Participation

Protection

Relief

Recover

Prevention

Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland and the Women's Sector

An overview of reports and programmes

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Diversity ⇌ *Equity*

Interdependence

iCR

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Contents

Glossary

CEDAW   Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women

FWIN   Foyle Women's Information Network

NIRWN   Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network

NIWEP   Northern Ireland Women's European Platform

TWN   Training for Women Network

UNSCR 1325   United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

WINI   Women's Information Network Northern Ireland

WPS   Women, Peace and Security

WRDA   Women's Resource and Development Agency

1. Introduction

There is a growing body of evidence which supports the assertion that the increased inclusion of women in peacebuilding will help achieve sustainable peace. Research undertaken by the Graduate Institute in Geneva has shown that in cases where women's groups were able to exercise a strong influence on peace negotiations there was a much higher chance that agreement would be reached and implemented (Paffenholz et al, 2015). Quantitative analysis of 181 peace agreements signed between 1989 and 2011 showed that peace agreements which included women as signatories, witnesses, mediators and or/negotiators demonstrated a 20 per cent increase in probability of lasting at least two years and a 35 per cent probability of lasting 15 years (Stone, 2014).

Women have long been involved in the sphere of conflict not only as peace-makers attempting to end conflict, but as combatants and instigators of violence. And there is overwhelming evidence that women are both victims, as well as carers for those who are survivors, of conflict (Boydell et al (2008) and Radford and Templer (2008)). However, women's participation in conflict and peace processes is often much less visible and informal than those elite male actors celebrated and commemorated as combatants and peace negotiators. Our understanding and memory of war (and consequently peace-building) is largely through the perspectives and experiences of men. The current success and recognition of the 'Women, Peace and Security' (WPS) agenda builds on a long struggle by international women's civil society to recognise the participation of women in conflict and peace, the fact that gender inequality is implicitly tied to the outbreak of violent conflict (Caprioli, 2005; Melander, 2005) and that the experiences and impact of conflict are substantially different for women than they are for men.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325

UNSCR 1325 (The Resolution) builds on the Beijing Platform for Action (the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women) which prioritised twelve areas for consideration in achieving gender equality internationally. One of these is 'Women in Armed Conflict' which calls for an increase in the participation of women in conflict resolution, and in the protection of women living in situations of armed conflict. This success prompted an international coalition of NGO's to form and intensively lobby the UN Security Council for a similar statement (Cockburn, 2007). UNSCR 1325 was largely shaped by civil society and its adoption in 2000 by the Security Council initiated the development and expansion of a comprehensive framework for the promotion and protection of women's human rights in conflict and post-conflict settings (it is unlikely that the UN Security Council envisioned such an expansive agenda). The Resolution applies to all 198 UN member states including the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Since the initial Resolution there have been seven further WPS Resolutions (see Table 1 below). Many of these have focussed on the prevention of sexual violence (1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1960 (2010); 2106 (2013)) and others on participation (1889 (2009) and 2122 (2013)). The most recent Resolution, 2242 adopted in 2015, addresses women's role in preventing violent extremism. The Resolution recognises the important role played by women in the *'prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction'* and calls for the increased participation of women *'at all levels of decision-making, including in national, regional, and international institutions; in mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict; in peace negotiations; in peace operations, as soldiers, police, and civilians'*. The Resolution also calls for States (and the UN) to protect women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations, especially from gender-based violence; and adopt a gender perspective on peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

Table 1: The suite of UN 'Women, Peace and Security' Resolutions

Resolution	Year	Theme
1325	2000	Introduced the four pillars of 'Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery.'
1820	2008	Sexual violence
1888	2009	Sexual violence
1889	2009	Participation
1960	2010	Sexual violence
2106	2013	Sexual violence and victims
2122	2013	Participation and women's leadership
2422	2015	Women's role in countering violent extremism

The Resolution (and subsequent UN Resolutions on the theme of 'women, peace and security') is structured around four pillars (themes) of 'Participation', 'Protection', 'Prevention', and 'Relief and Recovery'.

- Prevention: including a gendered perspective in conflict prevention activities and strategies, strengthening efforts to prevent violence against women, in particular various forms of gender-based violence.
- Participation: promoting and supporting women's active and meaningful participation in peace processes as well as their representation in formal and informal decision-making at all levels; partnering and networking with local and international women's rights groups and organisations; recruit and appoint women to senior positions.

- Protection: strengthening and amplifying efforts to secure the safety, physical or mental health, well-being and economic security of women and girls; promoting and safeguarding human rights of women and mainstreaming a gender perspective into the legal and institutional reforms.
- Relief and Recovery: promote women's equal access to aid distribution mechanisms and services, including those dealing with the specific needs of women and girls in all relief recovery efforts, ensuring a gendered perspective is included in mechanisms to deal with legacies of the conflict.

The influence of the WPS agenda has filtered into other international gender equality mechanisms. The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee) adopted General Recommendation 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations in 2013 providing State Parties with guidance on how to ensure compliance with CEDAW obligations before, during and after conflict. The recommendation requests that State Parties report to the CEDAW Committee on the implementation of Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security.

<u>Implementation</u>

The Resolution has been criticised for its lack of implementation and oversight mechanisms. In 2010, the UN Secretary General (UNSG) set out global indicators to track implementation and to serve as a common reporting base by UN entities, international and regional organisations and Member States. Twenty six indicators were published in 2010. They have been organised around the four pillars of UNSCR 1325.

- Indicators for the 'Prevention' pillar measure progress towards the prevention of conflict and of violence.
- Indicators for the 'Participation' pillar allow the monitoring of progress in ensuring the inclusion of women and women's interests in decision-making processes related to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. The indicators also help to assess the extent to which women participate in reaching peace agreements and in peace-building.
- Indicators for the 'Protection' pillar measure progress towards protecting and promoting the human rights of women and girls and ensuring their physical safety, health and economic security.
- Indicators for the 'Relief and Recovery' pillar assess the extent to which the specific needs of women and girls are addressed during the relief and recovery phase following conflict.

The most recent international review of progress regarding the 1325 agenda took place in 2015 (commissioned to mark the 15 year anniversary of the initial Resolution) and highlighted that *'there remains a crippling gap between*

the ambition of our commitments and actual political and financial support' (UN Women, 2015). Political will and a subsequent lack of adequate resources to implement 1325 goals are identified as blockages in the system to effective implementation of the 1325 agenda. Just two percent of funding dedicated to peace and security internationally goes to gender equality or women's empowerment (O'Reilly, 2015). Despite problems with implementation, the Global Review sets out the gains that have been made since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 including increased references to women in the texts of peace agreements, firmer commitments to women's participation, increased consultation with women's groups and gender experts and the overall participation of women in peace processes increasing.

UN Resolution 1325 is implemented by member states through National Action Plans. To date, 54 countries have adopted NAPs. Regional and multi-lateral organisations such as NATO and the EU also have adopted action plans. This NAP process assists countries in identifying priorities and resources, determining their responsibilities, and committing to action. Both the UK and Ireland have National Action Plans to implement 1325. The issue with regard to the British government is that it designates 1325 as an issue of foreign policy and therefore does not include Northern Ireland within its remit. The most recent CEDAW Committee consideration of the UK (in 2013) expressed its *'concern at the low representation of women in the post-conflict processes in Northern Ireland and the failure to fully implement Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)'.* The Irish National Action Plan (after lobbying by women in civil society both in the north and south of Ireland) does include Northern Ireland. The Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade funds specific programmes and projects developed by women's groups and community groups throughout Northern Ireland. The Irish government's NAP provides some recognition of the need to support women as a result of the conflict in Northern Ireland yet is ambiguous in its recognition of the conflict in Northern Ireland. The actions proposed in the Irish NAP relating to local activities are confined to support for civil society and encouraging cross border engagement (McMinn and O'Rourke, 2012). The actions provide no mandate for cross border political engagement as part of UNSCR 1325. Despite the weaknesses of the Irish NAP, unlike the UK NAP, it proposes actions and resources to engage with and support women in Northern Ireland and provides women's organisations with an opportunity to increase the participation and representation of women on a cross border basis.

