

Gender & Dealing with the Past: UN Resolution 1325

Conference Report

25th June 2014 at Grosvenor House



For more information, please contact:

Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium

c/o Falls Community Council
275-277 Falls Road
Belfast, BT12 6FD

Tel: 02890202030

Fax: 02890202031

Email: info@bcrc.eu

Website: www.bcrc.eu

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Gender & Dealing with the Past: UN Resolution 1325

In 2010-11, BCRC commissioned Dr Laurence McKeown to complete a piece of research with the title *Gender at the Interface*. A response to the research findings was issued by BCRC and a follow-up seminar was held in November 2012 between BCRC staff/steering group and some of the research participants. The 25th June 2014 *Gender & Dealing with the Past: UN Resolution 1325* event at Grosvenor House was organised as a continuation of this process with a belief that addressing issues around gender in relation to peace, conflict and dealing with the past are essential to achieving a peaceful and sustainable future in Belfast and beyond. The event included contributions from a range of speakers and we would like to thank all those who took part in the event.

Agenda:

- Welcome & Introductions: BCRC Chair **Deirdre Hargey**
- Presentation of *Gender at the Interface* Research: BCRC Manager **Joe Marley**
- Introduction and overview of UN Security Council Resolution 1325:
Catherine O'Rourke (University of Ulster)
- Presentations by Panel of Speakers:
Eibhlín Glenholms (Tár Anall)
Teena Patrick (PUP)
Dawn Purvis (HTR)
- Q&A Chaired by **Bronagh Hinds** (DemocraShe)
Panel members: Deirdre Hargey, Joe Marley, Catherine O'Rourke,
Eibhlín Glenholms, Teena Patrick and Dawn Purvis

Following requests from a number of participants at the event as well as those who couldn't make it on the day, we've compiled the event contributions in this document.

Many thanks to the speakers and panel members who agreed to share their speaking notes.

Event Contributors:

Deirdre Hargey

BCRC Chair and Belfast City Councillor

Joe Marley has been employed with BCRC since its inception, initially as a Senior Development Officer and more recently he was appointed as Project Manager. Joe brought to the project his combined experience in both community development and conflict resolution work. Prior to taking up post with BCRC he was a Development Manager with a community development agency and before that he worked as an Interface worker in North Belfast.

Dr Catherine O'Rourke is Gender Research Coordinator and Course Director of the LLM Gender, Conflict and Human Rights at the University of Ulster Transitional Justice Institute. Her book *Gender Politics in Transitional Justice* (Routledge, 2013) examines questions of gender and dealing with the past in Northern Ireland in comparative perspective. She conducts expert work on gender, conflict and UNSC Resolution 1325 for UN Women.

Eibhlín Glenholms is a lifelong Republican activist and feminist from East Belfast. She has previously worked as the National Organiser for Gender Equality for Sinn Féin. Eibhlín currently works addressing the inequalities faced by former political prisoners of the Conflict and in 2012 was asked to join the legislative Forum for Victims and Survivors of the Conflict.

Teena Patrick left school at the age of 14 with no qualifications and went to work in Edenderry Mill as a spinner. She applied and was successful for a position in Gallagher's tobacco factory York Street where she sat an exam for accountancy and was moved into a clerical post. Coming from a family with a strong military link she too joined the forces part time at a time when the province was suffering the worst of the Troubles. During this time she also changed jobs and started employment with the health service, serving 29 years with them and also serving the British Army for 15 years part time. Teena however felt that she needed to do more and became active in the community working with young people along the Springfield interface where she lived. She took up a position as Leader in charge of Woodvale Y.E with the B.E.L.B and worked on a cross border project. While working with this group she also became involved with Interaction and the mobile phone network. Teena is trained in negotiation, community development and at present is a mental health counsellor.

Ms Bronagh Hinds is a Senior Associate with DemocraShe and an Honorary Senior Research Practitioner in Queen's University School of Law. She is Chair of Institute of British Irish Studies at University College Dublin, on the Board of the Glenree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation and a member of the Gender Advisory Panel of the Office of the First and deputy First Minister. A co-founder of the Women's Coalition Bronagh was in the negotiations for the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and lead introduction of s75 as the first Deputy Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. Recent projects (some with colleagues) include the independent mid-term review of Ireland's National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325, a Strategic Guide and Toolkit for applying 1325 in Northern Ireland, a cross-border strategic leadership programme for women in Ireland and work on the Syrian conflict.

