

Final Evaluation

of

Lifelong Learning through Sport Project

Funded by ADM/CPA under the EU Peace 2 Programme and part-financed by the Irish Government

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Background to the Project

Lifelong Learning through Sport Project evolved from the Youth Sport Foyle Project which operated previously within the Derry/Donegal/Strabane regions but on a smaller geographical scale than the current project. Once the initial phase of Youth Sport Foyle funding had finished in 2002, a successful application was made to the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation Measure 5.5 Education, Cross Border School and Youth Co-operation (ESF) with supporting funding provided under the National Development Plan.

Management of the Project

The project is jointly managed by Donegal VEC and Western Education and Library Board. The Management committee consists of key representatives from Educational Bodies, Sports Council, Local Councils and other statutory bodies from both sides of the border.

Conclusions

Lifelong Learning through Sport has been extremely effective in the provision of coaching on various sporting activities to schools on both sides of the border. Certainly the feedback through the consultation process from principals and teachers at both first and second levels of education has been extremely positive in the physical impact of the project on the children and young people. Opportunities were provided to engage in new activities that many schools had been unable to access previously.

There was anecdotal evidence of benefits to children and young people such as a higher degree of motivation and self-confidence as well as the development of basic skills and techniques such as better levels of balance and co-ordination. Many children and young people who previously had little opportunity or perceived ability to take part in sporting activities were able to access a wide variety of sporting activities which were not just mainstream such as soccer and rugby but were quite diverse including aerobics and fishing.

On a social level, the project also had an impact on the young people and children, especially through the organising of inter school activities which helped to foster a greater degree of co-operation and team building. Friendships were developed at a personal level as well as the development of a greater degree of contact between individual schools either within the same locality or on a cross border basis.

However there was little specific targeting of minority groups such as Travellers and Asylum Seekers which were outlined in the original project proposal although more recently, through partnership with Donegal Sports Partnership, a series of activities aimed at Traveller women were organised in Donegal through a 'Come and Try Day.'

Another weakness of the project was the lack of impact at local community level through targeting of local adults as potential coaches. There were various reasons for this such as demand on time and staff illness in Donegal.

Lifelong Learning through Sport has provided a strategic framework for cross border contact through the medium of sport and physical activities. The contact through these activities provided the impetus for further development which was carried out both at an individual level where relationships were developed between individual children and young people at a cross border/cross community level. Relationships were also formed on a schools based level where particular schools formed a basis of positive relationships through coming together as a result of the project and which now has provided the basis for further contact.

Recommendations

Workplan

As part of the next application process a strategic workplan should be drawn up outlining various outputs and targets which is time-framed and revisited by the management committee on a regular basis.

Local Community Involvement

The first phase of the project was too ambitious in attempting to address local community involvement alongside delivering the programme of sporting activities. The co-ordinators should pick only 4 schools each which would reduce the number of feeder schools and make the workload more manageable.

There should be liaison with local community networks to identify groups and individuals who may be interested in getting involved and trained up as coaches. Parents should also be targeted as potential coaches as well as to involve them in different ways such as drawing up a rota for transport if the school is based in isolated rural areas.

Peace Building

In conjunction with the various activities, a series of workshops should be organised on a cross border and cross community basis which address anti-discrimination, prejudice reduction and cultural diversity which should be aimed at children, young people, co-ordinators and parents.

Sports which are perceived as being specific to one community such as rugby and gaelic games have been successfully introduced into communities which would not normally have engaged in them before should be used as the basis of workshops for young people.

Active Involvement of Senior Students

Some schools actively involved some of their senior students in the delivery of the project. This should be encouraged as much as possible in the next phase of the project. It provides enhancement of skills for the young people concerned as well as providing role models for the children.

Management Structure

The management committee needs to spend some time addressing its roles and responsibilities towards the project and what each agency can bring to the table in terms of support and resources. The committee should also address the possibility of widening its structure such as including school staff and community and youth networks so that there is a constant input at ground level that can inform the project in a more strategic way.

Evaluation

It would be more appropriate to have a built in evaluation process from the very beginning of the project. This would enable greater scope for discussion of progress and enable issues and difficulties to be highlighted early on. Also the evaluation should examine the benefits of the project to other elements of pupil performance such as academic achievement, motivation and other skills that may have a bearing in their involvement in the project. This would provide evidence when lobbying at statutory level for more sustainable funding.

Mainstreaming

During the next phase of the project efforts should be made to lobby schools on an interagency basis to secure funding for the appointment of permanent co-ordinators both in the Western Board area and Donegal. Also to secure funding for the sports development officers as well as more resources for equipment and coaching. This would ensure that when peace funding ceases, there is a permanent legacy of programme activities which potentially can be funded on both sides of the border.

Introduction

Lifelong Learning through Sport Project evolved from the Youth Sport Foyle Project which operated previously within the Derry/Donegal/Strabane regions but on a smaller geographical scale than the current project. Once the initial phase of Youth Sport Foyle funding had finished in 2002, a successful application was made to the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation Measure 5.5 Education, Cross Border School and Youth Co-operation (ESF) with supporting funding provided under the National Development Plan.

At the end of the project in June 2005, an evaluation was commissioned to examine the progress and achievements of the project. The terms of reference were as follows:

- To examine and assess the impact of Lifelong Learning through sport within the education system of Primary and Second Level schools in Donegal, Derry and Tyrone within the context of outcomes and objectives specified in the Programme's letter of offer on the 23rd July 2003;
- To determine the effectiveness of the approach adopted by Management and Staff in the delivery of the programme;
- To identify best practice in relation to the future development of the project throughout Donegal, Derry and Tyrone;
- To determine the effectiveness of the approach employed by the project in addressing the issues of Peace and Reconciliation within the respective communities.

Specific Objectives of the Evaluation

- To examine the criteria used for the selection of schools and participants under the programme;
- Examine the effectiveness of the Management Structures put in place for the delivery of the project;
- To examine the effectiveness of the delivery of the project in being able to target the various sectors and groups as identified in the letter of offer;
- Examine the quality and variety of Coaching provided within the various schools under the Programme;

- Examine the Cross Border and Cross Community links created as a result of the Programme and the effectiveness and impact of the activities provided;
- Determine the level of sports training provided to communities within the Programme;
- Determine the level of training afforded to staff involved in the day-to-day running of the Programme;
- Examine the future long-term viability of the Programme;
- Examine the extent of the links established within the various sports clubs and bodies for the future development of the Programme.

Methodology

A series of extensive consultations were held with project co-ordinators and principals in the various schools involved on both sides of the border, Sports Development officers, members of the management committee including senior representatives from the Western Education and Library Board, VEC, Health Service Executive and Donegal Sports Council.

Unfortunately due to the fact that the evaluation was held at the end of the project, the evaluator had to rely on statistical records which were not consistent on both sides of the border which explains the lack of uniformity in presentation of data of activities taking place.