Despite non-implementation by the national government one of the strengths of the 1325 agenda in the Northern Ireland context is the extent to which it has been promoted by civil society in the region. The local ownership of the agenda, in particular by women's groups, has resulted in numerous educational events, awareness raising and lobbying. It has also resulted in attempts to mainstream the principles of 1325 into policies at local council level and into the Gender Equality Strategy.

The Training for Women Network (TWN - a network for the promotion of women's training and development, through policy, training, networking and education), support the implementation of 1325 through having Special Consultative Status granted by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2012. This status allows organisations to submit oral and written statements to the Council on subjects which they have special competence. TWN have submitted several statements to the Commission on the Status of Women, outlining the differential impact of conflict on women and the lack of a unified national strategy to implement 1325 in Northern Ireland.

Hanna's House (a coalition of feminist and women's groups in Ireland) has brought women together on an all Ireland cross community basis to discuss the legacy of the conflict in Ireland and the impact it has had on their lives. The debates have provided a focus for women's experiences and perspectives on peace building, conflict resolution, protection, and security and governance concerns throughout Ireland. Hanna's House advocates for the implementation of 1325 through the strands of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, emphasising greater cooperation between the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and UK governments to address the impact of the conflict on women in both jurisdictions (Hoewer, 2012).

The Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP) has lobbied women's groups in Europe through the EWL (European Women's Lobby) who have supported the call for Northern Ireland to be included in the UK NAP. NIWEP advocates that groups explore opportunities to use the capacity and influence of institutions and networks in Europe highlighting the unique and unequal position of Northern Ireland regarding UNSCR 1325. NIWEP is also responsible for the secretariat for the All Party Group on 'Women, Peace and Security' at Stormont. The group was set up *'to raise awareness of the lack of participation of women in political and public life in areas outlined in UNSCR 1325.'*

2. Remit of the Report

The Community Relations Council (CRC) recognises the important role that women continue to play in supporting peace building alongside the gender imbalances in relation to peace building following violent conflict. It believes that it is critical that women's involvement in preventing and resolving conflict is supported.

The women's sector itself has raised this matter on many occasions including a WRDA conference held on perspectives regarding the Haas/O'Sullivan talks (March 2014) which concluded that there has been a reassertion of male control in some communities. Conference delegates also noted that, whilst women were once at the forefront of peace building, it was now largely viewed as a male dominated arena with diminished opportunities for women to participate in discussions or the process around peace building. The lack of women's participation was also highlighted in Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium research 'Gender at the Interface' (2014) and the Executive's 'A Fresh Start Agreement' (2015) which made a commitment to "*the development of a programme to increase the participation and influence of women in community development.*"

The role of women in peace building has been an area of substantive research and initiatives over many decades. This extensive body of work has produced recommendations for actions which CRC was interested in exploring and reflecting upon through this commissioned report which represents the outcome of a small scale scoping study into the work of the women's sector in peace-building over the past 5 years. The report concentrates on the work of the formal women's sector, however other relevant work will be cited within the report as evidence of wider commitments to engaging with women and peace-building.

In addition to detailing the evidence in conference and research reports, the research engaged in a number of informal interviews with key stakeholders in the women's and community sector to get a wider understanding of the future of the 1325 agenda in Northern Ireland.

The aims of this report are:

- To provide an overview of research and conference reports on women and peace building within the last 5 years;
- To review relevant peace building and community relations policy for specific references or commitments to women and assess how these have been, or are planned to be implemented;

- To analyse the recommendations in research and conference reports carried out by the women's sector to see how these have been, or are planned to be followed up;
- To explore what is needed to support women in peacebuilding in relation to the women's sector, funders, policy makers and other stakeholders.

3. The Women's Sector in Northern Ireland

Women's civil society organisations continue to be a vibrant and often interconnected presence committed to challenging gender inequality in Northern Ireland. The women's sector encompasses a wide range of groups with divergent understandings and commitments to feminism, feminist theory and practice and a range of gendered and trans-gendered perspectives. These range from overarching, umbrella organisations working on lobbying and policy both locally and internationally, to local women's centres working with women in communities in areas of training and support. These groups can be broadly divided into four categories:

- Specific interest groups or locations – these groups act on a specific mandate or to represent a specific group of women or region. This includes groups such as the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, the Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network and the Foyle Women's Network.
- Umbrella, support organisations – these groups work on lobbying, research, policy and as an umbrella, support network for the wider women's sector, they include groups such as the Women's Resource and Development Agency, Training for Women Network, Women's Support Network, the Federation of Women's Institutes of Northern Ireland and the Women's Information Network NI.
- Local community based women's centres – these are the groups who work directly with women through support and training programmes and are based in communities throughout Northern Ireland.
- Coalition groups – these are women's sector groups working as a network to support women and establish links with statutory and governmental agencies, an example is the Women's Regional Consortium.

It is noteworthy that there are a range of other organisations within the voluntary and community sector which though not directly aligned to the women's sector, (nor with any intention to be so) that nonetheless have a specific remit for addressing women's issues and in particular those in which peace-building plays a significant role. They may often mirror, replicate or build on work being undertaken within the women's sector. For example:

- Both the Ballymena Inter Ethnic Forum and the Northern Ireland Council for Refugees and Asylum seekers bring a high-level policy and practice focus on the specific needs and rights of women of colour, minority ethnicity and faith whose experiences of the gendered bearing of discrimination and conflict outside Britain and Ireland continues to impact their lives within Northern Ireland.
- The faith sector has gender specific programmes and has been responsible for taking a lead in the development of a range of advocacy, psychotherapeutic and community relations programmes for victims and survivors of conflict over decades as well as leading debates in relation to gendered inequality within the faith sector.
- Bodies addressing community relations with the rural environment, such as the Rural Community Network have specific regions where their women's groups do not connect with the NIRWN, for example, the North Armagh Women's Group, and,
- Non-governmental organisations and charities such as the Institute for Conflict Research have designed and deliver a range of engagement and accredited training programmes for women from diverse backgrounds who are interested in addressing the legacy of their past in relation to building a more peaceful future. Furthermore, initiatives, such as the ICR CARE Programme, have been designed specifically to promote and extend the capacity of women currently engaged in peace building initiatives in local areas including those at risk of 'burn out' and not recognising the value of the role they play in conflict transformation and peace-keeping

4. Women and Community Relations Policy

Community relations policy and legislation in Northern Ireland is conceived around and focussed on the 'two communities' perspective of Northern Ireland. Such policy makes sporadic reference to women and when women are referenced it is generally with regard to participation.

Participation is of vital importance. It is a term which should be interpreted widely and inclusively. Despite efforts by individual political parties, academics (including the Centre of Advancement of Women in Politics) and grass roots movements, such as Women into Politics and DemocraShe, political participation for women is particularly low for women in Northern Ireland, which has the lowest percentage of women of the devolved regions in the UK. As of May 2016, women accounted for only 28% of the elected membership of the Northern Ireland Assembly (See Table 2). Acknowledging that 'under-representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland is a serious issue that must be addressed as a matter of urgency', a recent report by the Northern

Ireland Assembly (2015:1) considers key challenges, existing initiatives and the potential positive actions and recommendations that might support, mentor and encourage women to engage in political participation.