Dawn Purvis is a former MLA for East Belfast and leader of the Progressive Unionist Party. Dawn is the Chair of Healing Through Remembering and has a number of other voluntary commitments. She is Programme Director for Marie Stopes Northern Ireland, the first centre of its kind on the island to offer an integrated sexual and reproductive health service that includes early medical abortion within the law.

BCRC and the *Gender at the Interface* Research

Joe Marley (BCRC)

I think that it is appropriate that I give a bit of context and background about today's event and even the history of BCRC.

The Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium (BCRC) is a citywide cross-community partnership working to assist conflict transformation at Belfast's interfaces. The project was set up in April 2007 and took about a year in the making through extensive negotiations with republican, loyalist and community activists from across Belfast. It has since focused on a number of key areas of work, including:

- Intercommunity Engagements (creating opportunities for engagement on issues of commonality in an effort to forge cross-community alliances)
- Practitioner Work & Initiatives
- Shared History & Dealing with the Past Events
- Research Projects & Policy Development
- Training & Capacity Building
- International Study Visits/Activities.

During the previous funding stream, December 2008-December 2011, BCRC organised 31 training & capacity building courses for 376 participants as well as 28 intercommunity engagements & events for approximately 728 people and 10 shared history/dealing with the past events to over 320 people.

The overarching mission of BCRC is focused on two parallel processes:

- 1) To provide an integrated response to tensions at interfaces and to prevent outbreaks of violence through fostering and expanding cross-community strategic alliances.
- 2) To enhance within interface communities conflict resolution skills, local leadership capacity, democratic involvement, and reconciliation efforts and to share future work on the legacy of the conflict and social problems faced by these communities.

In 2008 BCRC organised 4 workshops across the geographic areas of Belfast which was attended by in excess of 76 community based organisations.

Our intention was to capture what local practitioners and residents felt were the key priority issues as defined by them. It is no coincidence that these issues were mirrored in each part of the city. The following issues were what people wanted to be put at the heart of the community agenda and addressed:

- Community safety and policing
- Housing and regeneration
- Youth and youth provision
- Education and employment
- Health

Some of the workshops raised issues about political representation or the lack thereof and 2 of them discussed the integration of migrant workers and minority ethnic communities and emerging issues in South and East Belfast. The sometimes negative role of the media was debated and the impact and implications their portrayal of interface and working class communities can have. These issues are every bit as relevant now as they were in 2008.

Two other observations were recorded during the workshops - one was the age profile of personnel of BCRC through our staff, steering group and Key Area Contacts – with the exception of me of course. But seriously, the need to get more young people involved in community development and conflict resolution work.

The second was the apparent absence of women in leadership positions, not only in BCRC but of those working in this field. These two points were acknowledged by the project and gave cause for us to self reflect and undertake a critical examination of our own structures and processes.

This presented big challenges for the project because of the diverse make up of it but also big opportunities with regards to addressing the issues highlighted.

It's not an exaggeration to say that the Belfast workshops acted as a catalyst for change in terms of the importance we gave to gender dimensions and youth in interface work.

Since that time the project has developed an 'Emerging Leaders' programme which has given opportunities to over 34 young people to get more involved in community development and conflict resolution work enabling a youth focussed perspective on big issues.

We also commissioned research (conducted by Laurence McKeown) in 2010-11. The objectives of the research, as outlined by BCRC, were to:

- analyse the gendered dimensions of interface conflict resolution work
- assess the strengths and limitations of current conflict resolution work from a gender perspective taking a number of projects including BCRC as case studies
- examine the opportunities for BCRC to be more effective by taking account of gender in its work
- make recommendations for a gender strategy for the organisation if the findings support the need for this

Laurence McKeown presented the initial findings of the research back to BCRC at a planning morning which was quite frankly a Rude Awakening about how some female community activists perceived the BCRC project, ex-combatants and ex-prisoners.

