender-based violence as a human rights violation, and noting that it is a structural and deep-rooted problem. Bringing change and reform will require embedding issues of consent and awareness of violence in education.

Ruth Breslin spent a little time outlining the context in which the partnership between SERP UCD and Women's Aid Belfast and Lisburn is happening. Both organisations gather information and evidence from the front line. In the south, there are approximately 1000 women selling sex. Up to 94% of these are migrants. In the main, they are very young and have little English when they start. Poverty, coercion, and trafficking bring women into the sex trade. This sector is a very mobile one, with the women involved constantly moving from place to place. This is primarily due to market demands - sex buyers value new women and seek them out.

The partnership between the two organisations is an ambitious all-Ireland project which works to end this sexual exploitation. Their collaboration to date has involved a lot of intelligence sharing, learning, and discussion of models of best practice about exiting prostitution. The discussion between the two groups, one in academia, and one on the frontline, has been hugely helpful for both, perhaps particularly for the academic one, having a chance to step out of the 'tower'. The partnership has seen a series of round tables being set up with various high-level stakeholders, including the police forces of both jurisdictions, officials from the departments of health, housing and justice on both sides of the border as well as specialists in anti-trafficking and frontline services participating.

Although both groups were aware of the work of the other for many years, this partnership forced them to communicate and has given each a sense of solidarity in battling a damaging narrative that has gained some currency in recent years - that women entering prostitution through poverty, addiction, coercion or other absence of choice are no different to any others engaged in waged labour under capitalism. Great strides are currently being made in both jurisdictions in relation to recognising and calling out sexual violence. Ruth Breslin praised the south of Ireland's recognition of prostitution as a form of violence against women within the recently published third national strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence there. However, she noted that there was still a way to go in terms of working to prevent these crimes.

Noelle Collins commented that for her, one of the successes of the partnership has been in relation to their trafficking work. There has been an increase in the number of refugees coming into Northern Ireland, and through the cross-border project, the partnership was able to identify countries that were coming to either jurisdiction. They were also able to discuss areas along the border that were prime for sexual exploitation, this information is very useful when working with local women. They have also found that stakeholders at a very senior level were attending their roundtables, which again enhanced the effectiveness of their work and planning.

Women coming through the trafficking project frequently don't trust the police, often having been abused by them in their country of origin. This is useful information to pass on to the policing service in both jurisdictions and this is discussed at the roundtables as well as strategies to overcome this mistrust.

NI are seeking to have women's historical convictions in relation to prostitution expunged. The recent Martin Heaney court case there made vivid the exploitation of women in prostitution, there were over 80 young women referenced in the case. These would not all have been described as vulnerable, but he got them on a vulnerable day. The hope is that the convictions of women like those victims of Martin Heaney can be wiped so they can move on, they otherwise have very little open to them in terms of employment.

There is a narrative in society and academia that prostitution is just another form of work. The groups in this partnership are very clear that it is an exploitation of women's vulnerability, and that many are coerced into the trade, while others are forced into prostitution by poverty. It can sometimes feel lonely battling this narrative so another benefit of the partnership is to offer support and solidarity not only to women being exploited but to the other women seeking to combat the exploitation. Northern Ireland is also very clearly stating now, along with the south of Ireland, that prostitution is a form of gender-based violence. Some people find it almost distasteful to talk about prostitution, but women don't go into the sex trade through choice. It's a very sad, lonely place. Some women went in 20 years ago with a plan for 3 months, and many women don't finish their education, or attain the careers they may have initially hoped for. Many live with the secret, but experience guilt and trauma and many never disclose this part of their lives to family or friends.

The conversation then turned to the issue of women being trafficked from the north into the south - are we closer to solving this? The partnership has the position that brothels wouldn't exist if there wasn't a market for the purchase of sex, so work needs to be done to tackle demand. This is a problem that men need to look at and address as well as women. Exploiters exploit the border. Women will be brought through Dublin, and into Northern Ireland because they benefit from travel through EU countries. But it also happens in reverse. Traffickers use both ways. The main website offering sex for sale in Ireland covers the whole island.

Noeline Blackwell talked about the increase in gender-based violence during the worst part of the Covid pandemic and lockdown. Covid had the effect of highlighting issues of domestic violence. There was a sense of people being shut in and closeted with their abuser at home. The state had to acknowledge that there could be adverse consequences to something that, on the face of it, might look like an advantage. The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre became part of a Government awareness-raising campaign, spearheaded by the Department of Justice & Equality, to emphasise that domestic & sexual violence support services from state agencies and the voluntary sector are 'still here' during the COVID-19 crisis. The Still Here campaign was a success, and for the first time, funders came to DRCC and asked how much they needed.

Even before the pandemic, there was a move to look at gender-based violence in a holistic way, and these changes sensitised us to the dangers during Covid. Referenda made us conscious of bodily autonomy and integrity. Legislation criminalising coercive control was introduced. The Me Too movement also had a huge impact in Ireland and internationally in the global north. The celebrity rugby rape trial led to a discussion about the cruelty of the justice system for intimate abuse. We are not a respectful society. This was all happening even before covid. The dangers to women during lockdown reminded us we needed to institute protections and make changes to the criminal justice system. There were systems put in place with Gardai for domestic violence, which stipulated a certain kind of follow-up and monitoring. There is no such system for rape cases. The 3rd national strategy on domestic and gender-based violence is hugely important in this. It was in the programme for government that gender-based violence is an epidemic, and they, therefore, set an extensive consultation in motion. The document we have today, overseen by NWCi and Safe Ireland, was really well received by civil society.

In terms of prostitution and sexual exploitation and the issue of consent - we think that the purchase of sex is a consensual transaction because we have a limited understanding of what consent is. We need more awareness and education on this, and a programme of education and research is coming on stream soon in relation to this. We regularly hear now of people selling sex for accommodation and landlords proposing this, openly on websites. This has to be addressed and stopped.

When asked if policymakers are more aware of sexual violence now Noelle replied that there is a real way in which people can't see the impact of sexual violence in the way they see the impact of domestic violence. However, a really positive change is that those who have experienced it are becoming less ashamed, understand that they should have no shame, and are coming forward. Sexual Violence being shameful is a societal construct. The shame belongs with the perpetrator, and is on the state for the cruelty of the criminal justice system. We have to challenge the norms that assume that women and children are property. We have to name rape as an issue, refuse to be embarrassed or ashamed of sexual violence if it happens to us, and continue to talk about it. We need to be outraged as a country and as a society by sexual violence. It should not be a private matter.