Table 2: Gender and Political Representation by Party

Party	Total MLAs	Women MLAs	%
DEMOCRATIC UNIONIST PARTY	38	8	21
ULSTER UNIONIST PARTY	16	4	25
TRADITIONAL UNIONIST VOTE	1	0	0
SOCIAL AND DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY	12	3	25
SINN FEIN	28	10	36
ALLIANCE	8	3	38
GREEN PARTY	2	1	50
PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT	2	0	0
INDEPENDENT	1	1	100
TOTAL	108	30	28

(Source: Danielle Roberts, Ulster University, no date)

However, political participation is only one way through which women can participate in community relations and peace-building. Commencing in 2013 (see Table 3), recent policy has begun to recognise the wider nature of women's involvement with reference to women's contribution to community and public life. The role of the all-party group on Women's Peace and Security convened by NIWEP might indicate both a substantive move towards the development of future shared working on gendered issues and the potential development of a women's caucus.

Table 3: Community Relations Policy/Political Agreements

Policy / Legislation	Year	Reference to Women
The Good Friday Agreement	1998	• Strand 3, Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity – 'the right of women to full and equal political participation.' • Strand 3, Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity - Economic, Social and Cultural Issues –'…promoting social inclusion, including in particular community development and the advancement of women in public life.'
Shared Future	2005	• Section 2.8 – p42 Good Relations, Community Development and Tackling Disadvantage 'Best practice will be drawn from the practitioners in community development, good relations and reconciliation, including…women's organizations (who)…have demonstrated considerable expertise in community development work sensitive to good relations needs and this should be considered when modelling future approaches. • Section 3.4 Action at Regional Level – p55 -Government also recognises the contributions made for example by… women's groups… These organisations continue to have a role to play in helping build relationships across Northern Ireland. These contributions will be important as Northern Ireland moves forward to a shared society.
St Andrews Agreement	2006	• No reference to women.

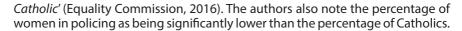|		
Cohesion, Sharing and Integration	2010	• Section 3.41- p22, Places - 'Creating shared spaces and facilities is not only vital in urban areas but is also instrumental in building a more vibrant rural community. In recognition of this, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) currently funds 75% of and the Rural Community Network, Rural Support Networks and NI Rural Women's Networks, which all play a key role in promoting good relations in rural areas.' • Equality Statement, p75 - Duties under Section 75 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act in relation to good relations and equality to promote equality of opportunity between men and women.
Together: Building a United Community	2013	• Introduction - p14 'Good Relations and Equality' - Duties under Section 75 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act in relation to good relations and equality to promote equality of opportunity between men and women. • Section on 'Gender' – 1.27, p17 'Women have made, and continue to make, an important contribution to the political process and have been a named beneficiary group under successive EU-funded PEACE Programmes (1995 to present). The Government remains committed to ensuring the right of women to full and equal political participation and will continue to work towards increasing women's representation in public and political life.'
Stormont House Agreement	2014	• Section 'Outstanding Commitments' - p13, point 69 'Noting that there is not at present consensus on a Bill of Rights, the parties commit to…promote a culture of tolerance, mutual respect and mutual understanding at every level of society, including initiatives to facilitate and encourage …in particular community development and the advancement of women in public life.'

A Fresh Start: The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan	2015	• Section A, point 3.9 p17 'Community Engagement and Prevention' - Development of a programme to increase the participation and influence of women in community development. • Section F, point 39, p38 '…to promote equality and respect and to prevent discrimination… including initiatives to facilitate and encourage shared and integrated education and housing, social inclusion, and in particular community development and the advancement of women in public life.'

Participation is only one facet of a gendered approach to peace-building; such an approach must take account of the specific harms that women face during conflict and in the 'post-conflict' period both in attempting to provide redress for such harms and in ensuring that they do not continue. The narrow focus of Northern Ireland's community relations policy, and the often gender neutral approach, contributes to an environment where gender is not considered relevant to community relations and gendered issues such as domestic and sexual violence are not considered within a community relations framework.

Critique of Community Relations Policy

The gender-neutral nature of community relations policy has been critiqued by the women's sector in a number of consultations (the Women's Resource and Development Agency have consulted on both 'A Shared Future' and 'Cohesion, Sharing and Integration'). Such consultations note that *'the exclusion of women from official policy and structures is a perennial problem, which has in this case been compounded by the remarkable blind spot on the part of those drafting the CSI consultation documents. They appear ignorant or dismissive of the positive role played by women in good relations and conflict resolution in Northern Ireland'* (WRDA, 2010).

A recent document from the Equality Commission considering equality impacts of the Stormont House Agreement (SHA) and the recent 'A Fresh Start' Implementation Plan calls for an intersectional approach to identity in proofing and making policy, recognising that gender intersects with ethno-national identity resulting in differential impacts for men and women. This document also notes that with regard to austerity measures outlined in the Stormont House Agreement that '*gender is a much more significant indicator of differences within the labour market. In other words, being a woman or a man is much more likely to determine location within the labour market than being a Protestant or a*

Catholic' (Equality Commission, 2016). The authors also note the percentage of women in policing as being significantly lower than the percentage of Catholics.

Recognition of intersecting gender and ethno-national identities is crucial in particular to work with those women who may not participate in women's groups but are fundamentally involved within community organising and activism. Recent research conducted with Loyalist women who were active in the flag protests noted that these women stated they felt disappointed by the response of political representatives and men within their community, which had motivated them to mobilise: '*They had felt extremely 'let down' by their political representatives, and maintained that the protests facilitated them in raising public awareness of the issue. They also ensured that they felt that they were actively responding and making a positive difference to their community'* (Byrne, 2013).

Research conducted by the Training for Women Network has also noted the silencing and marginalisation of Loyalist women who had been active within paramilitary groups (Potter, 2008). A more recent work, co-authored by the Institute for Conflict Research for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and published by CRC on the 2014 Flags Protests, engaged with women in the Twaddell camp. It indicates the low public voice of women as a result sexism at the highest levels of politics and within the media spheres and that gender inequality has a *'starkly inhibiting effect on democratic and civic engagement'* (Nolan et al, 2014:92). One interviewee noted: *'When you look at the Haass document, there's no gender balance within that document. At all. It's all male oriented … So how can they talk for a whole community? They can't.'* The report also acknowledges the disproportionate role played by women in normalising societies, communities and families after civic disturbance and violence: '*We have women sitting in the courts, watching to see what sentences are being handed out, because at the end of the day the women are picking up the pieces here.'*

Women who are active in community relations and community development work have also noted a retraction of space for their participation, as such work has become male dominated since the Agreement and the release of (mostly male) political prisoners. Community positions have been filled by men and have subsequently become paid employment. Recent research conducted with women working in community relations and development in interface communities has acknowledged the lower status and visibility that women now have in such arenas: '*there is frequently a lack of respect for women in these roles and their work is also insufficiently valued … this is for instance evident in the proportion of unpaid interface work carried out by women and the*

disproportionate number of men who are paid interface workers. It is also argued that the low proportion of funding for women's groups and projects is an indicator of this' (Blomkvist, 2014). The retraction of space for women to participate within community relations work on occasion goes further than simply the male domination of paid positions to the resurgence of paramilitary control over certain communities (WRDA, 2014).

A physical manifestation of this on the environmental landscape can be found in the gendered content of murals and the value placed on them (Radford 2016). Rita Duffy's mural "Banquet" commissioned by the Arts Council to mark the centenary of International Women's Day on 9 April 2011 is a 30 foot long photographic panelled mural tribute to Women's Suffrage, representing the historical and contemporary contribution made by women in Northern Ireland to equality in education, employment and to achieving democratic voting rights. Its social significance and artistic value was reported extensively in the broadcast and print media not least because of the artist's reputation and membership of the RUA, but also because of its significant recalibration of the gendered nature of the subject of and those artists who create militarised murals within the area. However, it was not long before it's deterioration began to be orchestrated and in 2016 the work had been re-sited and extensively scrawled over whilst other images of masculine armed conflict and military struggles continue to be erected and kept clean of graffiti.

