

# A Common Vision

THE IRELAND FUNDS SUPPORT **CO-OPERATION IRELAND**  
IN DELIVERING A UNIQUE PEACE PROJECT IN NORTHERN IRELAND



THE HISTORIC 2012 HANDSHAKE  
BETWEEN HER MAJESTY  
THE QUEEN AND NORTHERN  
IRELAND'S DEPUTY  
FIRST MINISTER  
MARTIN MCGUINNESS.



THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO CO-OPERATION IRELAND (FORMERLY CO-OPERATION NORTH) WAS SET UP WITH THE AIM OF BUILDING BETTER ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LINKAGES BETWEEN THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND AND OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND.

**In** the intervening years, it has expanded and been at the forefront of improving relations between the two main religious communities living on the island. Whilst the main focus of Co-operation Ireland's work has been at the heart of local communities, it has also been instrumental in facilitating some of the highest profile reconciliation gestures the world has seen, including the handshake between Her Majesty The Queen and Northern Ireland's deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness.

As a result Co-operation Ireland has a reputation as an organization that can effect positive change in peoples' behaviors and attitudes. This is borne out in the location and type of peace-building projects they deliver, where research shows there has been a reduction in anti-social and sectarian activity as well as marked improvements in project participants' perception of people from the other religious community.

However Co-operation Ireland has also recognized that many in Northern Ireland society, in particular sections of the Protestant community, are not at the stage where they can undertake reconciliation work with people from another religious identity. The reasons are varied but include lack of infrastructure, leadership and resources.

*Now with support from The Ireland Funds, Co-operation Ireland has established a new project LEGaSI (Learning, Engagement, Growth and Succession Intervention) Leadership, which seeks to address the issue of weak infrastructure within Protestant Unionist Loyalist (PUL) communities and empower them to create and build a progressive and positive future.*

This LEGaSI project will involve identifying emerging leaders from within the community and supporting them in their personal development. This includes participating in a series of learning environments, ranging from change management to auditing, which will enable them gain new skills that will help them become more effective in the communities they represent.

A critical element of the project will be supporting these local communities to develop a common vision of the future and develop solutions to the challenges they may encounter.

Whilst this project is regarded as single identity, its impact will be felt throughout the whole of Northern Ireland and beyond. More informed, skilled influencers will be able to shape community development and build constructive relationship with statutory organizations and groups outside the community, including those from the Catholic, Nationalist and Republican communities. In addition, it is envisaged that social innovations will emerge as a result of the project. These will create employment and economic growth in locations that have suffered greatly as a result of lack of investment and confidence in the area.

If this type of project is to have a real bearing, it requires long term support and this has been recognized by The Ireland Funds. A \$1 million investment illustrates the commitment to building a better future for all.





THIS **LEGaSI** PROJECT  
WILL INVOLVE  
IDENTIFYING  
EMERGING LEADERS  
FROM WITHIN THE  
COMMUNITY AND  
SUPPORTING THEM  
IN THEIR PERSONAL  
DEVELOPMENT.