Chapter One

Context

Cross Border Contact between Schools

Over the years there have been a number of initiatives that have resulted in the acknowledgement of the importance of cross border links between schools within the island of Ireland. One prime example has been through the work of Co-operation Ireland. Ever since its foundation, Co-operation Ireland has believed in the importance of getting young people involved in peace building and learning more about other cultures and societies.

Most people's earliest memories of Co-operation Ireland stem from their participation in a school exchanges assisted by the charity. For many children then and now, a Co-operation Ireland exchange is the first time they have met and talked to people from the other part of Ireland and for many it is also the first time they ventured to the other part of Ireland.

Co-operation Ireland's Education programme is also responsible for the running of Civic-Link, a curriculum based programme designed to encourage practical citizenship among young people.

Another organisation that promotes North South co-operation between schools is the Irish Council of Churches which represents eight Protestant denominations and the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace supported by the Roman Catholic bishops. The Council has done much work in the area of Education for Mutual Understanding and developed related educational materials for use north and south.

One recent example of an initiative promoted by the Irish Council of Churches was "The Stamp of Different Footprints" project which was a cross community, cross border project with primary schools. Various themed clusters of schools looked at issues such as Ulster Scots and Celtic traditions in music and dance, traditional

legends from Ireland and from the rest of the world and stories from localities in which schools were based, as well as the impact of emigration and immigration in those areas.

At primary and secondary level, institutional links are often difficult due to different educational structures in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Most contacts are at an individual level facilitated by Co-operation Ireland or the Irish Council of Churches as mentioned previously. There is also collaboration between the two Departments of Education and the curriculum bodies in both jurisdictions.

At Departmental level, several projects have been jointly established. These include the European Studies Project that involves three-way co-operation between schools in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and another European Union country. This project aims to develop curricular links and was jointly established by the Departments of Education in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland .

At teacher level there has been little regular or structured contact. Some teacher exchanges do take place through Co-operation Ireland or through the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges (NI) and its Southern counterpart, Leargas. Annual conferences of the teacher unions north and south also provide opportunities for exchanges of views.

Issues affecting Physical wellbeing of Children

Ireland is in the throes of a global obesity pandemic. Obesity is threatening the children's wellbeing, their development and their future health as adults. Over 155 million school aged children world-wide are now overweight or obese; in developed countries it is estimated that almost 1 in 10 children are either overweight or obese.

There is clear evidence internationally that patterns of behaviour and obesity are well established by the time a child reaches 11 years of age.

In the 2002 phase of the nationally representative Survey at Lifestyles and Nutrition (SLÁN), 34% of Irish adults reported themselves as being overweight and 13% obese.

The prevalence of overweight and obesity rose by 2% and 3% respectively in the four year period since the first phase of SLÁN. Similar data is not currently available on a nationally representative sample of children, however the Irish Health Behaviour of School-Aged Children Survey contains some information on the subject. In 2002, 13% of children reported being on a weight reducing diet, and a further 22% reported that they need to lose weight.

A recent study was carried out by Christina Mc Master et al on behalf of Dublin City University on overweight and obesity in Irish Primary Schools. The eligible cohort consisted of 361 children. Weight and height measurements were available on 328 children aged between 4.22 and 7.42 years. IOTF standard application gave prevalence rates of 25% for obesity and overweight in boys and 26% in girls. With the UK growth standard, this increased to 34% in boys and reduced to 23% in girls.

Their conclusions were that the study suggested that levels of childhood overweight and obesity were comparable to other Western societies. Therefore the Republic of Ireland appears to be already struggling with as large a problem of childhood overweight and obesity as other Western societies.

They also concluded that schools provide a unique environment for programmes aimed at preventing overweight and obesity in children as part of health education and promotion activities.

In the UK it is estimated that up to 15% of children are overweight or obese. The number of children in this category has risen steadily over the past 20 years. This is now a major health concern.

In Northern Ireland recent research from the Health Promotion Agency revealed that one third of boys and one quarter of girls aged 12 carry excess weight.

Very few children become overweight because of an underlying medical problem. Children are more likely to be in this condition if their parents are obese. But genetic factors are thought to be less significant than the fact that families tend to share eating

and activity habits. In other words most children put on excess weight because their lifestyles include an unhealthy diet and a lack of physical activity.

Exercise is no longer a regular part of everyone's day – some children never walk or cycle to school or play any kind of sport. It is not unusual for children to spend hours in front of a television or computer. In the UK, the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (2000) found that 40-60% of children over the age of six spend less than the recommended minimum of one hour a day doing moderate intensity physical activity.

In the Republic of Ireland there is strong evidence from cohort studies to show that, even after accounting for the effect of other factors, the development of obesity in children is associated with physical inactivity. Sedentary pursuits, in particular television viewing, have been associated with the development of childhood obesity in many studies.

Importance of Physical Activity

Developing good sporting habits early in life will reduce the growing problems of obesity in children and give many more young people the chance to discover a talent and to have fun. Children who take regular exercise do better at school. School sport raises pupil standards of attainment, improves their social skills and behaviour.

Estelle Morris

British Minister of Education

Physical activity has been called 'today's best buy in public health' as it is estimated that significant savings in health care expenditure could result from a mere 10% increase in physical activity in the population as a whole. Irish and international guidelines suggest that children should engage in 60 minutes or more of active play daily, alternating between activity and rest periods, as needed. Recent results from the HBSC survey show that 48% of children report participating in vigorous exercise four or more times per week and 12% exercise less than weekly. Boys participate more than girls and exercise participation decreases with age.

These figures are of concern because research has shown that physical activity patterns track from childhood into adulthood. Physical inactivity in adults is implicated in several chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes. Even in childhood, physical activity can modify risk factors for chronic diseases such as hypertension or raised blood lipids.

According to NHS Health Department Agency, UK, participating in regular physical activity helps young people to:

- Optimise physical fitness, current health and well being and growth and development e.g. enhanced self esteem and maintenance of a healthy weight;
- Reduce the risk of chronic diseases later in life e.g. heart disease by positively influencing risk factors such as high blood pressure and stress;
- Develop active lifestyles at an early age to encourage lifelong participation;

These factors all impact on a young person's health, but there are many other potential benefits for young people associated with regular participation in physical activity. Some of these benefits include:

- Acquiring new skills, knowledge and understanding about a variety of activities;
- Being challenged either on an individual level or through competition against others;
- Experiencing a sense of satisfaction in performing to the best of their ability;
- Taking on leadership responsibilities and becoming independent in the physical activity environment;
- Experiencing fun, enjoyment and excitement; and
- Making new friends.