It cannot also be assumed that women do not experience or take part in sectarianism. A project developed by Women's Information Northern Ireland and Community Dialogue outlined the impact of sectarianism on women's lives (WINI, 2015). As well as having valuable contributions to make to eradicating sectarianism there is also a need for gender balance on programmes to challenge sectarianism and identity stereotypes. Furthermore, it needs to be acknowledged that throughout the conflict in and about Northern Ireland, women played a pivotal role in sustaining both pro and anti-state violence. Whilst this is not a key focus for the women's sector, there is a range of OCN and ILM accredited in by the ICR, Trademark, Training for Women Network. In relation to extremism, and within a broader European framework, the Radicalisation Awareness Network[1] is making connections between its working group membership to extend gender awareness. This includes training programmes currently available within the broader community relations sector aimed at addressing these gendered deficits through community education, the development of core skills, effective leadership, mentoring and coaching.

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1   http://ec.europa.eu/ dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_aware-ness_network/index_en.htm sourced 12th June 2016

These include programmes developed in Northern Ireland which contribute to discourses on health and social care; families and communities; and prison, probation and policing.

Within consultation reports and conversations with those in the women's sector for this research the marginalisation of women from community relations policy and practice was noted to have a tangible effect on the ability of the women's sector to engage and lead programmes in improving community relations. If community relations are solely deemed to be between Catholics and Protestants, this effects how woman's groups frame plans for project funding and may put them in a weaker position to apply for and be successful in funding applications. As one participant noted *'we always have to talk about Catholic and Protestant women, we feel we've moved beyond that but we keep getting pulled back when we apply for funding.'*

It was noted that European Peace IV funding programme mirrors the Together: Building a United Community strategy which is focussed on young people and shared spaces, building safer communities and on cultural expression. However, if a gender mainstreaming approach was taken, projects which focus on the marginalisation of young women and the gendered nature of safe space (particularly at night) could lead to innovative programmes.

1325 was emphasised as a means to break the cycle of male-led, gender-neutral community relations actions. The key function of 1325 is to recognise the exclusion of women from traditional peace-building activities and to encourage a gender sensitive notion of participation and peace-building, mainstreaming the principles of 1325 into community relations policy and practice provides a context within which to bring programmes which focus on women to the fore.

The following recommendations for mainstreaming gender in community relations policy and practice have been noted in consultation reports and by participants to this research[2]:

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2   WRDA (2007); WRDA (2014).

- Integrate policies such as the Gender Equality Strategy and Racial Equality Strategy into community relations policy for a more gender aware approach.
- Integrate the principles of 1325 into community relations policy and work.
- Recognise the different impacts of political/sectarian division on women e.g. community and school safety; choices for integrated education; integrated housing and public space
- should gender proof its work.
- Gender champions should be appointed to all government departments.
- Gender equality training should be provided to those involved in creating and implementing community relations policy.
- The Governments of Northern Ireland and Ireland should meet the UN target of minimum 15% of post-conflict spending on women's recovery needs and empowerment, including direct financing to women's civil society organisations.
- There should be a gender perspective developed to reconstruction work in interface areas within a broader context of de-militarisation, peacebuilding and community development.
- All key peacebuilding and reconstruction strategies – including shared • learning with other societies in conflict – should be informed by women's perspectives.
- The women's sector should be facilitated and supported in community relations programmes, creating a safe space for women's participation.

5. 1325 Reviews

Although the women's sector has undertaken a range of activities under specific pillars of the 'Women, Peace and Security' agenda, there have also been a number of activities undertaken which specifically review the landscape of Northern Ireland in relation to 1325 as a whole. These include the; the Inquiry into 1325 (led by NIWEP) and a large scale project led by a coalition of women's groups which produced a 'Gender and Peace-building Toolkit'.

Inquiry into the position of women in Northern Ireland since the Peace Agreement

The Inquiry set out to examine women's role in post conflict reconstruction and made recommendations for the future of an equal role for women in the development of a more peaceful society. It specifically looked at how the principles of UNSCR 1325 are being implemented for women in Northern Ireland. The Inquiry was brought forward by the Westminster Associate Party Parliamentary Group on UNSCR 1325 and the Northern Ireland All Party Group

on Women, Peace and Security. Evidence was gathered on the themes of gender equality, women and electoral politics, women's contribution to local communities, women in decision making and violence against women. The Inquiry generated over 100 pages of evidence gathered from women's centres, the Equality Commission, the Human Rights Commission, the Commissioner for Public Appointments, the Department of Justice Community Safety Unit and the PSNI. Some of the evidence to the Inquiry was heard in closed sessions due to its sensitive nature and this evidence has not been publically reported (this includes statements made on paramilitary control of communities and sexual abuse). The key findings from the Inquiry, (with additional comments by the authors of this report in parenthesis), are:

- The Gender Equality Strategy should include reference to UNSCR 1325 and women's inclusion in post-conflict transformation.
- Commitments must be made to challenging social attitudes towards women and girls.
- The NI Executive should create a regional action plan focussed on the 4 pillars of 1325 to measure inclusion of women in peace-building.
- The under-representation of women in political life continues to be a concern, recommendations to make use of all-women shortlists, challenging political culture, initiatives for 'Gender Champions', support for training and confidence building and awareness raising on 1325 from the All-Party Group.
- Evidence was given of the silencing of women and their marginalisation from community roles.
- Community relations policy, including 'Together: Building a United Community' needs to give recognition to the work of women in community relations and peace-building and support the work of the women's community sector through recognition and financial support. In particular Peace IV should meet the UN minimum standard of 15% spending on women.
- Increasing participation of women must also widen participation and recognise different groups including, BME women, and women with disabilities.
- Dealing with the past must give due recognition to gendered legacies of conflict and their specific impact on women, this could include continued dependence on prescription drugs, reparations or compensation for women who lost the family breadwinner, including their husbands/partners, brothers and fathers and the support the victims and survivors sector can give to women. (It is noteworthy that those women who were not married, but lost their partner or the father of their children as a result of the conflict are ineligible for any compensation. This was also the case for women whose deceased partners had a criminal conviction). In addition, forms of violence during the conflict which were specifically gendered such as tarring and feathering must be recognised.

- The masking of domestic and sexual violence during conflict remains hidden, particularly in communities where paramilitaries (and also members of armed groups and those with access to legally held weapons) continue to operate, these women may not be, or have not been, able to report to the police.
- Strategies for domestic and sexual violence cannot remain gender neutral and must recognise the disproportionate effect of such violence on women.

Strategic Guide and Toolkit to Developing and Applying Women Peace and Security Practice Ireland/Northern Ireland (Hinds and Donnelly, 2014)

The Strategic Guide and Toolkit is the product of the Women and Peacebuilding: Sharing the Learning project which was funded under the European Union PEACE III Programme during 2013 and 2014. It was developed as a cross border (Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland) initiative by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in partnership with the Women's Resource and Development Agency, the National Women's Council for Ireland and the Foundations for Peace Network. The content of the Guide was informed by the views of the approximately 800 women who participated in the project in a series of interactive focus groups held throughout Northern Ireland and the border counties. It also consulted in interviews with government departments and agencies.

The Guide is intended for use by those working in the public sector in Northern Ireland and Ireland to enhance the protection of women's rights and advance gender equality. It aims to help women's realisation of the peace commitments and benefits of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement through the effective application of the principles of UNSCR 1325 and the domestic incorporation of obligations such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Guide is modelled on the themes within the UN women, peace and security monitoring framework. A number of outcomes and supporting recommendations under each of the five themes are presented to support political leaders and policy makers in delivering peace commitments and benefits to women. Although findings and recommendations from the toolkit are presented throughout, some key findings are presented below:

- The Gender Equality Strategy in Northern Ireland and the Ireland's National Action Plan for Implementation of UNSCR 1325 can be the key drivers to show political and administrative commitment to embedding women peace and security issues and gender perspectives in the appropriate range of government policies and strategies.

