

## Chapter 8 The Donegal Community Audit – The Way Forward

### 8.1 Introduction

As this project is funded under Measure 3.3. *Building Better Communities* of the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, some consideration needs to be given to how the 'Donegal Community Audit'<sup>1</sup> contributes towards 'Building Better Communities' in County Donegal. A necessary precursor to building better communities is by enhancing their accessibility and a simple synopsis of the topics covered in the early chapters, identifies how the concept has been explored and developed throughout the project. These include:

- ❑ how accessible both community groups and facilities are to concentrations of the population (chapters 3 and 7)
- ❑ how well community infrastructure is distributed across different sectors and how effective it is in meeting the needs of sectorally specific groups and PEACE 11 target groups (chapter 4)
- ❑ how community infrastructure can be better coordinated to make it more representative of community and voluntary groups in County Donegal (chapter 5)
- ❑ how important funding is to improving accessibility and ultimately better communities now and in the future (chapter 6)
- ❑ what are the strategic needs of community facilities<sup>2</sup> and how accessible are these facilities to different segments of the population (chapter 7).

However, the focus of this chapter now is to examine how links can be forged between different community and voluntary groups and facilities with regards to sharing resources, ultimately increasing accessibility sectorally, geographically and on a cross border basis.

**Accessibility is a necessary prerequisite to building better communities**

### 8.2. Linking, building and bridging

To determine where links can be forged or are possible, a section entitled 'Linking, Building and Bridging' was included in the questionnaire. The purpose of this section was to identify situations where matching or sharing of resources could take place. In economic terms, a resource can be described as Land, Labour, Capital and Enterprise. However, in terms of the Donegal Community Audit, the definition of a resource is more specific and includes:

- ❑ Programmes/Activities/Projects - the 'Second Chance Education Programme', a cross border arts project, an active retirement club etc
- ❑ Volunteers - a person that undertakes work in an unpaid capacity
- ❑ Paid Staff
- ❑ Buildings - a family resource centre, a community hall, a school, a clubhouse etc
- ❑ Equipment - IT equipment, crèche facilities, conference facilities
- ❑ Other - sharing expertise and knowledge, developing models of best practise.

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<sup>1</sup> Comprising of the Donegal Community Audit 'A Strategic Needs Assessment', the 'Mapping Community Infrastructure', the 'Directories of Community and Voluntary Groups by Sectoral and Geographical Remits'

<sup>2</sup>With regards to insurance, programming of activities, equality & diversity, ownership and management issues

### 8.2.1 The scenarios

Respondents were then presented with 5 different scenarios and asked to select which best described their intentions or behaviour in terms of sharing the above resources. These scenarios can be explored from the perspective of community and voluntary groups who either have or have not got the resource:

#### Existence of the resource

In situations where groups **have** a specific resource they can fall into either:

Scenario	Description	Type of relationship
A	Groups are sharing resource	<b>Consolidate a link</b>
B	Groups are willing to share resource	<b>Building a relationship</b>
C	Groups do not want to share resource	<b>Bridging a gap in a relationship</b>

**Table 8.1** Different scenarios when groups have a resource

#### Lack of resource

This section also highlighted instances where community and voluntary groups are experiencing a **lack** of resources, specifically where:

Scenario	Description	Type of relationship
D	Another group is sharing resources with a group	<b>Consolidate a link</b>
E	Group would like another group to share the resources with them	<b>Building a relationship</b>

**Table 8.2** Different scenarios when groups do not have a resource

This chapter is important in that it identifies where linkages exist at present, highlight barriers to sharing and identifies where future linkages could be developed. This in effect will improve access to community and voluntary infrastructure by sharing scarce resources and making better use of under utilised resources.

### 8.3 Consolidating existing linkages

For the purposes of this project existing linkages are defined as situations where a resource is being shared as in Scenarios A and D above. Therefore the continuation of these relationships between groups, offers great potential for the long-term development of the Community and Voluntary sector and should be viewed as best practise from which others groups and policy makers can learn from.