In terms of good news, Ruth Breslin commented that the expunging of historical convictions for women in prostitution was being worked on and would be a huge step forward for women who have managed to exit the sex trade. It is also good news that most men in Ireland do not buy sex and do not think it's acceptable. It is often the case that women experience multiple forms of gender-based violence, women often enter prostitution because of domestic violence. The 3rd national strategy is good news in this regard in that it proposes a holistic approach to the prevention and prosecution of violence and to the protection of women.

Noelle Collins urged attendees to keep talking about violence against women and not to be afraid to talk about prostitution. It's another form of exploitation, and we should not be afraid to talk about it as such.

Dr Salome Mbugua closed the panel by commenting that violence against women is not only a problem for women but also for men, and we should enlist their help in addressing this problem.



Salome Mbugua of AkiDwa, Heather Woods of Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid, Ruth Breslin of the Sexual Exploitation and Research Programme at UCD and Noelle Collins of Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid.

Tackling Climate Change

The All-Island Partners have not shied away from the biggest challenge of all, protecting our communities against climate change and the biodiversity emergency. Rose Wall and Lynda Sullivan shared their experience of working together in a session which addressed questions posed by prominent journalist, Amanda Ferguson.

Rose Wall has been the CEO of Community Law & Mediation since 2013. She previously held the position of Managing Solicitor of the Mercy Law Resource Centre, where she advised and represented clients who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. Having qualified as a solicitor in 2008, Rose initially worked as a plaintiff litigation solicitor representing clients before a variety of fora, including the Hepatitis C and HIV Compensation Tribunal and the Residential Institutions Redress Board.

Lynda Sullivan is an activist with the all-island network Communities Against the Injustice of Mining. She previously worked for human rights organisations in Ireland before spending 5 years in Latin America, accompanying Andean communities in their resistance against mega extractive projects. After returning home and working with Friends of the Earth NI for the past 4 years she is now a freelance consultant for the Environmental Justice Network Ireland and the Yes to Life No to Mining global network. She is also Chair of the Centre for Global Education and Management Committee member of the PPR Project.

Amanda Ferguson is a Northern Ireland-based journalist, commentator, and storyteller. She is also the co-founder of Women in Media Belfast, which promotes the voices of women in and on the media. Amanda has a particular interest in politics, peacebuilding, women's issues, equality, and wellbeing.

Awareness of climate change has increased, but other things have been perceived as more important. In situations of competing needs, there is a tension between preparing for the end of the world versus the end of the month. Often short-term and immediate pressures win out.

Amanda Ferguson began by noting that law and mediation isn't a typical background for an environmentalist, and asked Rose Wall about this context in her work. Rose responded that there is now a general acceptance that climate change is an enormous threat to human rights- the right to water, a clean environment and health. Climate change will not affect everyone equally. The poor have less choice about where and how they live, lower access to green space, and affordable, sustainable homes; yet, the voices of marginalised communities are missing from climate action work. We can help aid inclusion by capacity building and training disadvantaged communities in this area. Community Law and mediation offer education and training around the national clean air strategy, amongst other issues. They work with organisations whose main focus would not usually be in the environmental space, like Travellers groups and disability groupings and other

Lynda Sullivan from Communities against the Injustice of Mining talked about how the island of Ireland is one ecological unit in two jurisdictions divided by a border that water systems, pollutants, and the air do not respect or acknowledge. Ireland is currently a hotspot for mining, in the north of the island, in some areas (for example, Derry/Strabane), as much as 70% of the land is covered by mining concessions, these concessions give private companies the rights to extract minerals from public lands, or carry out exploration of the area. This includes fracking and the mining of minerals and metals like lithium and copper. Ireland is regularly represented at large international mining conferences, it is considered number 1 in the world for attractiveness in mining, with Northern Ireland being number 2. We have already started down the road to extractive capitalism. Zinc, gold and, gypsum are among those resources currently being mined. This will increase. A narrative of green mining is being used more and more to justify it in light of the climate crisis. But this is definitely a case of greed, not need.

Lynda referenced that Peru has seen hugely deleterious effects of large-scale gold mining, for example, with consequential air pollution, and contamination of food with heavy metals, which, when ingested, enter the bloodstream. Animals have been dying, and people getting sick. Fracking is devastating wherever it happens. It was banned in the south of Ireland in 2018, and also banned in Scotland and Wales, but in the UK, there was a moratorium put on the practice rather than an outright ban, and soon after Liz Truss was made Prime Minister, she reversed this measure.

Speakers at the session were in favour of the need for an all Island approach to environmental protection, creating an impetus for cross-border collaboration. There are cross-border initiatives under the partnership, and while these are really positive, we need a broader strategy. The border allows the possibility of divergence in environmental protection within the region. NI is a little bit behind, huge time is being taken to implement the climate act because of events in Stormont. Since Brexit, some protections are in place, but we are no longer working under a common law on this. In terms of facilitating the extractive industry, there is not much difference between the two states, both are highly facilitative. Both also support industrial agriculture, which accounts for 1/3 of our carbon emissions. Lobbying by the agriculture sector worked to really delay the climate act. Media operate in such a way that farmers are being seen as pitted against climate action, but this is not really the case. Climate change is bad for everyone, farmers included. They're increasingly being put under pressure to work on an industrial scale with fear of failure if they do otherwise.



Members of the Environmental Panel addressing both climate change and the biodiversity emergency

Speakers agreed that both jurisdictions have similarly bad records in relation to climate action. In the south, there are ok laws but no implementation, and there is no urgency in relation to emissions. The EPA Air Quality report concluded that poor air quality contributes to 1300 premature deaths in Ireland every year. The Youth Work Ireland report concluded that 71% of landfill sites were located in areas below the national average for deprivation; and in relation to green space, the Mapping Green Dublin Report found that there were more trees than residents in Ballsbridge but 10 residents per tree in the North inner city. Access to green space is not equal, it's far better in wealthy areas. There is a policy on retrofitting in the south but not in the north. More needs to be done, but at least in the south, a start has been made. We need renewable fuel to be community-owned, it should not go the way of fossil fuel, In the north, there's no movement on this, again a start has been made in the south.

Border divergence remains a major challenge to collaboration. While An Taisce also tackles the issue of mining in the south, the impetus for mining communities' protests (Monaghan and Leitrim, for example) usually comes from the grassroots. They can be supported by funders as long as they don't control it. This partnership was great because we had an NGO that was willing to support us without controlling our operations.