An early years pilot study carried out on Physical Education and Sport in Schools (PESS), which addressed the important aspects of children's development in primary schools, identified a number of benefits. These were:

- Importance of play;
- Fundamental skills;

- Develops knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of physical activities;
- Develops self esteem and self confidence;
- Develops positive attitudes and personal qualities (leadership, responsibility etc);
- Develops an understanding of the importance of being healthy;

In terms of post primary physical education, in a cohort study carried out by Curriculum Council Education Authority, the pupils at Key Stage 3 stated that PE was their most enjoyable subject and was the third most relevant subject to their lives. Various benefits included:

- Increase in self esteem and motivation;
- Noticeable improvement in pupil/teacher relationships, impacting on other factors, such as attendance, inclusion in school life and morer respect for school activities;
- Strengthens school/community links;
- Increases attainment in PE and improves their health;
- Improves attendance, behaviour, attitudes, motivation, aspirations and overall attainment.

Available research in Ireland suggests that the best primary strategy for improving the long term health of children through exercise may be to create a lifestyle pattern of regular physical activity that will carry over to adulthood. The school setting is regarded as the ideal environment for population based physical activity interventions. It provides benefit to children from all risk groups, especially those with little access to play areas and avoids stigmatisation of at risk children.

A piece of research was recently carried out which examined the facilities and practices in Cork Primary Schools with respect to physical activity. Various findings included the following:

- almost a quarter of schools lacked adequate indoor facilities for physical education;
- three quarters of school children had less than 40 minutes actual exercise in PE class during the school week;
- 40% of schools had a 'no running in the yard' policy;

- the majority of after school physical activity was focused on training the school teams; and
- most of the alternatives to competitive sports had an additional cost.

In September 1998, the Centre for Leisure Research at Moray House in Edinburgh, was commissioned by the Sports Council for Northern Ireland and Making Belfast Work to “measure the impact of Youth Sport Belfast and Youth Sport beyond Belfast”.

The key findings of the research were as follows:

Benefits of Youth Sport:

To the school

- Most head teachers got involved to promote links with primary schools and 88 per cent believed that Youth Sport had achieved this;
- Youth Sport represented a staff development opportunity for co-ordinators, especially those in non promoted posts;
- The network approach to development had strengthened their schools’ links with the community – “it’s important that we reach out beyond our own school – Youth Sport is a good example of this”;
- The ‘Sport for All’ ethos was strong among head teachers. Sport rather than competition was important for their pupils and Youth Sport provided opportunities to bring in more non traditional sports participants.

To the pupils

- Co-ordinators and head teachers agreed that pupils’ self esteem had increased as a result of participation in Youth Sport. For head teachers this increased confidence may have an indirect impact on other factors, including attendance, feelings of inclusion in school life more broadly and more respect for school activities;

- Most agreed that a major outcome was an improvement in pupil/teacher relationships. Pupils explained this as “having time to get to know the teachers that do sport”;
- The pupils regarded sport/PE as contributing to a balance of activity at school. They saw sport as a change from difficult mental tasks and sitting at desks, providing an opportunity to do something less difficult and fun – “we’d get dead bored if we just sat down all day”.

In the UK, the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) in conjunction with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) set a PE and School Sport Public Service Agreement (PSA) of 75% of 5-16 year olds receiving at least two hours high quality PE/Sport per week by 2006.

An Ofsted survey concluded in April 2004 found that 62% of pupils in School Sports Partnerships had already reached that level. As a result of the Government’s 2004 spending review, PSA targets were extended to 85% by 2008.

Chapter Two

Lifelong Learning Through Sport

Background to the Project

Lifelong Learning through Sport Project evolved from the Youth Sport Foyle Project which operated previously within the Derry/Donegal/Strabane regions but on a smaller geographical scale than the current project. Youth Sport Foyle received international recognition from the Laureus World Sports Academy in 1999 for its work in the cross border, cross community field when it was awarded financial support through the Laureus Sport for Good Award. The citation for this award read ‘Cross border relationships have been improved and community links strengthened. Youth Sport Foyle should be developed as a model for reconciliation in other war torn areas of the world.’

In 2000 Youth Sport Foyle assisted the World Academy to establish a similar project in the Middle East for Israeli; and Palestinian children and trained a joint group of ten coaches from both nations in Donegal in September 2001.

Once the initial phase of Youth Sport Foyle funding had finished in 2002, a successful application was made to the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation Measure 5.5 Education, Cross Border School and Youth Co-operation (ESF) with supporting funding provided under the National Development Plan. This phase of the project entitled Lifelong Learning through Sport was aimed at targeting social inclusion, reconciliation and mutual understanding between children and young people in disadvantaged communities in Donegal, Tyrone and Derry. The project has been delivered through a structure of second level and feeder primary schools in identified areas throughout Donegal, Derry and Tyrone providing children in Primary and Post Primary Schools with sporting opportunities within an education setting. The project also set out to provide elements of coach education and club development within the various communities. The geographical area was widened to include rural areas of West Donegal and Derry and Tyrone.

Aims and Objectives of the Project

Aims

- To promote equality of opportunity for target groups located in disadvantaged areas on both sides of the border;
- To bring about greater partnership between communities on both sides of the border by reducing social distance and bringing about greater integration and better cross border co-operation;
- To develop an awareness and understanding of cultural diversity among the participants;
- To make school facilities available to local groups outside of class time;
- To encourage young people to remain in education; and
- To tackle legacies of the conflict and disadvantage brought about by violence, community tension, destruction of infrastructure, isolation and polarisation of communities;
- To equip young people with key life skills, especially those at greatest risk of marginalisation in society including those with special educational needs.

Objectives

- The project will establish pathways for lifelong learning through sport by promoting lifeskills in the young participants contributing to personal development skills for teachers and members of identified target groups;
- Promote an awareness of cultural diversity by means of cross border, cross community residential week-ends;
- Support teachers, coaches, senior pupils and sports co-ordinators in the area of conflict resolution;
- Development of quality child centred after school sporting programmes;
- Inclusion of new schools from the identified disadvantaged areas;
- Organisation of cross community, cross border multi-sport residential courses, festivals and fun days in areas of greatest social deprivation;
- Increasing the physical education delivery skills of the primary school teachers, especially in disadvantaged areas;

- Increasing communities use of and access to school facilities in the catchment area.

Management of the Project

The project is jointly managed by Donegal VEC and Western Education and Library Board. The Management committee consists of key representatives from Educational Bodies, Sports Council, Local Councils and other statutory bodies from both sides of the border.