#### 8.3.1 From the perspective of the groups who have the resource

Of the community and voluntary groups who had a resource, they indicated that approximately 281 resources were being shared with another community and voluntary group in County Donegal.

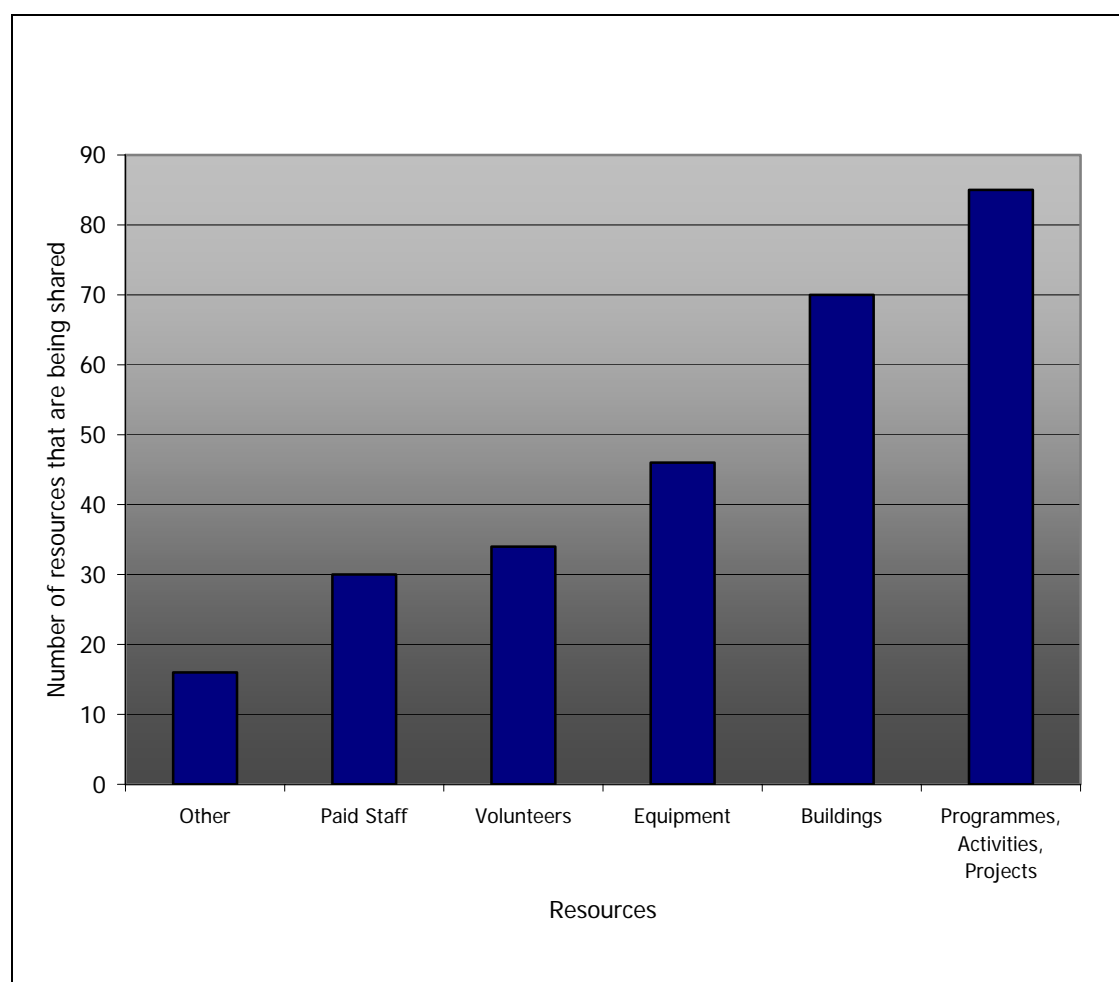
### Spare capacity

The most popular resources being shared were Programmes/Projects/Activities and Buildings as highlighted in Figure 8.1 below. The audit highlighted a serious under utilisation of indoor facilities in chapter 7 indicating substantial spare capacity in both peak and off peak seasons. The result indicated here in figure 8.1 would suggest recognition of community and voluntary groups of the existence of this spare capacity in the facilities that they own. This would indicate that a certain amount of cooperation or consolidation between community and voluntary groups is taking place.