There is a right of nature movement building internationally. This redefines our relationship with the natural world and involves humans trying to live in balance and moving away from dominance over the environment. New ways of living in harmony with nature are being explored. The Ganges river, considered sacred by more than 1 billion Indians, has become the first non-human entity in India to be granted the same legal rights as people, this means that polluting or damaging the river will be legally equivalent to harming a person. Ecuador, Bolivia, and New Zealand have all also instituted rights of nature measures. If the Shannon or Lough Neagh or any other environmental resource owned themselves and were able to legally pursue polluters, they would be in a far better state. This approach is in opposition to extractivism, which is the process

of extracting natural resources from the earth to sell on the world market. It exists in an economy that depends primarily on the removal of resources that are considered valuable for export on a worldwide basis. The resources are typically taken from the ground in the global south by international corporations, with the funds being funnelled to the global north along imperial lines. Now they want to mine more everywhere. So we're seeing more in Europe, and along its peripheries. One could also say that industrial-scale agriculture and the development of data centres are a form of extractivism.

Events like the All-Island Convening and the fund have been hugely helpful. Relationships which were developed as part of the fund are incredibly important and now we want to work on other projects together, we have been inspired by the partnership. With Brexit has come a lack of funding for cross-border work. Ireland is the 3rd worst polluter in Europe per capita so we have a disproportionate influence and moral imperative to act on this. As long as our governments continue to follow the current economic model, nothing will change. We can't wait on them, communities need to have the opportunity to create the alternative now.

Water quality is very important, the border can't control water flow, rain falls on us all. We have no clear strategy for protecting our water quality and its impact on the most deprived communities. Water is increasingly becoming commodified locally and globally. In the south, we have serious problems with water, – boil notices for a long period of time, and buying bottled water has cost implications. When you're working in two national systems there's no space to do advocacy. One can't participate in policy consultation, for example. But it is possible through one's partners. Rose Wall, worked with cross-border partners and brought their experience into southern consultations. Cross-border advocacy is possible through the kind of collaboration initiated by the all-island fund.

Flooding affects many people in Ireland, and there is real grassroots interest in this issue. We have a moral duty to help communities who are worried about flooding and enable, invest in, and empower those. How can we best help local people? In relation to flooding, 40% of our pop lives within 5k of the coast. This is a big coming problem. In Fairburn in Wales, a whole village has already been decommissioned because of this issue. As always, funding for climate and environmental work is a problem. While the state may fund awareness raising, they are less likely to fund litigation (no one funds you to sharpen a stick and poke them with it!), this is where philanthropy is very important.

Combatting the Far-Right

Joining the keynote speaker Eric K. Ward, were Siobhán O'Donoghue and facilitator Liam Herrick as they discussed the rise of the far-right both here at home and internationally. It was an insightful discussion on a trend which impacts every community in every country.

Eric K Ward is an internationally recognized expert on the relationship between authoritarian movements, hate violence, and preserving inclusive democracy, is the recipient of the 2021 Civil Courage Prize – the first American in the award's 21-year history. In his 30+ year civil rights career, Eric has worked with community groups, government and business leaders, human rights advocates, and philanthropy as an organizer, director, program officer, consultant, and board member. Eric's widely quoted writings and speeches are credited with key narrative shifts. He currently serves as Senior Advisor to the Western States Center, a member of the President's Leadership Council for the Search for Common Good, Chair of The Proteus Fund, and Advisor to the Bridge Entertainment Labs.

Siobhán O'Donoghue is the founding director of the people-powered campaigning organisation Uplift. Uplift connects people to take coordinated action for a better Ireland. With 340,000 supporters, campaigns range from action on climate, tackling hate and extremism, holding decision-makers to account, campaigning for public health we can be proud of, and safe and secure homes. Siobhán has been a social justice leader and campaigner for decades. Her experience ranges from community and youth work, to national policy advocacy and organisational leadership.

Liam Herrick was appointed Executive Director of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) in 2016. Prior to this, he worked as Advisor to President Michael D. Higgins. Liam was the Executive Director of the Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) between 2007 and 2014. He has also worked as the first head of legislation and policy at the former Irish Human Rights Commission and with the Law Reform Commission and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Liam Herrick started by noting that An Garda Síochána, the Republic's police service, have recognised that far-right extremism is one of the biggest security threats on the island. A lot of work is happening in this jurisdiction in this area. He asked the panellists about their opinion on this issue.

Siobhán O'Donoghue responded that most of us here care about each other and want people to have the best opportunities, however, there are some actors who do not, and are trying to divide us. That attempt to cause disruption and polarisation is having a

negative effect on our society. It's also having a chilling effect on leaders, there's self-censorship creeping in, particularly when having difficult conversations, for fear of backlash. There is also a weaponising/instrumentalising of systems that are meant to support and protect us – the broadcasting act, data protection laws and others, are being used against progressive organisations and communities.

In terms of the US – where do things stand at the moment? The rise of the far-right is no longer a fringe movement there, it has firmly entered the mainstream, we saw what happened on Jan 6th. The problem is not the movement itself, but the unwillingness to build an effective response. The debate was around who is American, and the vehicle became immigration. Women's rights were attacked, as were those of sexual minorities. The far-right is committed to undoing nearly 75 years of the civil rights movement; they are not grounded in inclusion but exclusion. In the US,

the effect of this movement is very tangible and it has a clear link to organised politics. This is not the case in Ireland so far, we are not in that space.

However, we are walking a fine line. We don't want to amplify them or give them oxygen, so sometimes there is a tension around how best to respond, even on social media. Any response at all may elevate their message, but giving no response seems equally problematic. Without a doubt, we have some small right-wing groupings here, but the biggest problem is the impact they're having on the communities being attacked. People are suffering real harm.

And people are being drawn into supporting these groups nefariously. For example, parents who didn't want their kids to wear masks in school were getting pulled into all sorts of other issues and conspiracies, the far-right is skilled in the use of these 'wedge issues' to divide and polarise people. In the US there was a failure to tackle this historically, we're in a different point here, and we need to start acting now.

In the US the progressive movement failed in relation to this, that's ok, movements fail all the time. We are arrogant if we do not believe that others won't fail. We refuse to understand that the white nationalist movement isn't spreading hate for itself but in order to gain power. Demographic change exists all over the world, but it's stark in the US. We talk about the new majority, feeding into demographic anxiety. All of us experience demographic anxiety all the time. If we experience the same fear over and over we develop the equipment to deal with it. It's a mistake to call it bigotry, in some ways, it's a natural and understandable response to the misinformation and stoking of fear that's rife. The far-right in the US is calling the demographic shift the 'great replacement' and using the fear engendered by this to recruit individuals into their movement. They are even now recruiting African Americans. We tend to demonise those that are attracted to the far-right, and these are people that often have been disenfranchised and marginalised themselves. This is also the case with social media, where discourse is coarsened. It's much easier to work on people's fears than people's hopes

The challenge is to match the energy and urgency of the far-right without adopting their tactics and narratives. Organising against them is an opportunity to build a society.