Specific organisations on the management committee include the following:

- Sports Council for Northern Ireland
- County Donegal VEC
- Irish Sports Council
- Letterkenny Town Council
- Udaras na Gaeltachta
- Western Education and Library Board
- Donegal Sports Partnership
- Health Service Executive North West
- Strabane District Partnership
- Donegal County Council

Chapter Three

Sporting Activities and Cross Border Contacts

Schools and Sporting Activities in the Western Board Area

Secondary School	Feeder Primary	Events
Castledearg High School	Erganagh PS	Soccer
	Bridgehill PS	Basketball
	Castledearg High School	Hockey
	Newtownstewart Model PS	Tag Rugby
	Langfield PS	Rugby
	Edwards PS	
	Killen PS	
Lisneal College Derry	Eglinton PS	Volleyball
	Newbuildings PS	Netball
	Mullabuoy PS	Golf
	Drumahoe PS	
St. Brigid's College Derry	Steelstown PS	Fitkids
	Greenhaw PS	Soccer
	Groarty PS	Netball
	St. Paul's Slievemore	Athletics
	St. Theresa's PS	
	St. Brigid's PS	
St. Cecelia's College Derry	St. Eugene's PS	Fitkids
	Holy Family PS	Soccer
	St. Eithne's PS	Badminton
	Model PS	Netball
	St. Anne's PS	Athletics
St. Colman's High School, Strabane	St. Mary's Boys PS	Soccer
	St. Theresa's PS	Basketball
	Barrack Street School	Fishing
St. Josephs High School, Plumbridge	St. Brigid's Cranagh	Basketball
	Gortin PS	Soccer
	Our Lady of Lourdes	Badminton
	St. Patrick's NTS	
	St. Peter's Plumbridge	

St. Mary's College Derry	Long Tower PS	Netball
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St. Peter's High School Derry	Gaelscoil Eadain mhoir	Fitkids Dance Netball Touch Rugby Gaelic Football Dance/Athletics Games
	Holy Child PS	
	Fountain PS	

Secondary Schools and Sporting Activities

Secondary School	Activity
Castledearg High School	Soccer Basketball
Lisneal College Derry	Soccer Rugby
St. Brigid's College Derry	Aerobics
St. Cecelia's College Derry	Contemporary Dance Aerobics Fitness
St. Colman's High School Strabane	Basketball
St. Eugene's High School Castledearg	Swimming
St. Joseph's High School Plumbridge	
St. Mary's College Derry	Gaelic Fitness Netball Soccer
St. Peter's High School Derry	Fitness Training Hurling

Schools in Donegal

Deele College, Raphoe	St. Eunan's Primary, Raphoe	Gaelic Football Movement Awareness Hockey Gymnastics Basketball
	Raphoe Central	
	St. Bridgets Primary, Convoy	
	Convoy Joint Primary	
	St. Baithins Primary, St Johnston	
	Lifford Primary	

Crana College Buncrana	Scoil N Brid Muff	Hurling Soccer Skills Indoor Camogie Tag Rugby
	Scoil Iosagain, Buncrana	
	St. Oran's Primary, Cockhill	
	St. Mura's Primary, Burnfoot	
	Drumfries NS	
	St. Aengus Primary, Bridgend	

St. Catherine's Killybegs	Niall Mor Primary	Basketball Tag Rugby
	Fintra Primary	
	Commons Primary	
	Kilaghtee Primary	
	Dunkineely Primary	
	Bruckless	

St. Columbas Comprehensive, Glenties	Scoi Mhuire Glenties	Activities not recorded
	Drimnacross Primary Kilraine	
	St. Mary's Ardara	
	St. Conals Primary Narin	

Stranorlar Vocational School	Dooish Primary	Tag Rugby Athletics
	Dromore Primary Killgordan	
	St. Mary's Primary Castlefin	
	St. Mary's Primary Stranorlar	
	Stranorlar Vocational School (1 st year group)	

Magh Ene College, Buncrana	St. Macartan's Primary School Bundoran	Volleyball Soccer/Volleyball
	Four Masters Kinlough	
	Cliffoney Primary, Co. Sligo	

Letterkenny Vocational School	Scoil Colmcille, Letterkenny	Mixed
	Illistrin National School	
	Woodlands National School	

	Scoil Colmcille Newtowncunningham	
	Rathdonnel National School, Trentagh	

Mulroy College	Kerrykeel National School	Dance
	Drumhalla National School	
	Milford National School	
	Kilmacrennan National School	
	Mulroy College (1 st YEAR)	

Colaiste Ailigh	Termon National School	Activities not recorded
	Gaelscoil Adhmamnain	

Carndonagh Community School	Rasheny National School	Basketball Athletics Tag Rugby Badminton Dance Ballskills
	Glengad National School	
	Clonmany National School	
	St. Patrick's Carndonagh	
	Cloontagh National School	

Moville Community College	Scoil Eoghain	Tag Rugby Rugby Skills Football
	Gaelscoil Moville	
	St. Colmcilles	

Abbey Vocational School	Robertson Ballintra	Sportsball Athletics Basketball
	St. Eunan's, Letterkenny	
	St. Ernan's Laghey	
	Glebe Donegal Town	
	Frosses National School	
	Gaelscoil na gCeithre Maistiri Donegal Town	

Schools twinned for cross border activity

Date	Schools	Activities	Date	Numbers
Feb 04	Magh Emne College Bundoran	Rugby trip to Belfast	June 05	24
	Colaiste Chu Uladh Ballinamore			
	Clondermott High School			
	Colaiste Mhic Diarmuida Arranamore	Walking climbing	18 May 05	28
	Strabane Convent Grammar			
	Deele College, Raphoe	Activities not recorded	Unknown	Unknown
	Stranorlar Vocational School			
	Castlederg High School			
	St. Eugene's High School, Castlederg			
	St. Catherine's Vocational School, Killybegs	Basketball	May 05	25
	Carrick Vocational School			
	St. Mary's High School, Derry			
	Crana College, Buncrana	Golf	June 04/ June 05	18/23
	St. Brigid's College, Derry			
	Mulroy College, Milford	Outdoor activity day	May 05	72
	St. Cecelia's College, Derry			
	St. Catherine's Vocational School, Killybegs	Basketball Netball	April 04	46
	St. Mary's Derry			
	Letterkenny Vocational School	Soccer Blitz	May 04	40/37
	St. Joseph's Plumbridge		June 05	
	Crana College	Golf Outing	May 04	20
	St. Brigid's Derry			
	Strabane Grammer School	Rugby coaching and competition	May 04	34
	Magh Ene College, Bundroan			
	Magh Ene College, Bundoran	Archery, Caving, Hill Walking, High Wire, Climbing wall, orienteering, Team Challenge	March 05	41
	Lisneal College, Derry			
	Letterkenny Vocational School	Soccer Activity Day	March 05	37