### Scarcity of resources

The least tendency to share resources occurred in the 'Volunteers' and 'Paid Staff' categories, inferring a scarcity of resources. The over reliance on Volunteers as opposed to paid staff and the declining trends in Volunteerism, indicated in Chapter 5, inevitably supports the scarcity argument.

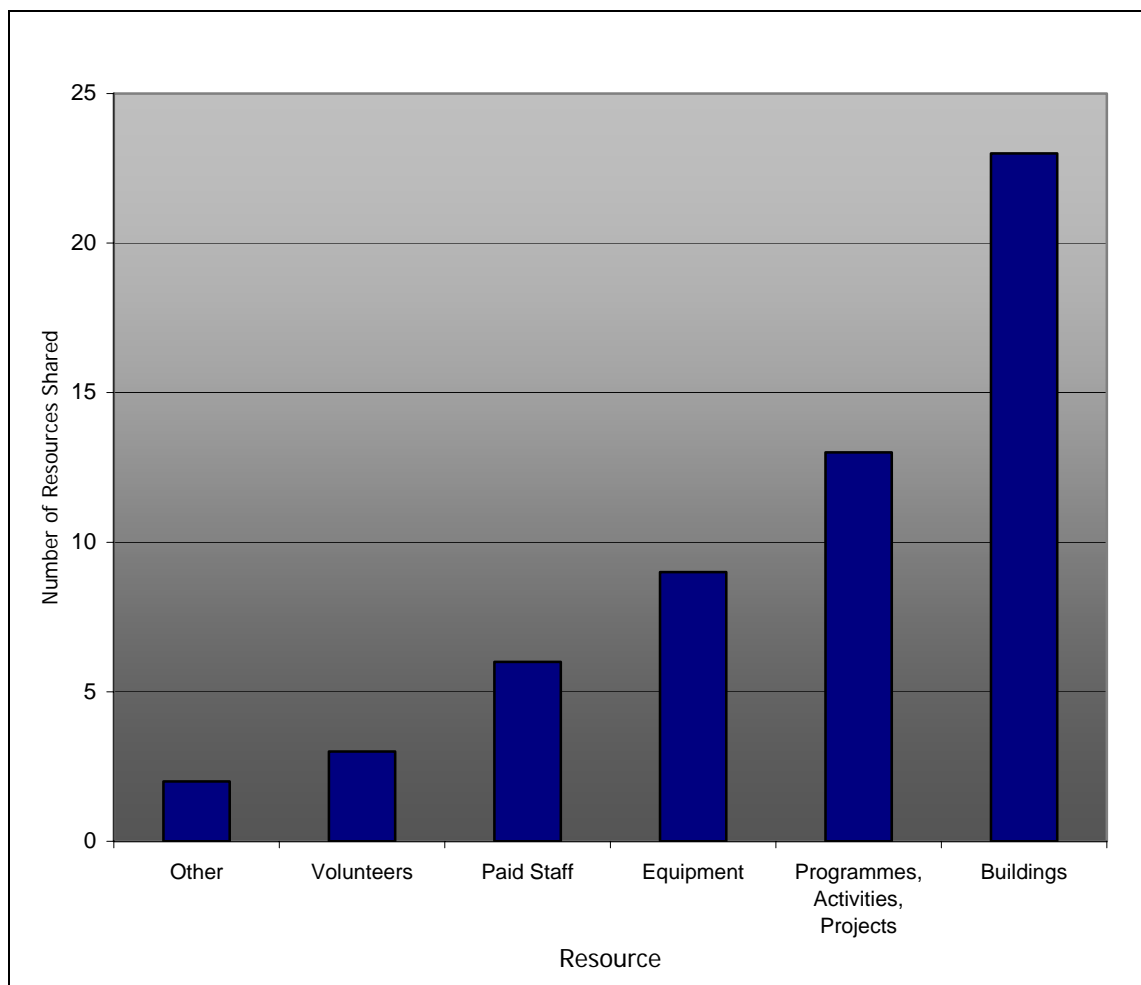
**Figure 8.1 Existing linkages between Community and Voluntary Groups who have the resource and are sharing it**