We have to say what we're for, and we must be careful not to play into their narrative. Language matters, but we need to focus on impact. In the US, looking back, it seems as though the far-right had a coherent strategy and plan though it may not have seemed that way at the time. The response needs to have several components, including research and monitoring. Use those resources and grassroots knowledge to service local NGOs (for example, the far-right observatory in the south). All of civil society has a role to play here and need to get involved. There is a direct correlation between the rhetoric of elected officials and hate violence in the US, It's not just about getting people elected but using electioneering and electoral platforms as a vehicle to spread their message and build their lists.

Philanthropy has to rise to the occasion, responding to the people who are not interested in the polite rules we make for ourselves. We don't have a big far-right party in the south, but they're using the system to build their base. The local elections are very important for the National Party in Ireland. Independents are organising together and are going on message together. We need to dial down and not amplify what some of the rural independents are saying. Journalists cover hate violence without ever talking to people who are affected it and this needs to change, there should be greater awareness and sensitivity in the media to these issues. We're also beginning to see polarisation among the media on some issues at the moment.

We're living in societies that are increasingly alienated from traditional organising foci – the media is one. We need to stretch ourselves as movements into new subcultures and work with those. In the US, they work with soccer and supporter organisations, for example, to battle the rise of the far-right and to reach young people. Rather than building organisations that require people to hook into them, we need to resource existing organisations on these issues. In the US, the far-right understands that they have to challenge those spaces that look like competition to their ideology. The island fund is one of those spaces. It will be targeted, but we shouldn't wait for that to happen but get out ahead of it. The far-right in the US is extremely well-resourced. Just in August of this year, one man made possibly the largest donation ever when he gifted \$1.6 billion to a non-profit group controlled by a conservative activist who has crusaded, to transform the country's politics. The donation was given to a group that has helped fund right-wing advocacy on abortion rights, voting and climate change, among other things.

Far-right messaging and its intersection with social media abuses is often looked at as a freedom of speech issue. But in relation to social media, there's another way to look at it, which is about the business model of favouring the content that spreads further and fastest. American media is also a culprit. It likes to set stories up as though they were dramas, and seeks to find a hero and culprit in every issue. There has to be education and engagement with journalists.

In the US, beyond the rhetoric, there are limits to free speech, one can't engage in insider trading, for example, or one can't call for the assassination of the president. But it's ok to call for the extermination of a race on social media. Media and social media companies can rise to the occasion, but they refuse to because there's profit in dissension.

It's really important to have a well-equipped research and monitoring organisation in the fight against the far-right and to support them by not having them scrambling for funding, and ensure it's multi-year. We need to be clear and name the society we want and have a pluralistic movement at the centre. The urgency of the response is not here in Ireland at the moment. The far-right might be small, but it can have a huge chilling effect. The onus is on all of us to build a positive vision of the kind of society we want to live in. Our enemies would love us to think there's no hope.

Workshops

A series of parallel workshops were held to give the partnerships the opportunity to meet with each other in a more formal setting and discuss their successes and challenges to further inform the fund's future work. These workshops were organised around central questions, and these questions and summary responses are outlined below. Some of the responses were common across the workshops, while others were unique to individual partnerships.

Workshop questions and responses

The following is a summary of the questions addressed in workshops and the kinds of responses given.

What are the highlights of your partnership work?

- Getting the opportunity to visit the partner project and getting to know each other more deeply. Developing the relationship between us has been key to our learning.
- Beginning the conversations about looking at policy-level issues.
- We're at the beginning of a journey. We'll be applying again. This conference is amazing; it's great to talk to all the other people and really great to see the relationships and cross-border work, Brexit divided us, and this brings us together. It's hard to rise to the cross-border stuff without a funder, and this has provided it.
- We've always done things from an understanding that we have a lot in common although we're in different jurisdictions. People have to see the value of that and want it. This fund gives them the opportunity to do that. People and relationships are what is important, but the possibility that's created is really hugely important. Connecting people is fundamentally what matters.
- Reconnecting with people is what counts.
- The networks built through the partnerships are being used by state agencies and others to make connections and share information and have conversations that were needed by all. There is a demand from these agencies to use these networks and events. Eyes being opened to the value of partnerships.
- Tangible projects such as tool kits and shared resources that will continue to be useful after the funding ends.
- Intangible things such as strong connections, being able to ask a second opinion, and expanding your network in a meaningful and long-lasting way.
- These are now functioning working relationships that are working outside of the terms of the project.
- Resource sharing and information sharing are lasting beyond the scope of the projects
- Shared learning about cross border state systems can then be built in to actions, advocacy, planning etc on the other side of the border.
- This funding was more flexible than a lot of partnership funding and could be used for political matters etc. This was a real strength of the funding.
- The amount of paperwork was manageable as the application was processed
- Networks – connections spark connections, and one group working together has a domino effect on networks.
- The convening! The value of all coming together and seeing all the projects that have been funded.
- Funding from the All Island Fund allowed new partnerships to form and existing partnerships to carry on.

- It provided the rare opportunity for organisations to focus on aspects outside of service / operational delivery.
- Has created a template for future partnership plans.
- The partnerships created can now work on emerging issues.

What were the challenges associated with your work?

- Timetabling partnership work in, some staff are voluntary and this can make visits etc difficult. The community and voluntary sector seems to be more staffed in the north, while in the south it seems to be more voluntary. This can make scheduling and planning of events more difficult.
- The distinction between volunteer-led and staffed projects can be challenging, particularly when it comes to freedom around advocacy. Our sector can be constrained (they're not going to pay you to poke a stick at them!).
- It's great to have a conference with donors and recipients, but there are also worries about whether we'd be cut off from funding if we say the wrong thing.
- Differing structures north and south and working within these structures
- Managing different expectations north and south was difficult.
- GDPR restrictions wouldn't allow organisations to share data about people
- Partnerships suffered where organisations were volunteer-led.
- A suggestion that all-island funding needs to focus harder on communities in the north that may be reticent about all-island collaboration or would struggle to make the initial connections. A feeling that there is a sector of Northern society is not in the room.
- Communities are siloed and complex and navigating partnerships like this can be tricky.
- Academics are often not connected – maybe a focus on these relationships as they are vital for the rest of the networks.
- More feedback/ shared information is needed about how people built their relationships. Could there be a further step? What is next? A steering group etc to move collaboration like this forward.
- The impact of COVID on face-to-face gatherings and the general working of these projects.