	Plumbridge High School			
	Crana College	Rugby Activity Day	March 05	31
	Lisneal College			
	Glenties Comprehensive	Tag Rugby Blitz	Feb 05	75
	Carndonagh Community School			
	St. Peter's High School			
	Deele College, Raphoe	Cross border Paintballing Day	April 05	46
	Stranorlar Vocational School			
	St. Eugene's High School, Castlederg			
	Castlederg High School			
	Scoile Mac Driamuida	Hill Climbing Fun Games	May 05	28
	Strabane Convent			
	St. Brigid's College	Golf	June 05	22
	Crana College			
	Bundoran Vocational School	Outdoor Activity Centre	Unknown	Unknown
	Strabane Grammar			
	Raphoe NS	Kayaking Wall Climbing Orienteering	May 05	50
	Killen PS			
	Groarty PS	Kayaking Wall Climbing Orienteering	May 05	50
	Robertson NS			
	Edwards PS	Kayaking Wall Climbing Orienteering	May 05	50
	Milford NS			
	Fountain PS	Kayaking Wall Climbing Orienteering	May 05	50
	Gaelscoil Moville			
	Gairmscoil Na Carraige	Basketball Tournament in Troone Scotland	June 05	19
	Colaiste Ailigh			
	St. Colman's High School			

Cross Border Events

Event	Venue	Date	Numbers
Cross border surfing day	Bundoran	Oct 03	40
Cross border multi sports day	Strabane	Feb 04	80
Cross border residential	Gartan	March 04	60
Multi sports Day	Stranorlar	May 04	100
Multi sports Day	Derry	May 04	100
Multi sports Day	Derry	June 04	100
Multi sports Day	Stranorlar	June 04	100
St. Columb's College Cross Border sports day	Derry	June 04	45
St. Colman Cross Border fishing day	Strabane	Unknown	9 schools Lifford/ Strabane
Cross Border Training Day	Gartan	Dec 04	65
2 Residential Training Days	Gartan	Feb 05	360
Cross border event day	Creggan Country Park	May 05	31 NS pupils Donegal 29 1 st year pupils St. Cecelia's
Fishing Day	Rectory Lodge, Cookstown	June 05	9 schools Strabane and Lifford

Summer Festivals

Donegal

Schools	Activities	Date	Numbers
Carrick Vocational School St. Catherine's Vocational School, Killybegs	Athletics Day for Feeder Primary Schools	May 04	200 children
Magh Ene College Bundoran	Summer Fun Day for Feeder Primary Schools	June 04	70
Colaiste Chu Uladh	Festival Fun Day for Feeder Primary Schools	June 04	70

Derry

Schools in Bogside and Brandywell area	Soccer Coaching 5 a side tournament	10 th June 05	100
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Schools in Strabane area	Cricket Festival	June 04	92
St. Eugene's High School, Castlederg	Sports Day for feeder Primary Schools	May 04 May 05	6 schools
Schools in Strabane	Soccer Tournament	June 05	12 schools
Castlederg High School	Soccer Festival	May 04 June 05	10 schools
St. Brigid's College	Netball Festival	April 04 April 05	8 schools

Training Events for Co-ordinators and Coaches

Cross border co-ordinator's training day	Letterkenny	Feb 04	20
Cross Border co-ordinator's training day	Ballybofey	Dec 04	21
SAQ Training Course	Finn Valley Centre	Dec 04	21

Chapter Four

Feedback from Consultation Process

Introduction

A series of consultations were carried out with various co-ordinators on both sides of the border as well as a sample of Primary and Post Primary schools. An analysis of questionnaires that had been distributed to pupils and teachers from Primary and Post Primary schools was also carried out and is outlined in this chapter.

Common Issues between Derry, Tyrone and Donegal

Difficulties

One of the difficulties common to all areas was in being able to co-ordinate activity times between the coaches and the various schools timetables. Many of the coaches were unavailable during the day and as a result it proved difficult to always arrive at a suitable time for all partners concerned. Various methods were used to bring the activity to the children such as the use of a particular school yard, use of a community facility or locating the activities at a second level site.

It was also difficult for some of the school based co-ordinators to visit all the primary schools sites, due to their own school commitments and also due to the fact that activities in the feeder primary schools being organised on different days of the school week.

Legislation in both jurisdictions is different and this has implications for areas such as child protection training where the system of vetting in Northern Ireland is different from that of the Republic. Another example is the involvement of young people in the Sport for All courses as the courses applied to two different age groups in each jurisdiction. In Donegal the minimum age is 16 whilst in Northern Ireland it is 18.

The weather proved a difficulty, particularly in the winter months such as January and February where outdoor sports such as football or rugby proved impossible to organise if conditions were unfavourable. This was particularly the case in Donegal where indoor sports facilities were particularly scarce.

Impact on Schools

One notable impact on the second level schools was the fact that children from Primary schools were able to experience their first taste of the Post Primary facility as a result of the project. Principals and Co-ordinators noticed that there was a greater confidence in these children when starting their first term there.

The project helped to improve the communication between the second level schools and their feeder schools.

Strong cross border links were established between some of the Primary and Post primary schools in each locality as well as on a cross border basis as a result of the various inter school activities.

One particular benefit to the schools in all areas was that the project helped to introduce new activities into schools which heretofore had been limited. Examples of these activities included fishing and aerobics.

Impact on Children

The project helped provide the children and young people involved with a greater level of confidence and self esteem through their involvement in the various activities, many of which were not only fun but provided them with a sense of achievement.

Different skills and techniques were developed such as movement, control and co-ordination which enabled them to achieve better balance, ball control and other skills. Teachers often commented that a percentage of children had lost and that the activities presented in the programme provided activities in a fun and enjoyable way.

Many children who previously had little opportunity or confidence to get involved in sporting activities were given greater opportunities for doing so as a result of the project.

Being in a less competitive environment provided an opportunity for the children and young people to interact and socialise more with each other and a number of friendships were developed as a result.

The project also provided opportunities for them to get involved in activities that they had not previously had access to such as fishing, rugby and basketball for example.

Some of the children transferring to the second level institutions experienced an induction in sports activities which enabled them to have confidence to participate more within their new Post Primary School environment.

There was a noticeable change in the behaviour patterns of the younger children with greater discipline, application and concentration and who were less disruptive as a result of using up so much energy through participating in the various activities.

Coaches

On the whole, coaches were key to what sports activities were available to the schools and if there was a shortage of coaches who had skills in minority sports, then schools were limited to what they could access. Some coaches were also employed on a cross border basis.

Some of the coaches were obtained through personal contact of the co-ordinators themselves, most of whom were PE teachers and therefore would have personal knowledge of individual coaches in particular sporting areas.

Payment for coaches was also an issue as some co-ordinators made the comment that the pay was insufficient. This restricted the range and level of coaches available. This was resolved with a consistent rate being applied on both sides of the border by the lead agencies.

Cross Border Contact

Various advantages and successes arose out of the cross border contact made through the project. These included:

Friendships developing between individual children and young people. This was particularly the case among the girls.

The residentials provided a good opportunity for contact at a much deeper level as they were not only involved in sporting activities but had opportunities for group work sessions to explore areas of interest. Certain misconceptions were challenged, for example, some young people from the North from the Protestant community thought that no Protestants lived in Donegal.