#### 8.3.2 From the perspective of the groups who do not have the resource

Of the Community and Voluntary Groups who did not have the resource and indicated that another Community and Voluntary Group were sharing it with them, approximately 56 resources fell into this category. The greatest tendency to engage in resource sharing was again in the 'Buildings' category as indicated in figure 8.2 below.

**Figure 8.2 Community and Voluntary Groups that do not have the resource but another organisation is sharing it with them**



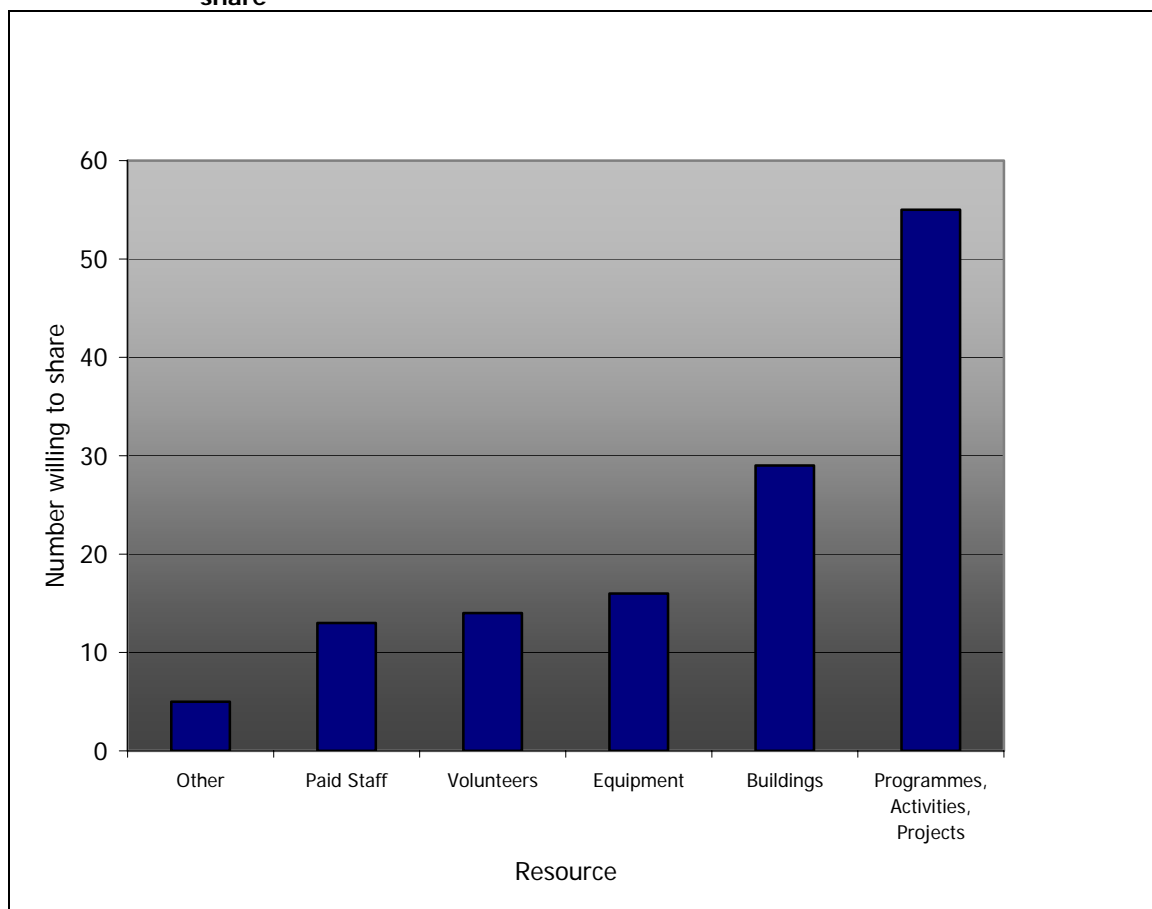
## 8.4 Building a relationship

This section focuses on groups who are not at present sharing a resource but have expressed a willingness to share. Again, it can be viewed from the perspective of those who have and have not got the resource.

