

Evaluation of Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation (2012)

Summary information note

Background

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has provided more than €3.5m in funding for the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation since 1982, under the Reconciliation Fund administered by the Anglo-Irish Division. In recent years, this funding has been channeled to Glencree's Political Dialogue, Women's Empowerment and Victims' Issues programmes. Since 2009, Glencree has received further funding of €0.816m for its International Programme. This funding, from the DFAT Stability Fund, is administered by the Conflict Resolution Unit in the Political Division.

In September 2012 an evaluation of Glencree was undertaken by DFAT. The purpose of the evaluation was to provide DFAT with an independent assessment of the work of Glencree, including its achievements and strengths and its partnership with the Department through programme funding. This evaluation was carried out by Mr. Mike Williams, an independent consultant. The methodology included looking at Glencree under the headings of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The evaluation was intended to help inform decisions about the future strategic partnership between the Department and Glencree. The scope of the evaluation was broad, covering a 15-year period from 1996 to 2011.

Main Findings of the Evaluation

In overall terms, Glencree programmes have had considerable success in the earlier part of the 15 year period under review. Some of the more recent activities are still relevant and produce good outcomes, but there is insufficient clarity about the strategic direction of each programme at present. The evaluation found that there is also a need to build much better coherence and complementarity across programmes as some of these programmes tend to operate in isolation from others. Glencree is currently facing serious sustainability problems, which is putting the future of the organisation at stake. It needs to establish its future strategic direction, including programming and funding strategies and also needs to develop more professional management systems and processes that will ensure that it delivers on the agreed strategy.

Over the period from 1996-2011, Glencree has suffered significantly from its lack of emphasis on the development and follow through of organisational strategy. It has also suffered from poor overall management, largely because of frequent changes in CEO in recent years, and an over-emphasis on technical peacebuilding skills at the expense of broader organisational management capacity.

Despite these significant shortcomings, *Glencree has had considerable success in the delivery of its individual programmes;*

- ✓ The **Political Dialogue Programme** played a very significant role in the area of facilitated dialogue, particularly in the period leading up to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, and in subsequent peacebuilding efforts at political level over the following decade. The progress of the Political Dialogue Programme in recent years is less clear, as it is very activity based and does not operate to a clear medium-term strategy.

- ✓ The **Women's Empowerment Programme** has also made significant progress in creating greater understanding among participants on its programmes, with the potential to build greater trust and break down barriers at community level.
- ✓ Under the **Victims' Issues Programme**, Glencree has established a rapport with many victims' groups, but it is still not clear at this stage as to how the programme might develop further in the future, in what is admittedly a very complex and challenging area.
- ✓ The **International Programme** has also contributed significantly to peacebuilding efforts in other parts of the world through sharing of the experiences from the Northern Ireland situation and specific mediation and facilitated dialogue projects at field level. However, this programme also suffers from a lack of focus, with a wide range of activities being undertaken despite relatively limited resources.

Some of the **key recommendations** of this evaluation include:

- The primary focus of Glencree's overall strategy over the next five years should remain on facilitated dialogue and leadership training for peacebuilding in Northern Ireland. The primary emphasis of the facilitated dialogue work should move towards community-level ('Track Three') peacebuilding initiatives.
- Glencree should document and publish a series of papers that capture the learning from its extensive peacebuilding experience in Ireland for wider dissemination.
- Glencree should develop a clear management structure that will ensure there is an appropriate level of skills and capacity to deliver all programmes to a high standard. A broader pool of peacebuilding and facilitated dialogue specialists should be developed to support the centre. Strong internal management systems should be developed to support programme work, and tight budgeting and financial control procedures should be in place for all programmes and activities. The possibility of identifying a more cost-effective centre, perhaps run by or in collaboration with another agency, should be explored.
- Glencree should systematically review a number of options in relation to potential mergers or alliances with other peacebuilding agencies. The final option chosen could include a complete merger with a group of other agencies, but with Glencree's identity and programme being clearly preserved, or Glencree to remain as a separate entity, but with a smaller range of focused programmes.
- Subject to satisfactory progress being made by Glencree, DFAT should consider a move to a multi-annual programme funding arrangement based on a clear strategy and programme of work over a 3-4 year period.

Glencree has recently finalised a new Strategic Plan for the organisation for the period 2013-2017 which will take into consideration the findings from this report.

A copy of the full evaluation report can be had on request by emailing the following address eau.queries@dfat.ie.

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