- Gender budgeting across government, including ring-fenced budgets for actions to tackle gender barriers such as special men's or women's health programmes, employment policy initiatives, provision of childcare facilities, and extension of parental leave provisions.
- Meet the UN target of minimum of 15% of post-conflict spending on women's recovery needs and empowerment, including direct financing to women's civil society organisations.
- All available governmental and inter-governmental mechanisms, across all sectors, used to deliver effective gender sensitive programmes to build and sustain peace.
- The Executive Office should make a statement of commitment to address the needs and interests of women during transition from conflict.
- Gender perspectives should be included in, and inform, all peace-building strategies, institutions and arrangements. A clear commitment to women's inclusion in all conflict resolution and transition/post-conflict transformation arrangements should be evident.
- A future Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, proposed in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement, should offer increased protection and promotion of women's human rights including participation in political and public life and freedom from gender-based violence and abuse.
- The North South Ministerial Council should progress the commitments and spirit of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement on women's participation and gender perspectives.
- Comprehensive training should be provided for senior governmental and non-departmental executives on the international gender equality and human rights obligations, including the principles of UNSCR 1325 and the reinforcing resolutions.

6. Participation

As a result of the influence of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement acknowledged the *'right of women to full and equal political participation'* and *'the advancement of women in public life'*. Unfortunately this commitment has not been backed up by any formal mechanism for implementation. The Agreement was signed in 1998, two years before the adoption of UNSCR 1325, which otherwise could have been used to provide an international framework that might have contributed to stronger outcomes for women.
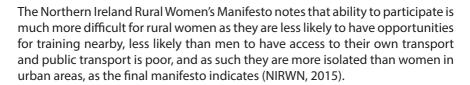
Women's formal political participation in Northern Ireland is below that of other regions of the UK with 28 per cent of MLA's being female as of May 2016 (35 per cent in the Scottish Parliament and 41 per cent in the Welsh Assembly). The Northern Ireland Assembly has noted that *'if placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world.'* There are currently over 1400 public appointments, just 33 per cent of these (464 positions) are held by women (Potter 2015). The percentage of women holding the position of Chairperson of a public appointment Board is 19 per cent. Within the Police Service Northern Ireland women do now occupy 19 per cent of Chief Inspector posts; 22 per cent of Superintendent posts and 6 per cent of Chief Superintendent posts due to assertive action and monitoring.[3]

Under-representation contributes to a sense of disillusionment by women of the post-Agreement society, where women's participation and voices are being marginalised from the community level upwards. Actions to increase women's participation and influence are based on the belief that women play multiple roles in conflict and post-conflict situations, and these roles extend well beyond those of caregivers and victims. As such, many NGOs feel it is crucially important to promote women's agency and build on their potential in peace processes by including them in all levels of participation and decision making, including in political institutions; peacebuilding; socio-economic reconstruction; disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) and development of local communities. This can be evidenced by the work by and with Women's Centres and others working within the community and voluntary sector (see also Pierson, 2015).

Research conducted by the Training for Women Network (Mooney and Billiet, 2013) as part of an evaluation of programmes for increasing participation, highlighted that the majority of (female) participants come to public life through the community/voluntary sector and that many women felt the formal political sphere to be unwelcoming to women. Self-confidence was noted as a key barrier to participation and personal development courses indicated as a route to increase women's participation. Courses in participation were also noted as a means to increase interest in participating in public life in general and knowledge about society and social justice.

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3   PSNI Statistics - https://www.psni.police.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/workforce-composition-statistics/ PSNI Statistics – Freedom of Information request available at - https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/advice--information/our-publications/disclosure-logs/2016/human-resources/psni_gender_breakdown.pdf

The Northern Ireland Rural Women's Manifesto notes that ability to participate is much more difficult for rural women as they are less likely to have opportunities for training nearby, less likely than men to have access to their own transport and public transport is poor, and as such they are more isolated than women in urban areas, as the final manifesto indicates (NIRWN, 2015).

The Women, Peace and Security Toolkit, noted in the previous section, reiterates a number of points about barriers to participation:

- Suggestions of all female decision-making forums are as undesirable as the current situation of under-representation.
- There was a concern that where women are involved in decision-making bodies and agencies, the level of their representation decreases with ascending hierarchy – women become less visible.
- Some women still expressed fears of voicing their views on political issues. There was a sense of implicit – and at times explicit – intimidation if their opinions challenged the political status quo within their communities.
- For women who live at the margins of the community, such as Traveller women or asylum seekers, participation is still significantly more difficult. Hence any strategies to achieve balanced gender participation must also be culturally aware.

Examples of Programmes

LEAD Programme: The WRDA, along with WINI and supported by NIWEP, NIRWN, HereNI and DemocraShe, developed the LEAD (Leadership, Equality, and Advocacy & Democracy) Programme. Based on the concept of active citizenship, this is a three tier programme designed to increase women's political awareness, advocacy, lobbying & representation from grassroots to public office working with women at different levels of engagement to become more effective advocates for the issues that are most important to them. The roll out of the programme is vital so that WRDA and partners can offer a programme that will engage women from all walks of life across communities, to access quality training to become effective advocates for the issues that are most important to them and to enable them to participate meaningfully in democratic decision making processes. The programme content includes training on advocacy and coalition building; leadership skills; negotiation skills, lobbying and campaigning, public policy and political education training. Participation in the programme will effectively support women to actively participate in initiatives both in the community and public sector and ultimately realise their full potential as citizens in Northern Ireland.

Positive Relations Project: Training for Women Network was lead partner for the delivery of a PEACE III funded project entitled the 'Positive Relations Project'. The goal of the project was to engage and empower women to contribute to post-conflict transition, reconciliation and reconstruction across Northern Ireland and the six border counties of Ireland. The project delivered personal development, Peace and Reconciliation and Political Skills and Dialogue training to 23 regions of Northern Ireland and the border counties. The project was needed to ensure a greater participation of women in post-conflict decision-making and activities in the transition from conflict, especially the engagement of women who to date have not engaged in meaningful relationship building. The Positive Relations Project aimed to build the capacity of women to participate through empowerment and skills acquisition on a regional basis in Northern Ireland and the six neighbouring counties of Ireland through clusters of community-based groups working with women.

Recommendations made in various consultation reports[4] to increase participation include:

- A commitment to increase the number of women in decision-making position should be stated in Programmes for Government and complemented by a range of measurable actions.
- Consider the adoption of quotas/targets to increase the number of women in public appointments and as election candidates. Strategies to increase women's representation should include steps to reach women from culturally diverse backgrounds and disadvantaged communities.
- The Civic Forum (as structured into the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement) should be re-established by the Northern Ireland Executive to help include the perspectives of women.
- Lack of access to childcare is regularly cited as a reason for women's inability to participate both in employment and in civic participation. According to research by Employers for Childcare Charitable Group, families in Northern Ireland are paying 44% of their income for childcare for one child, which is the highest amount in Europe (Dennison and Smith, 2013).
- CAJ have recommended that commitments should be made for the inclusion of women in community planning processes (CAJ's submission no. S441, Feb, 2015).

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4   See Mooney and Billiet (2013); Potter (2013); Committee for the Administration of Justice (2015); Hinds and Donnelly (2014).