### 8.4.1 From the perspective of the groups who have the resource

Figure 8.3 below demonstrates Scenario B where Community and Voluntary Group 1 has the resource and are willing to share it. Therefore, we have 132 cases where community and voluntary are looking for a partner group to share their available resource with. The most common type of resource they intend to share is again 'Programmes/ Activites / Projects' and 'Buildings'.

**Figure 8.3 Community and Voluntary Groups who have the resource and are willing to share**



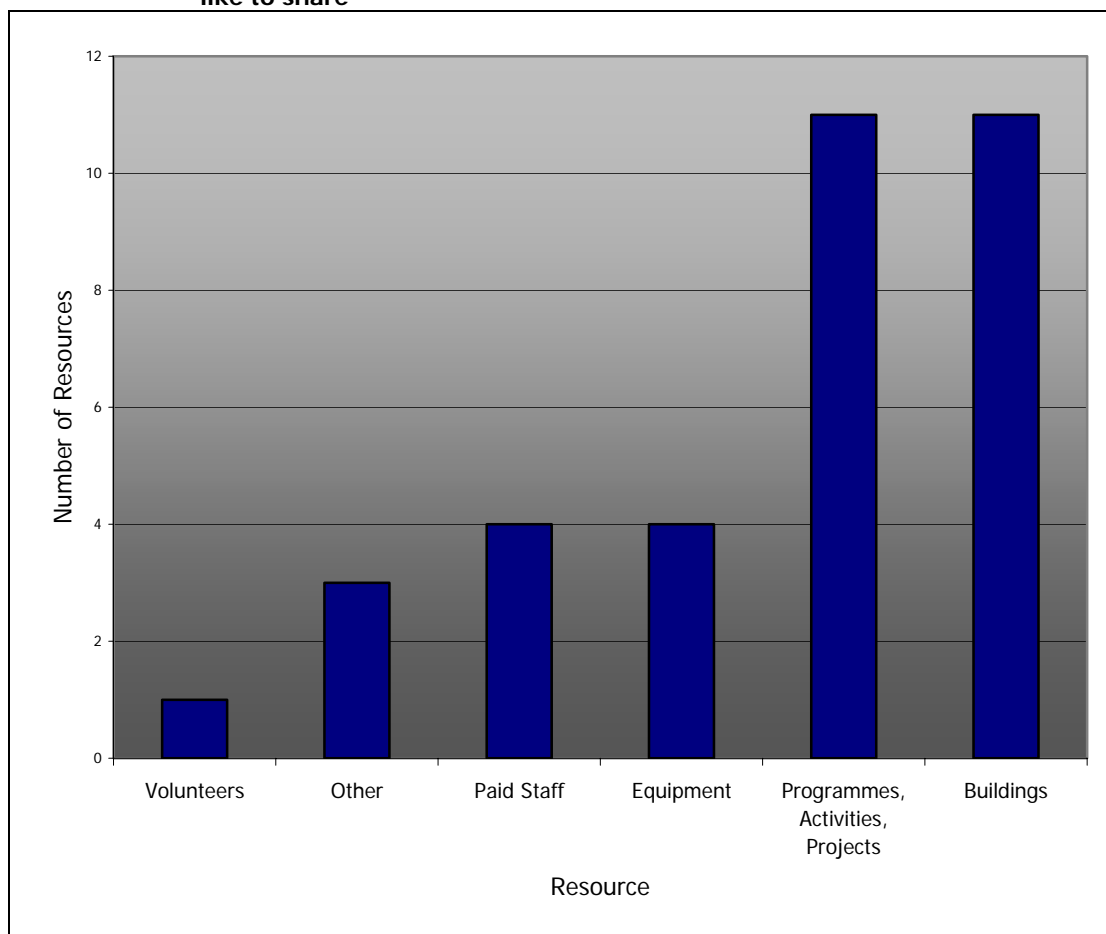
#### 8.4.2 From the perspective of the groups who do not have the resource

In Scenario E, a Community and Voluntary Group does not have the resource but would like another group to share it with them. 34 incidents were recorded in this case, which are highlighted in Figure 8.4 below. Again, similar patterns are evident with 'programmes/projects/activities' and 'buildings' scoring highest.

