

## Ireland

**The Development Challenge:** Tremendous changes have taken place since the 1998 approval of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) by an overwhelming majority of the population in Ireland and a large majority in Northern Ireland. After general acceptance of the GFA and with the continuing ceasefires by various paramilitary organizations, Northern Ireland has experienced economic renewal. Nonetheless, political stability is still not fully realized and remains a key objective of U.S. policy towards Northern Ireland. Sectarian confrontation within Northern Ireland, as well as voluntary segregation between the unionist and nationalist communities, remains a challenge to building a diverse society founded on tolerance, equal rights, and a commitment to nonviolent political means for the common good.

Support for cross-community reconciliation has long been the focus of U.S. assistance to Northern Ireland and the six border counties of Ireland: Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan, and Louth. The U.S. Government makes significant contributions to the peace process through its support of the International Fund for Ireland and the Walsh Visa Program as described below and in the Program Data Sheet.

**The USAID Program:** As the major donor to the International Fund for Ireland (IFI), the United States provides assistance for economic development and cross-community reconciliation throughout Northern Ireland and the border counties.

The objectives of the IFI are to promote economic and social advancement, and encourage contact, dialogue, and reconciliation between nationalist and unionist communities. The IFI has provided new investment aimed at creating jobs and reconstructing disadvantaged areas. Reconciliation projects have fostered cross-community exchanges involving youth and community leaders. Fund policy requires that projects benefit both nationalist and unionist communities, and that the implementing organization includes members of the two communities. Through this policy, the IFI has encouraged communities to take ownership of projects.

The Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998, also known as the Walsh Visa Program, provides employment and job training for young people who are residents of Northern Ireland or one of the six border counties of the Republic of Ireland. The Walsh Visa Program supports economic regeneration as well as peace and reconciliation in these areas. After the participants complete a training program, they are hired by a Walsh employer in the United States for up to 36 months. The last round of participants arrived in the United States in 2003; the program sunsets in 2006 when these final Walsh participants depart.

**Other Program Elements:** None.

**Other Donors:** IFI activities are financed through international contributions from the United States, European Union, and Canada. Each of the donors sends a non-voting observer to IFI Board meetings. New Zealand and Australia, former donors that do not actively contribute to the Fund, retain the right to send non-voting observers to IFI Board meetings.

## Data Sheet

<b>USAID Mission:</b>	Ireland
<b>Program Title:</b>	Int. Fund for Ireland and Walsh Visa Program
<b>Pillar:</b>	Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
<b>Strategic Objective:</b>	190-0410
<b>Proposed FY 2004 Obligation:</b>	\$21,870,000 ESF
<b>Prior Year Unobligated:</b>	\$0
<b>Proposed FY 2005 Obligation:</b>	\$12,000,000 ESF
<b>Year of Initial Obligation:</b>	FY 1986
<b>Year of Final Obligation:</b>	Indefinite

**Summary:** Through the International Fund for Ireland, the United States provides assistance for economic redevelopment and cross-community reconciliation throughout Northern Ireland and the six border counties of Ireland. The Walsh Visa Program provides employment, job training, and conflict resolution skills for young people from the same areas.

### Inputs, Outputs, Activities:

#### FY 2004 Program:

International Fund for Ireland (\$18,391,000 ESF). The U.S. Government's contribution to the International Fund for Ireland (IFI), administered by USAID, is used in the following initiatives:

- 1) Disadvantaged Areas Initiative. This initiative targets funding at areas of greatest need. Projects under this initiative focus on economic regeneration and community improvement, with special emphasis on employment and business creation.
- 2) Economic Development Initiative. Projects are designed to strengthen the economic base by stimulating local enterprise and self-employment, encouraging the growth of small and medium sized companies, encouraging tourism, and providing support for the regeneration of derelict properties in towns and villages for commercial purposes.
- 3) Communities Initiative. This initiative provides people, particularly those in the most disadvantaged areas, with the skills, resources and self-confidence to undertake the social and economic regeneration of their communities. It also helps to improve the employability of disadvantaged young people by providing training, work experience and personal development. Special emphasis in the Communities Initiative is on leadership potential, reconciliation and conflict resolution.

The implementer is the International Fund for Ireland.

Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998 (Walsh Visa Program) (\$3,479,000 ESF). While FY 2003 is the last year in which new participants will arrive to work in the United States under current legislation, funds will be needed in FY 2004, FY 2005, and FY 2006 to provide social services and monitoring for participants until their return home. The components of the program include: 1) Targeting the long-term (three months or more) unemployed and those who have been made redundant or received redundancy notices. 2) Admission to the program of a small number of employed persons who have been nominated by their employers. 3) Equality of opportunity in relation to community background, ethnic origin, gender and disability throughout all phases of the Program. The implementers are expected to continue to be Northrop-Grumman Information Technology (prime), the Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh, PA (sub), the Irish Immigration Center of Boston, MA (sub), and the Metropolitan Development Agency of Syracuse, NY (sub).

The State Department has partnered with the Department of Employment and Learning of

Northern Ireland and the Training and Employment Authority of the Republic of Ireland to provide oversight of the program.

**FY 2005 Program:**

International Fund for Ireland (\$8,500,000 ESF). It is expected that funds will continue to be used in projects designed to promote reconciliation and cross-community understanding. The implementer is the International Fund for Ireland.

Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998 (Walsh Visa Program) (\$3,500,000 ESF). While FY 2003 is the last year in which new participants will arrive to work in the United States, funds will be needed in FY 2004, FY 2005, and FY 2006 to provide social services and monitoring for participants until their return home. The implementers are expected to continue to be Northrop-Grumman Information Technology (prime), the Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh, PA (sub), the Irish Immigration Center of Boston, MA (sub), and the Metropolitan Development Agency of Syracuse, NY (sub).

**Performance and Results:** International Fund for Ireland. As a measure of the Fund's success, from its inception in 1986 to 2002, investment in the Fund totaled US \$681.13 million and assistance was offered to around 5000 projects involving regeneration of deprived areas, community capacity building, and economic development. In 2001 alone, more than 225 projects were supported by financial assistance totaling US \$33.83 million . For every U.S. dollar invested by the Fund, over two dollars are raised from other sources . Continued U.S. support underpins U.S. efforts to create an enduring, sustainable peace in Northern Ireland.

Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998 (Walsh Visa Program). Program participants gain job and social skills, including conflict resolution experience, enabling them to make meaningful contributions to their home counties upon their return. Beginning with the first group of participants in March-April 2000, some 1200 young people have participated in the program.