A number of schools had specific successes in their links such as Lisneal Secondary Schools in Derry and Ballinamore Vocational School in Fintown where some of the students continued to exchange e-mails with each other. However there were also constraints on time such as the difficulty in Lisneal and Buncrana Vocational School being able to co-ordinate rugby training sessions as a result of time constraints.

Cross border contact provided opportunities for children and young people to see a different school explore a different culture and develop social contact.

Relationships were developed between teachers and schools on a cross border context. One successful example was Castlederg High School which interacted with other schools for the first time through Sport for All Leadership Awards as well as a subsequent basketball blitz.

Co-ordinators Meetings

The co-ordinators meetings were regarded as highly successful and provided a lot of positive feedback from the various co-ordinators on both sides of the border. It enabled them to open up to new ideas and standards providing them with more clarity and support in developing their role. The meetings also enabled them to get useful

feedback as well as gaining new contacts for different coaches and the sharing of resources.

The meetings also provided a different outlook for some of the co-ordinators such as the need for more flexibility around the activity provision, with a greater emphasis on fun.

Coordinators also realised that they often shared the same difficulties and concerns which could be resolved as a result of getting together.

Impact on Sport in the Community

The project helped to provide an impetus for clubs at local community level to recruit young people to engage in their area of sport. For example in Strabane, a local athletics club was able to boost its membership as a result of a greater level of interest from the young people who took part in the project activities. In Killybegs a group of 20 students regularly travel to Donegal Town to attend training at a local rugby club as a result of tag rugby activities being introduced to the school through the project.

Process

There was a strong emphasis on team work but not within the confines of a school team. The participating children and young people from the different communities were always mixed together in groups to allow co-operation and participation with children they had never met before. As well as learning to work as a team it helped them to develop trust and friendships.

Cross border visits often had an element of de-briefing after various team activities with question and answer sessions the norm. This helps provide a more positive interaction between the groups. The children and young people were able to talk about what they had learned about each other on issues such as what makes a good team work together.

For the children there was a great emphasis on movement activities and also the element of fun within those activities. The coaches adopted this approach rather than introducing a more formal approach.

There was often a difficulty in encouraging teenage girls to get involved in sporting activities. There were some notable exceptions, however, such as the successful involvement of teenage girls in Claudy and St. Brigids Derry. In Donegal by introducing the introduction of such activities as dance and aerobics rather than team sports provided a greater level of interest. Whilst some schools provided Dance and Aerobics through the Lifelong Learning through Sport Programme, other schools introduced these activities as part of another programme known as Sport for All under the auspices of Donegal Sports Partnership.

Outcomes

One outcome as a result of the project was a cross border trip to Troone in Scotland to participate in a basketball tournament. This involved Carrick Vocational School and Colaiste Ailish from Donegal and St. Colmans from Strabane. The trip was funded through the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation under the auspices of the World Academy of Sport. A central aspect of the Academy's mission is to use the power of sport to help tackle pressing social challenges. The Laureus Sport for Good Foundation works with other organisations in the public and private sectors to identify a number of key social issues which would benefit from the influence of sports-related programmes. These issues could include education and literacy, health and nutrition and parenting and citizenship.

One common feedback was that many teachers noticed that the project helped provide the children with team building skills and increased confidence and noticed that many of them as a result of the involvement had better co-ordination skills.

Recommendations

Various recommendations from schools on both sides of the border included the need to target parents and community leaders as potential future coaches.

Another suggestion was the need for greater flexibility when planning activities outdoors due to the uncertainty of weather conditions especially during the winter months. This result was and a greater reliance on indoor facilities which were not always available.

Issues unique to Schools in Derry and Tyrone

Difficulties

There were issues over timing of events in local primary schools due to other curricular and non-curricular commitments such as school activities or the eleven plus exam. Also halls and facilities in primary schools were not always available due to other usages.

One Controlled Primary School in Derry had a difficulty bringing their children into a perceived nationalist/republican area of the city for an inter-schools tournament. However this was eventually resolved through follow up and discussion with the main parties concerned.

Cross Border

Anecdotal evidence suggested that there was an impact on Castlederg High School due to the cross border contact they experienced which helped break down various barriers and perceptions that many of the young people had about the Republic.

Process

In one school in Derry, some senior girls helped out with the coaching and as a result were encouraged to take part in the Sport for All Leadership Award. There was also the added advantage in providing role models for primary school children who were supervised by an older student.

Another example of pupil involvement was at a local Post Primary school, Derry, that organised a sports day for Primary school children from feeder Primary schools in their area. This event was planned and organised by some of the sixth form students and supervised by the Fourth Form students.

Another Post Primary school in Derry got its senior pupils involved in the Presidents Award through participation in refereeing and officiating in various sporting events involving local primary schools. This went on to their Record of Achievement. Two pupils also completed the Sport for All Leadership Award.

A cross border fishing tournament was organised by the co-ordinator in Strabane who managed to successfully persuade local businesses to donate prizes for the event.

Outcomes

One example of overcoming a physical disability was a disabled girl who managed to successfully take part in gymnastics. This helped to increase her confidence and self esteem enormously.

Whilst there was some degree of uncertainty among some schools at the beginning, the non threatening approach of involving team work among the different schools enabled the participants to break down barriers among each other.

Issues unique to Schools in Donegal

Difficulties

One Vocational school based in the Gaeltacht area had a difficulty in obtaining coaches who could communicate through the medium of Irish.

A common difficulty aired by a number of schools was the issue of transport facilities, where activities were often difficult to organise after schools hours. Getting parents to help out with transport proved unsuccessful for many schools.

A couple of co-ordinators were not aware at the beginning of the programme that participants from the Post Primary School could be involved in the project. Their perception was that the project was specifically aimed at the Feeder Primary Schools.

Impact on Schools

Some of the Primary Schools personnel were able to pick up various coaching skills from the coaches and implement them in the schools themselves.

Some Primary Schools also benefited from their involvement in the project through the provision of much needed sports equipment for their schools.

Impact on Children

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds from Post Primary Schools in the Raphoe area were able to gain significantly from the project through building their confidence and self esteem.

Coaches

The coaches were sometimes obtained on an ad hoc basis and some co-ordinators commented that the database was often out of date.

Cross Border

There was an awareness from many schools in Donegal that there were greater levels of facilities available in Northern schools both in terms of Hall facilities and access to transport. A number of Northern schools had been in receipt of capital spending which enabled them to develop school facilities. Also having access to Board transport meant that it was easier to provide bus services when required.