7. Protection

It is commonly acknowledged that the nature and causes of conflicts internationally are changing. As such, security concerns for women in societies emerging from conflict are changing. In societies moving out of conflict, women engage and are active in movements for justice, the enforcement of human rights norms, institutional reform and the provision of security, yet '*they generally rely on structures that do not encourage them to think about the manifold ways in which they have been victimized*' (Rubio-Marín, 2006). These societies notably lack gender-sensitive mechanisms for interpreting and addressing the structural harms and inequalities which particularly affect women. Ní Aoláin (2006) argues '*the matters that are framed as central issues for resolution in transitional negotiations may only peripherally impact many women's day-to-day lives.*'

Notions of security are broadening to encompass the concept of human security. Human security goes further than strengthening national security in divided societies, the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report identified seven areas of human security – personal, economic, food, health, political, environmental and community. It defined human security as '*safety from the constant threats of hunger, disease, crime and repression*' and '*protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions to the patterns of our daily lives – whether in the home, in our jobs, in our communities or in our environment*' (UNDP, 1994, p4). The United Nations Commission on Human Security's 2003 report 'Human Security Now' defines it as '*the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment*' (p8) without listing the exact form this could take, leaving interpretation in the hands of individual states. However, the individual considered under human security is also gendered. It is recognised that women in conflict situations are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, whilst the normalisation of violence in post-conflict societies can result in heightened levels of violence against women and impunity for such acts. Efforts to strengthen security should include securing the safety, physical and mental health, well-being, economic security and/or dignity of women and girls; promote and safeguard the human rights of women and mainstream a gender perspective into legal and institutional reforms.

Domestic Violence: It has been documented that in Northern Ireland this distinction between 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' violence persisted during conflict and had particularly gendered effects. Ní Áolain and McWilliams (2014) present the example that a sectarian motivated murder of a woman in her own home garnered outrage whereas the murder of a woman from domestic assault gained minimal media attention. Evidence has also shown a much higher rate of domestic assault where a gun was involved due to the much higher rate of legally and illegally available weapons.

The figures for domestic violence in 2012/13 were the highest for incidents and crimes since 2004/05 and show Northern Ireland continuing to have a higher rate than the rest of the UK (Nolan, 2014). In 2011/12 there were 12 domestic-abuse cases reported to the police per 1,000 of the population, rising to 15 in 2012/13 – much higher than the figures for Scotland (11.3) or England and Wales (10). The vast majority of *'worst case'* incidents of partner abuse took place within a heterosexual relationship, with around four-fifths involving a female victim and a male perpetrator. While most victims of abuse (56 per cent) regarded their worst incident as a criminal offence, over two fifths did not, with more than a quarter (29 per cent) believing it was *'wrong, but not a crime'* and a further one in seven accepting it as *'just something that happens'*. Reported domestic violence incidents recorded by the PSNI have continued to increase: in 2014-2015 28,287 domestic incidents were recorded and a further increase to 28,392 was noted in 2015-2016. In fact there has been steady upward trend in recorded incidents since 2004-2005.

A number of programmes have been implemented to improve police response to domestic violence. Footprints Women's Centre and the human rights organisation, 'Participation and the Practice of Rights' have been working with women from the Colin neighbourhood to tackle their concerns around the way in which the PSNI currently approach Non-Molestation Orders. The group has now formed as 'Footprints Women's Movement' and has gathered evidence on the impact of domestic violence in their community and, more specifically the effectiveness of Non-Molestation Orders as a response to domestic violence. Specifically they are attempting to tackle the police notification of Non-Molestation Orders to the victim.

Sexual Assault: Data shows that Northern Ireland is close to the England and Wales figure for reported rapes in 2012/13: 29 per 100,000 in both cases, higher than Scotland which reports 26 per 100,000 for the same year. But the first fully comprehensive review, 'An Overview of Sexual Crimes', published by the Ministry of Justice in January 2013, warned against making comparisons across the UK, because of cultural differences and different recording systems. Prosecution rates for sexual crime remain low and the Criminal Justice Inspectorate (2013) in Northern Ireland estimates that about 5-25 per cent of rapes are reported. Of those reported, just over half are sent by the police to the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland for a decision. Of this number only a small number, around 25 per cent, proceed to trial. The conviction rate for those cases that go to court is 57 per cent.

Socio-Economic Security: Hinds (2011) indicates that Northern Ireland has a gender segregated employment market, with women being much more likely to work in part-time employment: 37 per cent of women work part-time, compared with just 8 per cent of men, and 82 per cent of all part-time employees are women. Employment statistics also take little acknowledgement of informal caring roles, either childcare or care for elderly or ill relatives predominantly

undertaken by women. In addition, the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland reports that the majority of employment complaints concern women being dismissed over pregnancy (Equality Commission NI website, 2016). The gender pay gap also results in overall female median hourly earnings, excluding overtime, being 90 per cent of male earnings. Consequently, women are more vulnerable in the job market and are more likely to be under-paid, under-employed or unemployed.

Mental Health: There is growing recognition of the impact of violent conflict on mental health. In the post-Agreement period this has brought a number of interventions in the field of conflict-related trauma. Statistics show that Northern Ireland has the highest rate of suicide in the UK for both men and women; however the rates for completed male suicide are much higher and much more widely reported. It has also been reported that women are more likely to use prescription medication as a coping strategy, and there is limited data to indicate uncompleted suicide attempts among women as a result of substance abuse (See Hinds, 2011 and Hinds and Donnelly, 2014).

Recommendations for women's security arising from the Women, Peace and Security Toolkit and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions include:

- Reduce delays in the hearing of domestic violence and sexual abuse cases in the Northern Ireland Court Service.
- Examine the possibility of introducing specialist Domestic Violence Courts.
- Address the continued under reporting of crimes related to domestic violence and sexual abuse and violence. In Northern Ireland it is estimated that women do not report such criminal acts in some 80 per cent of cases.
- Voluntary organisations that meet the needs of women without recourse to public money (asylum seekers, refugees, immigrant communities) must be funded to provide support services to victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse.
- Policies and resources must be put in place to support work with refugees/asylum seekers and trafficked women who are victims of gender-based violence and sexual abuse. This should be underpinned by increased collaboration on a cross-Border basis to support victims of gender-based violence, and the recognition of a duty of care towards those women that have fled conflict-affected regions and states.
- There should be support for women's groups and networks in those communities that experienced the brunt of the impact of the conflict in past years, and continue to face challenges of paramilitary influence and anti-social activities, with an emphasis on raising their own awareness and capacity about issues of gender-based violence.
- The Irish Congress of Trade Unions calls for all workplaces to have a policy statement that has clear aims and states the company's commitment to treat domestic violence seriously (ICTU, 2014).

8. Prevention

The role of women as preventative agents in peace building in Northern Ireland is under researched within the women's sector. Like those who have experienced conflict, war and peacebuilding in other jurisdictions, the Northern Ireland experiences of peace building have specific contextual implications for the social, economic, psychological and physical resilience of women and the families in which they provide the core. This is as yet an under developed area of academic and practical concern. Furthermore, it is also not yet acknowledged how important the role of women has been in:

- Supporting child development after the separation of families as a result of conflict;
- The promotion of rehabilitation within families and communities after separation, engagement with criminal justice agencies or restorative justice programmes;
- The social integration of child/youth combatants, street activists or those participating in other forms of civil violence; and,
- Addressing the normalising of trauma.

This is an area of practice based work and action research where the sector might be better supported by a range of departments and non-departmental public bodies, local government agents and commissions whose work in the area of gendered peacebuilding and conflict transformation is currently under par. Such practice is, however, not without problematics. The latest UN Security Council Resolution (2242) emphasises women's role in countering violent extremism. Ni Aolain (2015) refers to this process as a co-opting of the 'women, peace and security' agenda by states which may further marginalise women by making them become informers on their children.