Has anything concrete come out of your partnership so far?

- The relationships that were built, not just between the organisations but also between participants. We plan to have future events to continue working both sides of the border and doing it legitimately, not 'grannyng' - pretending your address is one side of the border when it's the other.
- People who had never crossed the border now had the chance. Some were initially suspicious, initially believing it to be a 'softly softly' approach to building a united Ireland. Now they are reassured.
- Participants have influenced their wider families - siblings, children, parents, and grandparents, in relation to their positive experience of cross-border co-operation
- Shared and online resources, leaflets, training of volunteers, conferences, research.

What are the greatest challenges to cross-border collaboration

- Travel was a huge challenge – the cost of it had rocketed, what we had applied for was not enough when it came around.
- The money came in euros and then went back, so we lost some in currency conversion. Some partners thought they were applying in sterling but turned out to be euro.
- Cross-border projects shouldn't pick Mondays for grant disbursement or events because of differences in bank holidays.
- Partner organisations were not aware of the political processes in the two jurisdictions.
- Cross-border work with refugees and migrants can be difficult in terms of travel capabilities.



Martin O'Brien of the Social Change Initiative guides participants through workshops.

How can grants be structured better to support and encourage cross-border work?

- There need to be discussions around pathways to mainstreaming funds. It would be good to get the opportunity to have statutory funders in the room at some stage to advocate for the ongoing development of projects.
- Project funding is short-term, and the connections are so fruitful that they don't want to drop them but can't necessarily afford to maintain them. Collaboration like this isn't seen as a priority for funders. Limits on planning and setting targets. Short-term funding is a waste of resources in that relationships are difficult to build, and then you drop them.
- There is a missing link between this work and feeding this information back to government and policymakers - feeling that all the benefits of the work aren't going to be reaped if they don't know about it. Could this be part of the next phase?
- General Feedback on funding (not specific to this fund) Innovation – a feeling that is not a useful thing to have on application forms. These organisations are often very successful, why do they need to innovate?
- Structural funding would be helpful. Funding can be too narrow. Money is earmarked for an objective over a period of 3 years without limitations on how the objective is reached.
- In line with the slow progress of the work, grants should be given for more than 12 months or impact expectations should be in line with that.
- Supports around 'Questions to consider before embarking on a partnership' could be provided.
- Social movements that aren't formalised should be better supported.
- Some additional funding could be kept as a buffer in case of budget/project changes.
- Supporting core costs.
- Some part of the grants could be ringfenced to help with reserves to help organisations to build financial sustainability.
- Funding should be awarded at set times in the year especially when it is awarded to support staff costs.

Convening Reflections

The second day of the All-Island Fund Convening commenced with Art O'Leary in conversation with Ailbhe Smyth and Pat Hynes

Art O'Leary is a Former Secretary-General to the President, advising on constitutional and all other matters relating to the presidency. He was also responsible for the administration of the President's office and staff at Áras an Uachtaráin. Prior to that, he was Secretary to the Constitutional Convention, a two-year citizen-led initiative to consider constitutional change in a wide number of areas, from the electoral system to marriage equality. Art also worked in the Houses of the Oireachtas for over 20 years, primarily as a member of the senior management team.

Ailbhe Smith was the founding head of Women's Studies at University College Dublin where she lectured for many years. A long-time feminist, LGBTQIA + and socialist activist, she played a key role in the successful Marriage Equality campaign in 2015. In 2013, she co-founded and convened the Coalition to Repeal the Eighth Amendment and became co-director of Together for Yes, the national referendum campaign which achieved the legalisation of abortion in 2018. Ailbhe's role in the abortion campaign was recognised by her inclusion on the Time Magazine list of the world's 100 most influential people in 2019. She is a founding member of Le Chéile: Diversity not Division, a cross-sectoral alliance challenging far-right extremism in Ireland, and also of the Climate Justice Coalition Ireland. In 2022 she was conferred with an honorary doctorate in laws by the National University of Ireland Galway and was also conferred with the Freedom of Dublin.

Pat Hynes has been leading the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation's Community & Political Dialogue Programme since 2015, Pat brings a wealth of experience from the political arena. Throughout the 1990s, Pat worked with various government ministers in the early years of the Peace Process, later participating in Glencree's Political Dialogue workshops leading up to the Good Friday / Belfast Agreement. His international work spans over 15 years, including participation in Glencree's Middle East Programme working on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. More recently, Pat acted as Special Advisor to Former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern in his role as Chairman of the Bougainville Referendum Commission. This role involved working with the United Nations as they sought to bring to a conclusion the Papua New Guinea / Bougainville peace process. Pat is part of the adjunct faculty in Maynooth University where he lectures and works with the Edward M Kennedy Institute for Conflict Resolution.

The section commenced with Art O'Leary introducing Ailbhe Smyth and Pat Hynes as legendary figures in the Irish social justice landscape. Ailbhe Smyth responded that she was really glad to be asked to be part of the Convening, although she considers herself to be a campaigner and activist, and has never worked in community development. She went on to say that the breadth of groups and organisations involved in the fund was really impressive. Although it's depressing to say that we are in a time of crisis, we are. This is a turning point. We need to look fully face-on at the turns the world is taking in order to confront the negative ones and address them. It's possible to achieve equality for every person from the moment they're born to the moment they die. Yet, there's a gap worldwide in how people may live their lives.



Art O'Leary of the Board of The Community Foundation for Ireland, Equality Champion Ailbhe Smyth and Pat Hynes of the Glencree Centre for Peace Reconciliation.

We need to ask, though, what does wealth look like, and where is it going? There is a huge job to be done on the redistribution of wealth in the world today. If we could take on the greed in the world we could make some inroads into tackling the destruction of our planet.

How can we live with the disparity? The gap between the rich, comfortable, and the poor.

Very impressed to hear about the work being done through the support of the fund. Every person who spoke, speaks out of deep knowledge of how things work. This work is the beating heart of the movements for equality, not as abstractions but because it involves real people, real children, real communities

We know we can make a world that's equal, and that's where the hope is. The all-island fund is fantastic. But a year is no good. This is long-term work. We have to move to situations where it's possible to have 5 or 10-year plans. It takes an entire life to get anywhere near achieving results.

Art O'Leary asked Pat Hynes what has changed since 1974 when Glencree started, and Pat responded that we have a deep understanding now that we share this island. Northern Ireland still remains a deeply contested space and unfortunately, people still wander up to mics and say deeply unhelpful things. Large swathes of people and communities remain untouched by the financial benefits of the peace. We still have active paramilitarism in Northern Ireland. We have not addressed many of the social and economic impacts of the conflict.