Feedback from Questionnaires

Primary School Teachers in Western Board Area

Initial Comments

- A different approach used in the warm ups. Good fun and games non competitive.
- Children offered a variety of taster courses which introduced them to enjoyment and skills in sport
- Gave children experience of sport which they can continue or not as they choose
- An excellent programme – tutors know exactly the level to pitch the activities and are always well prepared
- Gave children opportunity to try out a variety of sports in an organised way. Not only were they learning new skills but they also worked as a team respecting their opponents
- Children are enjoying learning the different sports and skills needed to play them through the programme
- Excellent programme – great opportunities for our pupils who would not normally be able to avail of such a facility
- Children have been highly motivated with regards to each activity because of specialist coaching that they are receiving

Problems

- Coach did not let school know in time when he cancelled a session. It was difficult to contact parents to collect children earlier.
- Some coaches were better than others at keeping group occupied and active.
- Coach for fit kids had to adjust his programme to suit Primary 2 and 3 pupils whose attention span was limited.
- School hall is too small for many activities – travelling to venues can be difficult.
- Who is responsible for children should an accident happen or someone not turn up to collect a child when off premises?
- Gaelic football coach only turned up for one week.
- Couldn't make it to St. Peter's because of transport difficulties with bus.
- Pupils would like more games as well as basketball and football.
- We are a very busy school and sometimes other activities clashes with project e.g. cycling
- Difficult to find clear 6 week period during 2/3 term.

Difference in Behaviour/Attendance

- Pupils have better social skills. They can take turns and share equipment They have made friends with others in different classes.
- Pupils with special needs have improved their balance and co-ordination in ball skills. They also gained confidence in their ability to play.
- Girls were better co-ordinated in the Aerobic moves than the boys.
- P2/P3 pupils learned how to count backwards.
- Pupils fitness improved considerably
- Some pupils who were uncoordinated have improved in ball skills
- Some children were more forthcoming with coaches than they normally would be in school
- Some children who are less academically able enjoy the sports courses and relate well to the coaches
- Very keen and look forward to club days
- How well they worked together as a team – looking out for weaker members
- All pupils gained certificates ranging from gaining water confidence to improving techniques
- Improvement in social and communication skills has been evident
- Behaviour and attendance have both been excellent and pupils are disappointed when each programme ends
- Has enabled different year gaps to work effectively in a co-operative setting
- It was first time our pupils had any sort of sports coaching
- Don't feel the programmes run long enough to significantly influence behaviour although behaviour during each activity session has been exemplary

Suggestions for improvements

- More variety of sports for all age groups
- Keep routines very simple and repetitive for key Stage One pupils
- Would add to the completion of the course if children had to undergo some form of assessment of skills which they were supposed to acquire
- Perhaps children have a little test at the end of course to attain certificate rather than having to attend 6 weeks
- Would like to have more sports programmes aimed specifically at girls
- Would like to spend more time on 'fit kids' to tie in with our parent/pupil after school fitness club
- Would like to programme to start in September and end in June
- We would like more blitzes

Principal Teacher Feedback from Primary schools in Derry and Tyrone

“The school was delighted to get the opportunity to participate in the scheme – long may it continue.”

“We are very happy with the level and quality of coaching made available to all class levels and not just senior classes as it would be of great benefit to them. Poor weather also causes less coaching days (on occasions)”

“The children are enthusiastic about the various sports they have been involved in – ‘great fun’ would seem to be the general comment. Looking forward to next year”

“Both staff and pupils are very pleased with the programme. Perhaps if there was some follow up activity/ideas for lessons given to the teachers after each coach has completed his/her work in the school, the class teacher could work on them with the pupils.”

“Keep up the good work.”

“ Very well suited to the ffirst year group of girls who really appreciated it.”

Principal Teacher Feedback from Donegal National Schools

Key: A = Agree Strongly
B = Agree
C = Neutral
D = Disagree
E = Disagree Strongly

Statements	A	B	C	D	E
Children are being offered a varied coaching programme	83.3%	27.7%	0	0	0
The coaching staff are qualified, experienced and are suitable to work with children	83.3%	27.7%	0	0	0
All children get equal opportunities to take part.	100%	0	0	0	0
There is a strong emphasis on safety and child protection. I know the children are safe.	100%	0	0	0	0
The necessary equipment is always supplied.	83.3%	27.7%	0	0	0
The coaching sessions are organised at a suitable time	83.3%	27.7%	0	0	0
Teachers are kept up to date on what is happening on the programme	33.3%	66.7%	0	0	0
Teachers are encouraged to help out.	33.3%	50%	16.7%	0	0
Teachers are offered training opportunities if they wish to get involved	50%	50%	0	0	0

Comments from Principals

“Our pupils have been fortunate enough to have availed of this coaching over the past few years and it has instilled in them a love of various sports and has given them valuable out of school enjoyment and exercise.”

“I am totally convinced of the value of the project in promoting sports and physical activity among young people. The scheme has ensured that young people are introduced to a variety of sports which many have pursued in their leisure time which is one of the main purposes of the scheme.”

“All the coaches and time spent organising everything for the feeder primary schools is very welcome and gratefully received. Having sports people with a passion for sport visiting a school such as ours inspires young people to be passionate also.

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Recommendations

As has been pointed out in Chapter One, there is a strong degree of concern over childhood obesity which research has shown to be strongly associated with lack of physical activity. There is a growing body of evidence shows that in order to address the long term health of children there needs to be a regular pattern of physical activity that will continue into adulthood. The focal point for this activity has to be the school setting where children and young people can benefit from supervised regular exercise that doesn't have to be competitive but at the same time can be challenging and stimulating.

Lifelong Learning through Sport has been extremely effective in the provision of coaching on various sporting activities to schools on both sides of the border. Certainly the feedback through the consultation process from principals and teachers at both first and second levels of education has been extremely positive in the physical impact of the project on the children and young people. Opportunities were provided to engage in new activities that many schools had been unable to access previously. In some primary schools in Donegal there had previously been little or no PE activity which had meant that when children attended post primary education they were not orientated towards PE activities initially. Therefore the project provided more opportunities for PE provision at primary school level.

There was anecdotal evidence of benefits to children and young people such as a higher degree of motivation and self-confidence as well as the development of basic skills and techniques such as better levels of balance and co-ordination. Many children and young people who previously had little opportunity or perceived ability to take part in sporting activities were able to access a wide variety of sporting activities which were not just mainstream such as soccer and rugby but were quite diverse including aerobics and fishing.

On a social level, the project also had an impact on the young people and children, especially through the organising of inter school activities which helped to foster a

greater degree of co-operation and team building. Friendships were developed at a personal level as well as the development of a greater degree of contact between individual schools either within the same locality or on a cross border basis.

Some schools encouraged their senior pupils to become proactively involved in organising various inter school activities and events involving the younger children. This provided not only opportunities for personal achievement and development but also enabled the young people to become role models for those children.

As a transition programme, the project proved to be very beneficial for Primary school pupils about to enter second level education. The children were able to experience the Post Primary facility at first hand as a result of the project. This provided children with increased confidence which was remarked by a number of teachers and principals.

Some of the feedback from the questionnaires remarked on how much the project impacted on children who had special needs, particularly in balance and co-ordination. Also there was an improvement in communication skills. One Post Primary School in Raphoe specifically remarked on the impact of the project on students from disadvantaged backgrounds and how well it linked in to the Department of Education and Science Schools Completion Programme operating within their school.