The above results would suggest that potential exists to match the groups highlighted in figure 8.3 and 8.4. However care is needed to ensure that no duplicate groups exist in both scenarios and that different scales in the figures are used. Nevertheless, the centrally held databases<sup>3</sup> provide a useful starting point for policy makers, community development officers and funding bodies to establish such relationships by extracting the relevant groups in figure 8.3 and 8.4, matching these groups either geographically or sectorally, arranging meetings and then assessing the potential of the relationship.

<sup>3</sup> Please note, this database is held in Donegal County Council and procedures have been put in place to keep the database updated

**Figure 8.4 Community and Voluntary Groups who do not have the resource but would like to share**



### 8.5 Bridging a gap

Finally, Scenario C represents a case where a Community and Voluntary Group has the resource but is not willing to share it. A number of reasons were cited for this including;

*'We have our leaders and do not wish to demand more time of them'*

*'We have volunteers specific to our group'*

*'We do not wish to share machinery'*

*'The grant only allows them to work on that project'*

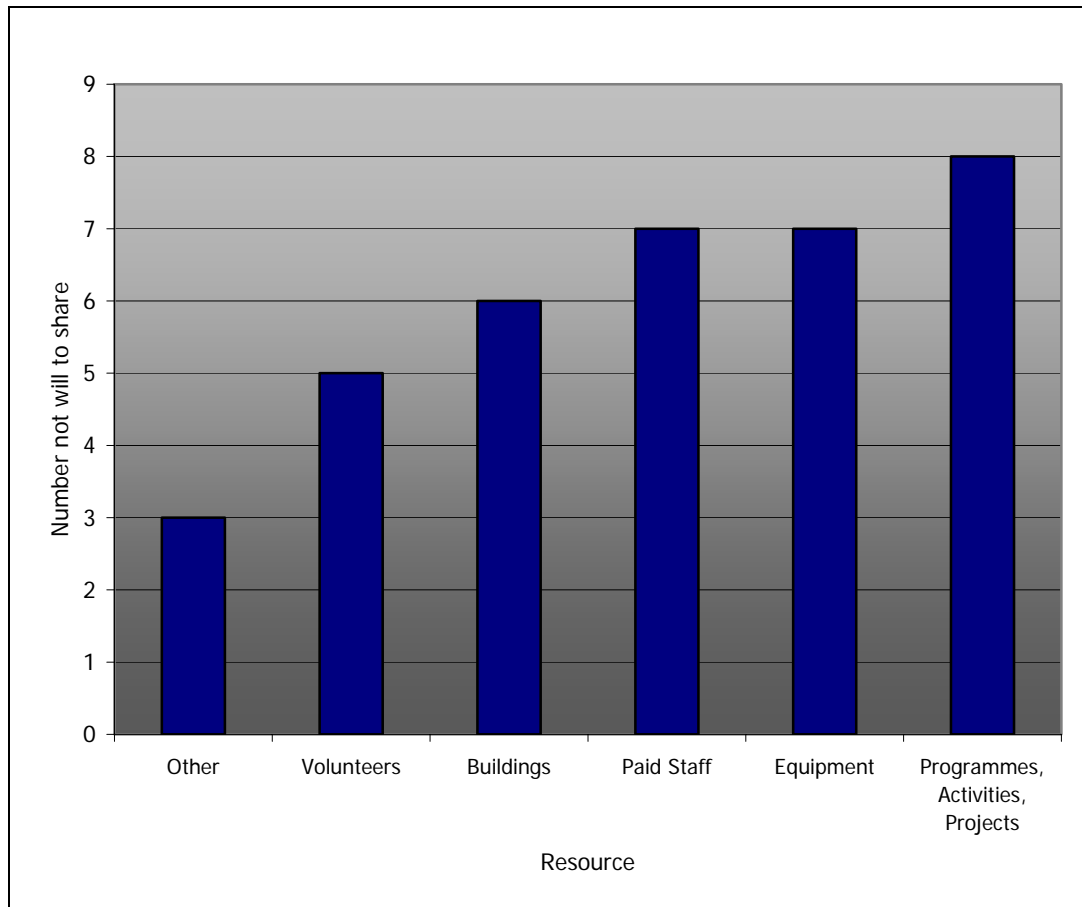
*'Staff are project driven'*

*'The premises are not large enough'*

Of the community and voluntary groups who had a resource they were only unwilling to share 36 of these resources, which is low out of all the responses received. Bridging such gaps will pose the most difficult task for community developers overall, as an awareness of the benefits, synergies and economies associated with "sharing", needs to be instilled prior to any intervention in this regard. Of particular significance here is the unwillingness to share paid staff and volunteers<sup>4</sup>, as the comments above illustrate.

<sup>4</sup> in proportionate terms the difference between paid staff and volunteers visa-a-vie programmes, activities and buildings is not as high

**Figure 8.5 Community and Voluntary Groups who have the resource but are not willing to share**



**The resources, which are being shared the most, are Programmes/ Activities / Projects and Buildings. The resources with the least tendency to share are Volunteers and Paid Staff.**

**8.6 Do linkages have to be based on proximity?**

Figures 8.1 to 8.5 above have highlighted existing linkages, cases where linkages can be built or forged. The question now needs to be asked as to whether these linkages can only occur between groups that are in close proximity to each other.