When asked for a piece of advice for civil society groups on how to deal with what's coming down the line, Pat Hynes replied that we're in a time of unprecedented flux. We don't know what will happen with the Protocol. Like in the movie *Gladiator*, he believes that we don't know what's going to come out of the tunnel, but whatever it is, we'll have to deal with it. Our main challenge is to get the voices of the disenfranchised heard so we can begin to heal fractured communities. In times of stress, those marginalised carry the heaviest burden. We need to find a way to use that stress in a productive way.



After dinner speech, summary – Eric K Ward



Eric K. Ward, an internationally recognized expert on the relationship between authoritarian movements, hate violence, and preserving inclusive democracy, is the recipient of the 2021 Civil Courage Prize – the first American in the award's 21-year history. In his 30+ year civil rights career, Eric has worked with community groups, government and business leaders, human rights advocates, and philanthropy as an organizer, director, program officer, consultant, and board member. Eric's widely quoted writings and speeches are credited with key narrative shifts. He currently serves as Senior Advisor to the Western States Center, a member of the President's Leadership Council for the Search for Common Good, Chair of The Proteus Fund, and Advisor to the Bridge Entertainment Labs.

Eric Ward began by describing how inspiring the All-Island convening was for him and, how radical a project it is in an inclusive way, involving building relationships that will carry communities through hard times. He went on to say that he wanted to talk a little about the progressive movement in the US and to remind us that there, like in many other places, there are successes to celebrate - hard-won fights and sacrifices that move forward inclusive democracy- meaning people-centred, transparent, and accountable government.

He pointed out that these successes are underpinned by huge cultural shifts, giving the growth in the Black Lives Matter movement (at its peak 30% of Americans expressed support) as an example. While that number might not seem large, it's worth noting that it's far higher than the support expressed by Americans for Martin Luther King during the height of the civil rights movement. Progress continues to move forward. While America is largely a conservative country, there have been moments when social movements have arisen through leadership and through vision and transformed the country in significant ways. While one can critique the social inequalities of America, it's important to hold nuance - as difficult as it is to be a Black man in America, progress has taken us to a place where in 2022 is better than 1922 and certainly better than 1822. That progress has not come willingly but through sacrifice. The sacrifice of building

community and learning how to govern. So, we can talk about the benefits of the progressive movement, we can actually be proud of this movement. It is the progressive movement that has secured inclusive democracy.

However, while saying that he wanted to be real, Eric acknowledged that gun sales in the US have sky-rocketed to such an extent that there is a shortage of ammunition. Over 50% of Republicans believe that political violence is acceptable in terms of solving social issues. The majority of Americans believe that there will be a civil war in the US in the next 5 years. The progressive movement has held its ground and held its values in this moment. Even as hate crimes escalate, even as partisanship grows across the country, the progressive movement holds to its vision. It understands the first important lesson, we aren't losing, we are winning. The challenges we face are a backlash against the gains that have been made. There are no gains that come without challenge, and the challenge at this moment in the United States is how we hold the space for belonging at a time when people want us to take hardened positions.

Eric Ward went on to say that he wanted to talk about a few things that he thought might be useful. We don't often talk about the failures of our movement, often we're not allowed to talk about the failures as movements or as leaders. We're often punished by talking about those failures. But within failures are the lessons of how we move forward. Eric said he wanted to talk about three critical lessons in this moment.

The first lesson is that we have to resist becoming like those who seek to do away with democracy, who seek to exploit bigotry and violence in order to grow political power. Those who use intimidation and violence reset the narrative, and reset our environments, they stoke our worst anxieties and our worst fears. They put us in a panic, and it is intentional to cause us to make decisions that we would not make under normal conditions. To act in fear rather than confidence. We have been stricken by this in the progressive movement in the United States. Over the last five years, most of our responses have been reactionary. The driving narrative of the far-right in the United States is that multi-racial America is losing and that we should be in a panic because barbarism is at the gate. But each and every day community leaders are engaging migrants and refugees, working class communities, sexual minorities, others marginalised in our society. We are not losing.

More and more Americans each day believe in a multi-racial America. That multi-racial America continues to expand. We see it in Congress, we see it in entertainment, we see it in sports, and we see it in local communities. That diversity is critical. But the white nationalist movement understands that multi-culturalism is a threat to their vision, by attacking multi-culturalism and democracy they hope to set themselves as the only alternative. In our fear and despair we have turned our backs on democracy. We have come to believe that democracy isn't radical, but in the United States, democracy is the most radical programme ever developed. Developed by black leaders in the 30s, 40s and 50s who believed that advancing America meant advancing everyone together. The 1960's civil rights movement was a rejection of identitarian politics. It didn't reject who we were as communities, it didn't reject our histories or areas of struggle, but it understood our futures were entwined.

The second lesson is the importance of driving our own narrative. A narrative that is grounded in inclusion. That narrative means that we do engage outside of our communities, that we understand the importance of self-agency, and that we understand the importance of showing up for others. I'm proud of the progressive community in the United States, African Americans

showing up for immigrants, poor whites showing up for women, and union members showing up for the LGBTQ community. We often say just showing up isn't enough, and that's true, but showing up is how we begin to practice real solidarity. And in the United States, that solidarity has resulted in the defence of human rights in important and critical ways. Right after the election of Donald Trump, he denied Muslim refugees the possibility of entry to the United States. Across the country, progressives mobilised, even those who weren't involved in the specific issues of immigrant and refugee rights. The movement grew. Over days Lyft and Uber drivers and other companies added their support, putting a pressure on the federal government not to penalise refugees because of their religion. Governors and mayors began to speak out. We understood at the end of the day that building grassroots power was ultimately about shifting of policies and shifting positions. It's important to understand that we don't give up on the question of governance. It's easy to mobilise, and it's easy to protest. It's less easy to invest in the important skill sets of managing society not just our community, but everyone, even those we disagree with. The progressive community in the United States has begun to build that infrastructure, with support from philanthropy.

The third point is that everyone has a choice point. The most amazing evolution of the progressive movement in the United States is the understanding that we're not just leaders, we're each individuals who make a choice point for ourselves and for our institutions. It's not a short-term choice point, it's a choice point about the long arc of building democracy and building inclusion. And that each of us holds that. As a poor kid, Eric Ward used to play a game called 'If I were'. He and his friends would sit in a circle in the summer when they didn't have much to do and they'd say if I was by a lions cage and the lion got out here's what I'd do or if I was driving down the freeway and the brakes failed here's what I would do'... The friends would argue back and forth about what they would or wouldn't do. There was one question that always came up – 'If I were in the midst of the 1960s civil rights movement here's what I would do?'