Recommendations from the Women, Peace and Security Toolkit include the need for:

- Support for women who have concerns over family members at risk of becoming involved in paramilitarism, anti-social activities, drugs or related issues.
- Funding for support and re-integration measures for politically motivated ex-prisoners should include a focus on women ex-prisoners.
- A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland should continue to focus on protections around the rights of women.

9. Relief and Recovery

It has been acknowledged that both the participation of women in talks to deal with legacies of the past and the absence of a gender focus within these discussions and subsequent policies and agreements has led to a situation where the gendered impact and legacy of conflict has been left to academics and community groups to address. The lack of women's involvement at the macro-political level in no way adequately reflects their participation in dealing with the past either within victim's organisations and services or within their families and homes.

Most recently, the Legacy Gender Integration Group (a group of individuals based in Northern Ireland community groups and academia including CAJ, RFJ and UU academic experts on gender and victims) constructed a set of 'Gender Principles' for dealing with the past which sets out a set of principles to be applied in discussions and policy related to dealing with the past (see Appendix for the full text of the Gender Principles). These principles emphasise that gender must be fully integrated into any mechanisms which relate to dealing with the past in particular taking into consideration the gendered implications of any such policy.

The Legacy Gender Integration Group report (2015) also stresses that processes to deal with the past must be victim-centred and led; and that structural barriers to participation must be broken down in order to encourage inclusive participation – such barriers may include poverty e.g. requiring material resources to participate or could be linked to gender roles e.g. women feeling less confident in speaking about conflict related deaths with the expectation that male relatives are spokespersons for families (as evidenced within stories included within the report).

WRDA have held three discussion sessions on legacies of the past – two on dealing with the past generally and the other specifically on the Haas-O'Sullivan talks. The outcomes of these discussions, which are documented in their reports of 2007, 2013, 2014, highlighted:

- A distinct lack of legitimate leadership within many communities which is filled by paramilitary groups.
- This continued control of communities by paramilitary groups has a silencing effect on others who are afraid to speak out because of reprisals.
- The erosion of Protestant/unionist/loyalist culture – women taking part in discussions had been involved in the organising of 'flag protests'.
- It was noted that the current decade of commemorations/centenaries has had very little input from, or impact on, women.

- A further legacy of the past was clearly identified as contested spaces. Peace Walls for some were viewed as a necessary safety measure – they provide protection. For others they were the manifestation of an inability to deal with the past, acting as both mental and physical barriers.
- Segregation remains the reality for many women living in both rural and urban areas, although it tends to be more cloaked in rural areas.

Recommendations arising from the reports of 2007, 2013 and 2014 included:

- The British Government needs to break with its official narrative that the conflict in Northern Ireland was not a politically motivated conflict and to accept the applicability of UNSCR 1325. Implementing the provisions of this resolution would help to ensure that attention is paid to women's inclusion in decision-making.
- Re-establishment of the NI Civic Forum in order to provide a stronger civic voice for women.
- Resources should be made available to ensure safe spaces for women to hold honest discussions on sensitive issues without fear of control or intimidation.
- Attention should be paid to support for women who are caring for victims and survivors of violence, particularly in rural and/or Border areas.
- Frustration has been expressed with the way peacebuilding projects 'open up' discussions and then there is little or no follow up. It was recommended that initiatives need to be put in place that maintain channels of communication between women from different communities, whether by holding an annual conference (actual or virtual), creating a calendar of forthcoming events that are relevant and creating update reports that women can access.
- Legacy issues of violence experienced by women during the conflict (either directly or as family members) should include women who suffered punishment attacks; strip searching; exclusion from communities, in addition to the Victims and Survivor Services available for those that were directly injured and/or bereaved during the conflict.
- The lack of women's participation has also been highlighted in the recently published 'A Fresh Start Agreement' which commits to "the development of a programme to increase the participation and influence of women in community development."

10. Conclusions

The literature and reports outlined above highlight that community relations policy has not adequately reflected the needs of women and has failed to take into account international norms regarding the role of women in post-conflict peace-building and conflict transformation. Some recent policy (as documented in Section 4 of this report) has begun to reference the participation of women, however, in general there is a lack of tangible commitments to the inclusion of women. This lack of commitment can be exemplified in the new Northern Ireland 'Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition' Commission, of which only one of the 15 nominees and appointees was a woman.

The Together: Building a United Community Strategy (May 2013) states that

Women have made, and continue to make, an important contribution to the political process and have been a named beneficiary group under successive EU-funded PEACE Programmes (1995 to present). The Government remains committed to ensuring the right of women to full and equal political participation and will continue to work towards increasing women's representation in public and political life.

Meetings of the recently established T:BUC Engagement Forum in March and June 2016 suggested that women and other marginalised groups, should be provided with better opportunities for engagement in T:BUC programmes. Delegates also proposed that government explore how deprivation and the current economic situation act as barriers to peace-building work, particularly the participation of women.

Additionally, The Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland (May 2016) stresses the importance of the equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security but recognises the gap between policy and practice and the concerns expressed about the influence of some paramilitary groups this is now being undermined. The report recommends (recommendation B5) that the Executive's programme for women in community development should be designed not only to enable women's organisations to continue to carry out transformative community development work in our communities but also to ensure that women are equipped to take on more leadership roles in public decision-making.

Without tangible commitments to gender integration in community relations issues across government, there is a role for the CRC to play in raising awareness of important gendered issues in community relations, developing programmes and research which focus on women, and supporting the work of the women's sector in its development of women and community relations work. Recommendations arising from research, consultation and engagement of the women's sector, already highlighted within this report, which are particularly relevant to the work and policy of the CRC include a need for:

- Opportunities to engage with the Department of Communities on recommendation B5 of the Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland and with the *Commission* on *Flags*, Identity, Culture and Tradition.
- More focussed action research and training in relation to the gendered impact of peacebuilding.
- Good relations officers and community planners to support resilience building initiatives, such as the ICR CARE Programme, to promote and extend the capacity of women currently engaged in peace building initiatives in local areas.
- The integration of key practices and methodologies from the Gender Equality Strategy and UNSCR 1325 and 2422 into community relations policy is necessary in order to make community relations work gender sensitive and relevant, and help develop more successful family and community-led preventative measures.
- Recognition given to the gendered experiences and legacies of conflict which may result in particular inequalities and experiences of loss for women.
- Budgets formulated to take account of and make provision for the integration of a gendered perspective (the UN recommends a 15% minimum of budgets to be targeted towards gender programmes).
- Training in gender equality should be provided to those involved in creating and implementing community relations policy.
- The marginalisation of women from peace-building within community relations development work should be recognised and provisions made for the consultation and participation of women.
- Peace-building projects need longer term strategic vision to maintain the good work that has resulted from programmes so far – too often programmes finish and there is minimal follow-up.
- Safe space provided to enable women to come together and discuss sensitive and controversial issues – the fear of reprisal within communities silences many women.
- Mechanisms introduced to ensure that women are participating on an equal footing to men at all levels, from community level upwards.