Recall Map 5 in chapter 3 looked at the physical accessibility from groups to facilities. Quite similarly, the technique employed in this map could be further used to examine the proximity from one group to another, particularly those who have indicated in figures 8.3 and 8.4 that they are seeking a resource partnership. This is of relevance in a county the size of Donegal and the project has presented cases where groups are sharing resources with their neighbours. For example, The Gartan Outdoor Centre are sharing equipment with the Church Hill Senior Citizen Club; The Scouts Den is being shared with the Finn Valley Special Olympics etc

### Transcending the proximity rule

It is important to note that inter community and inter sectoral alliances can also transcend the proximity rule especially where the sharing of other types of resources are required like knowledge transfer or learning networks. For instance this would include cases where community and voluntary groups/facilities learn from the experience of other groups on how to best programme activities to ensure that all target groups are catered for; on the best insurance policies to meet the needs of the community sector; on how to make their premises and groups more accessible to all target groups of society etc

### Transcending the border boundary

Inter community and inter sectoral alliances could also transcend the border boundary and this would be of particular benefit to groups in County Donegal in case where there was a weak sectoral provision identified. (See Maps 6 – 11). Ultimately this would further 'Pave the Way to Peace and Reconciliation' through the reproduction of the Donegal Community Audit on a Cross Border basis and in other 'Border Counties'.

**It is important to note that linkages are not solely determined by physical accessibility**

## **8.7 Conclusion**

It was outlined at the beginning of this chapter how the concept of accessibility underpinned each of the chapters contained in this document. This chapter also demonstrated that 'linking, building and bridging' resources could also enhance accessibility, by making optimal use of some scarce and in other cases under-utilised resources.

Finally it is proposed, that the concept of linking, building and bridging can be applied to the project in its entirety, specifically by:

- ❑ Determining real needs of communities and linking these needs to policy development and structures in the county
- ❑ Identifying gaps and overlaps in community infrastructure provision and presenting a number of practical examples as to how these gaps can be bridged
- ❑ Exploring the different caveats of accessibility in the entire project has provided untold insights and explored new ways of how to build better communities
- ❑ Producing a new framework to explore community infrastructure has ensured a new era for community development in County Donegal is emerging.