Target Groups

The particular focus of the project was primarily to be on young people, while women, the disabled, travellers, asylum seekers, refugees and the elderly were also targeted through the Community element of the programme. The geographical target area was to be areas of the north west which have been particularly affected by social exclusion, deprivation and marginalisation brought about directly by the conflict. The project was to provide a wide and balanced choice of new sporting opportunities for young people in these areas, provide education and employment for adults in the target groups through educating them as coaches. This training would allow them to gain employment in their own areas and bring them back into the educational

strategic plan with various outputs and outcomes along the way with strategic targets at local community level, the development and training of locally based coaches may have been more successful.

Use of Resources

Transport proved to be a difficulty, particularly in Donegal where a number of co-ordinators had pointed out that it was difficult to organise activities after school particularly for children in isolated rural areas as there was no transport available. Parents were often unable or unwilling to help out in this regard. This meant that in some schools activities were held during school hours which went against the original idea of the project.

The key point of contact for the project were the co-ordinators based in the Post Primary Schools. On the whole they were mainly PE teachers, although in one school in Strabane the Lab Technician who had a strong sporting background, was the local co-ordinator.

Due to their own school commitments, the co-ordinators were restricted in the amount of time they could give to the project and some would have liked to have visited the local schools more regularly. The Sports Development Officers played a key role in providing the necessary back-up and support that they needed in their co-ordinating role.

However the co-ordinators were restricted in the range and level of coaches they could use. As a result there was often a strong emphasis on traditional coaches and not enough on minority sports. Another difficulty was not only location appropriate coaches but being able to engage them during the daytime due to their other work commitments.

A comment was made by some co-ordinators on both sides of the border that the payment for coaches was a prohibitive factor in encouraging their participation and that this would need to be addressed if more coaches were to be encouraged to come on board.

The co-ordinators meetings were seen to be very helpful and stimulating. Best practice and experience could be shared and contacts for other coaches were often identified.

Effectiveness of Management Structures

As stated in Chapter One, the project has been managed jointly by Donegal VEC and the Western Education and Library Board and the management committee consists of key representatives from Educational Bodies, Sports Councils, Local Councils and other statutory bodies from both sides of the border.

The fact that the representatives were key players within their own organisations shows the level of commitment those organisations had towards the project. However the difficulties outlined previously in engaging at local community level may have been due to the lack of strategic focus and planning.

One of the key players that was absent from the management committee for some time was the Donegal Sports Partnership, a body which was an important contribution to facilitating the project at local community level. Also the Irish Sports Council have an important role to play in the future development of the Programme and require representation..

Peace Building

The project is funded under Measure 5.5 Education, Cross-Border School and Youth Co-operation. Young people and children were given opportunities to come together on a cross border and cross community basis to take part in various sporting activities. There was a deliberate attempt to mix participants from various backgrounds into teams which were not identified with their particular school or area. This provided opportunities for young people and children to mix more and develop team work skills with others from different religions or cultural backgrounds.

There is some anecdotal evidence from the consultation of relationships being formed between the young people. There was one particular example of a Post Primary in Castlederg based in a predominantly loyalist area in a town which has experienced various sectarian tensions over the years. Their involvement in the Lifelong Learning through Sport Project enabled some of the young people from the school to mix with other schools of a different religion as well as on a cross border basis. Various barriers were broken down as a result and different attitudes and understandings were formed on a more positive basis. Another example of barriers being broken down was the misconception by some children from Protestant schools in the North that there were no Protestant children who lived in Donegal. Through engaging with other children from across the border they were able to link up with Protestant schools in Donegal which helped to dispel those myths.

A number of cross border residencials were organised with discussion workshops on themes and issues affecting young people's perceptions of each other actively encouraged.

There was one difficulty encountered in Derry where a controlled Primary School would not take its children for a cross community event into a perceived nationalist/republican area of the city. It may have been advisable to either stage the event in another more perceived neutral area or perhaps have entered into more dialogue with the school principal to explore potential fears and ways of addressing them.

The cross community/cross border element of the work was an integral part of the project and there was quite a high proportion of schools that linked up to take part in joint activities. Overall the numbers of children taking part in cross border activities, for example, was approximately 2,500.

Even though the original numbers of schools were cut, if there had been fewer schools there may have been a better opportunity of doing more intense and focused work around perceptions and attitudes alongside the sporting activities such as anti-discrimination and cultural diversity workshops aimed not just at the children and young people but also at the co-ordinators.

Addressing the Programme Measure

Measure 5.3 Developing Cross Border Reconciliation and Understanding

Objectives

To provide a strategic framework for supporting cross border strategies and projects that will make a positive contribution to peace building and reconciliation and which will promote mutual respect and understanding.

Lifelong Learning through Sport has provided a strategic framework for cross border contact through the medium of sport and physical activities. The contact through these activities provided the impetus for further development which was carried out both at an individual level where relationships were developed between individual children and young people at a cross border/cross community level. Relationships were also formed on a schools based level where particular schools formed a basis of positive relationships through coming together as a result of the project and which now has provided the basis for further contact.

Children and young people were given the opportunity to learn more about each other's cultures and backgrounds and various methods were used to enable them to engage in dialogue whether through residential or use of information technology such as e-mail.

The co-ordinators also had an opportunity to meet up with their counterparts from across the border and share experience as well as practice both on a professional and sporting basis. Many found the co-ordinators meetings invaluable for those reasons.

A number of the schools were based in isolated rural areas of Derry, Donegal and Tyrone and as a result were facing a high degree of social exclusion and marginalisation. The project enabled them to access activities, equipment and facilities which previously were difficult to obtain.

Recommendations

Workplan

As part of the next application process a strategic workplan should be drawn up outlining various outputs and targets which is time-framed and revisited by the management committee on a regular basis. The document should also contain procedures, duties of co-ordinators and levels of supports expected from the Sports Development Officers. The workplan and application should be discussed and agreed by all management committee members so that there is greater clarity and ownership over the project.

Local Community Involvement

The first phase of the project was too ambitious in attempting to address local community involvement alongside delivering the programme of sporting activities. This was partly because too many primary schools were involved as well as not having a strategic workplan. The co-ordinators should pick only 4 schools each which would reduce the number of feeder schools and make the workload more manageable.

There should be liaison with local community networks to identify groups and individuals who may be interested in getting involved and trained up as coaches. Parents should also be targeted as potential coaches as well as to involve them in different ways such as drawing up a rota for transport if the school is based in isolated rural areas. One way of engaging with parents in Donegal could be through the Schools Completion Programme as it has a management structure that involves parents.

Peace Building

In conjunction with the various activities, a series of workshops should be organised on a cross border and cross community basis which address anti-discrimination, prejudice reduction and cultural diversity. Various groups should be contracted in

Appendix One

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