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Appendix: Gender Principles for Dealing with the Legacy of the Past

1. Gender Integration: Fully integrate gender into the processes for dealing with the past.

A gendered lens must be applied holistically throughout the processes (ie: design, remits, reviews, analyses, decisions). If gender is not integrated from the outset of the process, it will structurally determine that gender does not receive necessary attention and priority throughout the remainder of the process. **Gender parity should be a priority in all institutions and processes dealing with the past. Decisions about the design and implementation of processes to deal with the past must be actively considered for their gendered implications.**

There are clear gender patterns to victimhood and survival. The vast majority of those killed in the conflict were men. The majority of surviving family members are women. Women are a significant presence in victims' organisations in providing and receiving services. Moreover, one's experience of conflict and one's conflict legacy needs are heavily shaped by gender. Victimhood is gendered, as are coping strategies. **Different gender patterns of harm and survival must be recognized in the design of any process to deal with the past and must be further explored and addressed in the conduct of that process.**

2. Process-orientation: Understand gender and dealing with the past as a process, not an event

The experience of victimhood and survival is enduring and the pursuit of accountability is a long running process. New mechanisms must account for the victims' experiences of the processes that have gone before and will come after. Pre-determined deadlines for mechanisms fail to account for the importance of process. **Victims and survivors must be enabled and supported to engage with mechanisms to deal with the past in their own time.**

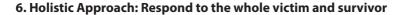## 3. Empowerment, Participation, Ownership and Control: Prioritise victim ownership and control of process

Engagement with official institutions to deal with the past can be a deeply disempowering experience that is compounded by the lack of attention to gender. In order to ensure that processes to deal with the past do no harm, avoid retraumatisation, and contribute to the empowerment of victims and survivors, ownership and control of the process by victims and survivors must be ensured throughout. It cannot be segmented into isolated outreach events or consultations; including separate components that concentrate only on gendered harms. **Resourcing existing localized support, close to victims and survivors, for example through the victim-led organisations in the community that have existing relationships of trust with victims and survivors, ensures victim ownership and control.** Another is crafting processes that allow victims and survivors to talk about their experience in ways that reflect their gendered reality.

4. Inclusivity: Be inclusive and accommodate complexity

Victimhood and survival are highly personal, complex, and gendered experiences. Hierarchies of victimhood fail to account for this complexity. They instead encourage narrow and prescribed accounts and categories of harm. Recognizing diverse, shifting, multiple and gendered forms of harm, victimhood and survival, is essential to the construction of an inclusive and gender-sensitive process to deal with the past. **Mechanisms must utilize fair procedures that respond to the diversity of victims' individual needs, including their gender-specific needs, and avoid treating all victims as the same.**

5. Addressing Structural Obstacles: Recognize and redress structural obstacles to inclusion

Multiple harm, poverty, and the absence of appropriate multi layered support are powerful material obstacles to the inclusion of victims. These obstacles are heavily gendered, given women's disproportionate experience of poverty and traditional roles. **These obstacles require direct, practical and material responses, as well as coordinated strategies, in order to be addressed.** Unmet expectations of victims from previous failed processes to deal with the past are equally powerful, though less obvious, structural obstacles to inclusion. Victims who engage in good faith must not be failed again.

6. Holistic Approach: Respond to the whole victim and survivor

Legalistic and medicalized approaches to dealing with the past can label victims as 'sick' or 'service users', and as passive and marginal to official processes, instead of the active agents for truth, justice and recovery that they are. Complex experiences of victimhood and survival require holistic and integrated responses. A process to deal with the past must respond to the whole gendered person and to the full range of related needs. Mechanisms need to be designed to reduce the likelihood and impact of retraumatisation for those engaging in the process. Multidisciplinary teams, competent in a number of areas, are best placed to avoid placing victims in duplicate and multiple interactions with official institutions. Effective advocacy for victims is essential to ensuring effective participation. Counselling, peer support and alternative therapies are essential for ensuring that victims are adequately supported to sustain participation. Moreover, recognising and valuing the existing resources and coping strategies of victims within their communities and community-led organisations is critical to this approach. **Services, support and acknowledgement must be included as essential elements of reparations to victims.**

7. Giving Voice and Being Heard: Honour individual stories

Processes to deal with the past often privilege very particular types of testimony, that is shaped around the linear recounting of the 'objective facts' of certain isolated events – often solely focused on deaths. This type of testimony can jar, however, with fuller, richer and broader accounts of victims and survivors seeking to tell their stories and to be heard and that can provide important documentation of the facts about and impact of harms. If a gendered lens is not incorporated in how a story is gathered it will impact the rest of how a case is addressed. Official processes must be ready to hear, to honour and to document, in their diversity and complexity, the stories of victims and survivors. Done properly, such processes can counter broader dynamics that result in silencing women and victims. **Practical measures to this end include provision for protected statements that can be used in all of the processes to deal with the past, and that can be edited or added to by victims and survivors as necessary.**

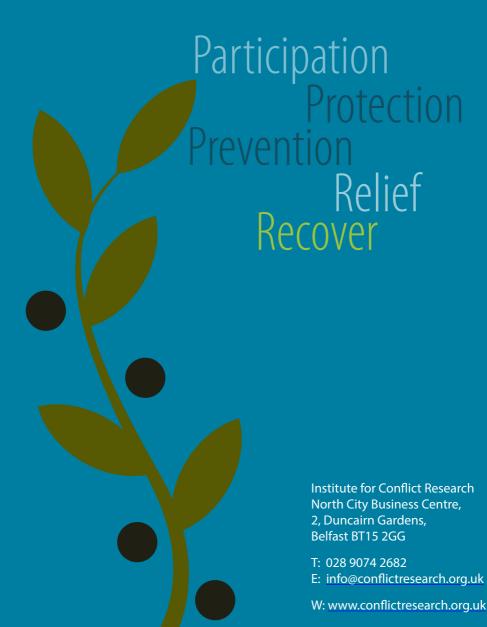## 8. Macro Analysis: Be attentive to the bigger picture

Individual stories of victimhood, loss, coping and survival emerge at multiple points from processes to deal with the past. In addition to honouring these individual stories, the continuities and patterns across these individual stories must also be recognized. Individual stories emerge from tapestries of gendered and other forms of structural inequality, community impact and family disruption. A process that privileges these individual stories to the exclusion of broader dynamics of inequality and conflict legacy will miss an essential dimension to ensuring a participative and gender-inclusive process to deal with the past. Investigation and information recovery processes must be harnessed also to building the 'bigger picture' of the conflict and its legacy. Agreements with multiple strands of process need to work collectively to facilitate such engagement. **Ensuring that gender is both integrated into each of the themes as well as identified as a specific theme for investigation are practical measure to this end.**

9. Equality and Diversity: Value gender expertise and lived experience

An over-reliance on legal, investigative and medical expertise in recruitment will likely work to preclude precisely the women and men who have direct and lived experience of the issues. Criteria used to determine skills, including for academic roles, must be transparent in order to ensure fairness and community confidence. Criteria that result in all- or largely-male teams of investigators and other relevant personnel cannot be accepted. Relevant expertise in recruiting, which includes gender expertise, should be recognized not just in terms of formal qualifications, but also in terms of experiential learning and leadership. Victims and survivors should be recruited for positions leading and involved with carrying out the processes. In addition, gender training should be provided to all personnel, at all levels, engaged in dealing with the past. **As a matter of priority, a specific group responsible for overseeing the integration of gender into dealing with the past should be established. Mechanisms for dealing with the past cannot be staffed and led in ways that reinforce existing gender and other inequalities.**

10. Local and Global Learning: Craft bottom-up local responses that draw on international good practice

It is crucial to have localised bottom-up approaches that are informed by international experiences. This requires the inclusion of local NGOs, the voices and experiences of victims and survivors in the design and implementation of the processes. The silences and exclusions of women and gender that have characterized approaches to dealing with the past in several places over many years need to be learned from and not replicated. Nevertheless, the development of relevant international standards, in particular state obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and guidance for states in the CEDAW General Recommendation Number 30 and the Women, Peace and Security Resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation, and the Nairobi Declaration on Women's and Girls' Right to a Remedy and Reparation, has fostered improved practice in recent years. Improved international practice has focused on the inclusion of women and men in all processes to deal with the past, the recognition of gendered harms experienced by women and men, and the acknowledgment of gender as a structural factor of conflict and dealing with the past. L**ocally appropriate processes to deal with the past must draw on this international learning, together with the substantial local resources and knowledge within the community and existing victims' organisations.**

Participation

Protection

Prevention

Relief

Recover

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