Children do not understand the choiceless choices of our parents and grandparents. They are full of bravado about what they would or wouldn't do. And they would argue for hours about their roles and choice points. That question is a haunting one. What would you do in the 1960s civil rights movement? Each of us has our own choice point in history, the question of 'what would you do?' Well in the United States and around the world, we no longer have to ponder that question. The truth is this, whatever it is we do when we leave this convening is exactly what we would have done in the 1960s civil rights movement. Understand the moment that we are in, this is a fight for the inclusion of all humanity. This isn't about destroying tradition. This isn't about marginalising other communities. This is the radical notion that every single human being has the right to live, love, worship and work free from fear and bigotry. It is a non-negotiable idea because it is one that allows us ultimately to move forward together. It's not about left or right. Or republican and democrat, or protestant and catholic, or rich or poor. It's about inclusion versus exclusion. It's about moving forward the values that we hold over politics. Loving one's neighbour is more important than the political party they belong to. It is our values that bind us together. But values lose their meaning when civil society no longer champions them, when civil society backs away from the values that we hold dear at community level. This is the importance of our work right now. It's to remind people in a very hard moment in history, of why we struggle together. Why we refuse to give up on one another. This is our choice point, not just in the United States. But in every country around the world right now. This is a global phenomenon. It's not just a horror story, it's an opportunity to prove our values. It's an opportunity to lift up our neighbours, and it is the choice point around where we will defend and stand our ground on democracy.

The All-Island Convening is the highest ideal of progressivism, the idea that we come together, that we build relationships and practices, not for what will happen tomorrow but for the hard days to come. Practice, practice, practice. Understand that leaders at the community level are our highest resources. Don't hem them in. We practice by expanding their abilities to innovate, to test, and to fail. It is through those lessons that we'll find a way forward.

Eric Ward ended by saying that he hoped that one day there would be an All-Island convening in every country, where we come together over differences, to forge the way together.



Closing Remarks

Text of Dr Gráinne Healy's closing remarks

Gráinne Healy has worked and volunteered in the community and voluntary sector for three decades. Founder and Chairwoman of Marriage Equality (2004) she was Co-Director of the Yes Equality campaign in 2015. Published author, trainer and facilitator she has conducted research and developed strategic plans for many leading Irish NGOs. Gráinne was Chairwoman of the European Women's Lobby's Observatory on Violence Against Women. She is a former Chairwoman of the National Women's Council of Ireland and is a long-standing feminist activist.

What a remarkable two days we have just spent together – hearing and seeing the All-Island funds at work. It was great to have US Ambassador Cronin to kick off proceedings and she spoke of the ‘wealth of experience in the room’ – the 30 civil society partnerships of the funds, each supporting and advocating for equality North and South of the island. As Ambassador Cronin said ‘It is vital the work you are about here’ and the two themes she raised of collaboration and building relationships are themes to which we returned many times over the last two days.

The All-Island funds in practice are creating new spaces for justice, equality and fairness. Over the two days we revisited the current context North and South and globally on many occasions – the panel inputs highlighted both the application of the funds and challenges we face and our gathering was to share contexts, learn lessons and begin to construct our further agenda of change for equality. Both Community Foundations share the same ambition- and the pilot partnerships are opportunities to highlight the challenges and solutions through collaboration and relationship building.

We saw on screen the excellent relationships building work of LGBT Ireland and Rainbow Project, Belfast, building the evidence base of the harm of conversion therapy, moving the dial to deliver an outright legislative ban throughout the island.

The first panel was inspirational and informative – Bernadette and Fergal sketched the terrible context of what poverty looks like North and South – and then described the efforts being made to address both the immediate needs and the root causes – through the work of the Family resource network in the South and the work of STEP, Bernadette's organisation in North. The key takeaway was that using a community development approach to meet the needs also requires meeting the parallel challenge when taking up service-level agreements with the State – there is a need to retain the critical relationship of holding the State to account to vindicate the human rights of all. We were also reminded that poverty is not accidental.

The second panel on tackling gender-based violence again spoke of the need to for all of us to be able to live lives free from violence – as a basic human right. Having a shared understanding of the root causes of DSGBV, Noeline, Noelle, and Ruth shared with Salome the stats on the number of women who have been killed by intimate partners – the partnership between SERP at UCD and Women's Aid N Ireland supported by All Island Funds allowed a gathering of intelligence and evidence of harm and sharing best practice – they acknowledged the importance of a strategy to combat DSGBV North and South – the need for strategies to recognise sexual exploitation as a form of violence against women

was stressed – in fact, the strategy for NI was just published on day one of the Convening. Working in partnership has strengthened the work to combat trafficking for sexual exploitation across the whole island.

Noeline highlighted the importance of naming rape in the work to tackle sexual violence – she spoke of the significant work they are doing on consent to raise awareness of sexual violence across society. A common theme across the sector is the silencing of victims' voices and the need to remove the shame from victims and be outraged as the tolerance of any form of violence against women – we need to keep talking about it, keep naming it and calling it out and that speaking of it is itself a tool towards ending it and promoting zero tolerance – ending the shame and the silence – reminding us all that DSGBV is not just a women's problem.

The second video told us of the partnership between Children's Rights Alliance and Children's Law Centre who are conducting research where children and young people are demanding to have their say – be heard and be part of the actions to vindicate children's human rights.

In the next panel on Tackling Climate Change we heard from Rose Wall (Community Law Centre Coolock) and Lynda Sullivan (Friends of the Earth) – the work of both organisations shows the fundamental need to include voices, actions and empowerment of marginalised people in climate change actions. Again here we witnessed the need for impactful partnerships to deliver just transitions whether in agriculture, housing, farming and industries such as mining. Relationships and partnership building and collaboration emerged again here as crucial coupled with the need for all NGOs, not just the environmental ones to work using a climate change lens in all they do. This ensures a sustainable future for generations to come, in particular a need to focus on water security and safety was discussed.

Towards the end of Day 1 we all dispersed into workshops to discuss what we had heard and to examine what the emerging themes and work might look like – I went to the session on the rise of the right and we had a really interesting gathering of funders and actors examining the need to fund work now to combat the rise of the right.

Last evening at our dinner we heard from Eric Ward who has spent decades on this work and he reminded us powerfully, that we are not losing against the right, rather we are experiencing a backlash against our wins, perhaps especially in Ireland, where we won democratically through referenda on Marriage Equality and reproductive right to abortion healthcare. Eric shared his three critical lessons with us:

1. Avoid becoming like them in our tactics and strategies
2. Drive our own narrative for inclusion by showing up for others
3. Know your choice-point

As we go home from this gathering today, we will have to practice our choice points for the hard days to come – remind ourselves why we struggle together for inclusion and remember that the values that bind us, are our strength.

Early this morning, a briefing workshop convened to examine how to best support work with Irish Traveller communities, recognising them as 'bottom of the heap' in Irish society, despite decades of work by some. Lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality; higher rates of disability; suicide amongst Traveller men is 7 times higher than the settled community rates; mental health issues; inequalities on many fronts – accommodation, racism, institutional discrimination, 80% unemployment rates; 40% of youth detainees are Traveller, and access to primary, secondary and third level education still low. It was agreed that a North/South group would convene with a view of building Traveller confidence to shape and grow self-directed work and build a Traveller-led community development support. Build the confidence of Traveller community to determine what work needs to be done. 'We don't know what we don't know' need for settled community to take this approach in funding Traveller work.

This morning to start us off on day two Ailbhe Smyth tells us we are the beating heart of the movement for change – and she challenged The Community Foundation for Ireland and CFI NI and all the funders in the room to build on the short term All Island Funds to consider the value of convening donors to allow longer term funding which promotes thinking and longer term action.

This point was taken up by Pat Hynes arising from his work over many decades promoting reconciliation to build relationships and mend fractured communities. Pat advises us of the need for a sustainable economic and social plan – he sees the All-Island Fund as a necessary and significant part of this. Especially in making the voices heard of the alienated and disenfranchised – our partnerships are doing this work.

Our final panel on Tackling the Rise of the far right heard from Siobhan about the chilling effect of far-right narratives and actors – undermining society and recognising this as a real threat to Irish society, our cohesion and our work to really tackle inequalities and exclusion.

Eric Ward sketched how the far-right and white nationalist groups in the US have fully extended into the mainstream of the US and how it is grounded in exclusion. We need to remember the impact of hate on targeted groups, whether, women, people of colour, ethnic minorities, migrants, LGBTI+ and others – and how wedge issues (migration moves, housing shortages) are used to draw many down rabbit holes promoting hate and causing hurt. He advises us to use inclusion as a critical tool to combat the far-right movements – his 3 points for last night again ring clear to us.

What is needed to be done – the panel, facilitated by Liam Herrick, agreed on the need for research and monitoring of far-right; use of this to feed grassroots local responses; monitoring of electoral rhetoric which inflames hatred and exclusion and noting the movable population of voters; working to influence new and emerging sub-cultures; investing to tackle far-right now before they are in the driving seat in Ireland; engaging with media to protect and deepen democracy and noting freedom of speech has its limits and supporting working with Governments on this.

The time is now – invest now was the key conclusion of this panel. The final video showcasing the All-Island Fund projects was the work being done by AkiDw and HapNI to work with African and other immigrant communities to build confidence and partnerships where equality and self-empowerment for such communities grow and lead to included, confident people in the communities in which they live, work and are educated.

So, as we depart now, let's continue our work bringing donors, changemakers, and beneficiaries together – in hope and optimism for an all-island positive future.

Seamus Heaney tells us

'Hope is not optimism, which expects things to turn out well, but something rooted in the conviction that there is good, worth working for.'

Text of Dawn Shackles Closing Remarks



Dawn Shackels is the Director of Peacebuilding & Communities at Community Foundation Northern Ireland. *She has extensive experience in working in community peacebuilding, social justice and human rights in Northern Ireland and internationally.*

Wow! What a convening this has been. Great conversations, great company, great energy, mixed in with lots of challenges, food for thought and a bit of craic – when there are rumours of singing at 3 am in the lobby, you know it's been a good night!

Over the course of yesterday and this morning, we have heard from you, about your projects, partnerships, challenges and impacts, and we have shared your successes and achievements.

There is no doubt that we are dealing with some hard-hitting issues, issues that respect neither border nor jurisdiction, but as Adrian said yesterday- are important to our islands, our future, our environments, and indeed our well-being. We have heard stories that you can't help but be moved by, and I'm sure, like me, as you listened to them, felt compelled to ensure that the work continues.

We have heard about the need for independence and voice and the role of philanthropy in creating and maintaining that space. We've heard about the bottom-up approaches you have adopted, lived experience that has been so valuable, of the training and learning that has taken place both within your organisations and with the communities and agencies and stakeholders you seek to support, influence, lobby and advocate. Most importantly, we've heard about the support you've given to one another.

So what are the next steps? Well, we need to reflect on what we've heard over the last day and a half and think about what a future fund may focus on, but we do have ambitions to grow the fund. We heard in our workshops about the need to ensure that we take time to develop partnerships – be they new or existing, and not to underestimate the time it takes to get these up to speed on what's happening in our two jurisdictions on these issues.

We heard of the importance of maintaining flexibility in the funding of the need for changes, (because let's face it, a project rarely goes 100% to plan), of funding existing posts and covering core costs, sustainability, full cost recovery and funding for more than a year – that's a tall order and probably more than this fund can take but certainly something we as funders need to consider across our work.

You've suggested that we draw upon the network of people that are in this room to help future applicants build connections, foster new relationships and share the learning. Importantly, we've heard of the need for networking and for convenings like this to continue.

So, rest assured, we are going to be busy! We will be having lot more conversations with our partners, our funders, and our donors and of course, let's not forget, we will be opening for applications for phase 2 of the fund – details of which will be on our respective websites in the coming days so watch this space!

However, as we draw the Convening to a close, a work of thanks are due to many. First and foremost, thanks to you for taking the time out of your work and busy lives to share with

everyone a little bit about your projects and your partnerships and the issues you have been seeking to address. We sincerely hope that some of you will continue and apply for funding to take your projects forward to the next stage.

Thanks also to our donors and funders for your time, your support, for your partnership. We hope that you have enjoyed the Convening and seeing and hearing first-hand the impact your support has had in tackling these hard issues and building enduring relationships both North and South. We look forward to continuing this discussion with you shortly over lunch. Thank you also to our facilitators, and speakers for the thought-provoking sessions they have led. To the board and staff of the Community Foundation for Ireland, my colleagues in the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland and our partners in the Social Change Initiative, thank you.

As you are all too aware, there is a huge amount of planning that goes into an event like this, with so much happening behind the scenes, arranging and rearranging plans, running orders, timings, photographs, catering and generally making sure that we have felt comfortable. I think you will all agree that they have definitely more than met our needs.

Thank you once again for so generously giving and sharing your time, your thoughts, your passion and your expertise with us and each other. As we leave the room, Eric's words are ringing in my ears – thinking about choosing our point in time, let's make this ours. Thank you.

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