Some of the points made in the feedback we accepted as being totally valid and agreed the need for change, others we contended were a bit more complex and reflected the reality of finite resources and competitive funding streams.

I'm embarrassed to say that it was during this period that I first heard of UN Resolution 1325 – over a decade after it had been adopted.

In November 2012 we did a follow up meeting with some of the research participants to discuss the report, to try and create a shared understanding of some of the issues, findings and recommendations highlighted in the report and to agree next steps or collective action in moving things forward.

Today's event and the event we held two weeks ago are out-workings of that engagement and this will continue to be a work in progress.

We accept there is a disparity between men and women in terms of representing work on interfaces, that men are much in the foreground and women in the background. This does not reflect or do justice to the work women do at interfaces or in many other spheres of community life and this needs to change.

In closing, I would like to offer evidence of what I just said, for today's event I had asked many women who I work with on a regular basis if they could attend. Of those 9 told me they couldn't attend – their reasons:

3 had confidence issues and I was told "don't like big events like that Joe, I'm happy to plough away here in the background".

2 couldn't get time off work.

4 stated that the kids are now off school and they couldn't get them minded.

Their hard work, energy and contribution to conflict resolution work, peace building and community development will not be represented here today but I'm sure you will agree our panel will reflect the many women who make positive contributions across Belfast and beyond.

Introduction to UNSCR 1325

Dr Catherine O'Rourke (University of Ulster Transitional Justice Institute)

Introduction and overview of UN Security Council Resolution 1325

UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000)

- Applies to UN System and to UN Member States
- Four Pillars:
 - Increased participation and representation of women at all levels of decision-making,
 - Attention to specific protection needs of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict contexts,
 - Gender perspective in post-conflict processes: The necessity of looking at the needs of those affected by conflict through a gendered lens, thereby highlighting the specific though diverse needs of women who are victims and survivors of conflict, not just as a generic group,
 - Gender perspective in UN programming, reporting and in SC missions.

UNSC's emergence from demands of women's orgs

Significance of coming from UNSC – the institution charged with dealing with crises in international peace and security, and capacity to authorise sanctions, peacekeeping missions

Recognition of the work that women and women's organisations were doing to respond to crises of peace and security

- Conflict prevention
- Community survival during conflict
- Conflict resolution
- Reconstructing societies after conflict

THE RESOLUTION

- Absence of women from formal spaces of decision-making and peace talks, and need to redress that, absence of women in leadership positions (talks about peace agreements and their implementation)
- Protection needs of women in conflict and post-conflict (violence that continues in communities and families post-conflict)
- Need for gender perspective in DDR, to ensure that programming and activity addressed specific needs of women
- Rehabilitation and recovery, i.e. dealing with the past
- The first resolution on women, peace and security, Security Council Resolution 1325 (SCR1325), was unanimously adopted by United Nations Security Council on 31 October

2000. SCR1325 marked the first time the Security Council addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women; recognized the under-valued and under-utilized contributions women make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building. It also stressed the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security.

Official Activity to Implement UNSCR1325 in Northern Ireland

- National Action Plans on UNSCR1325
 - UK – no mention of conflict in the North
 - Ireland – reference to supporting women's civil society organisations in the North
- OFMDFM Strategy for Victims and Survivors – no reference
- NIHRC 'Dealing with Northern Ireland's Past: Towards a Transitional Justice Approach' – no reference
- Haass Proposals: no reference to UNSCR1325 or gender
- OFMDFM Gender Equality Strategy references 1325 in terms of the following strategic objectives:
 - To achieve better collection and dissemination of data
 - To achieve gender balance in government appointed posts
 - To ensure the active participation of women and men in peace building, civil society, economy and government
 - To achieve equal value for paid work and equitable participation in unpaid work

Civil Society Activity to Implement UNSCR1325 Locally

- Peace III Women and Peacebuilding Project (CFNI, WRDA, NWCI)
- All-Party Group on UNSCR1325 at the Assembly
- Inquiry into implementation of the Resolution
- Work to integrate UNSCR1325 into dealing with the past

Potential to integrate UNSCR1325 into Dealing with the Past

Questions of Process:

- Inclusion of women in relevant decision-making
- Consultation with women's organisations to inform decision-making
- Building alliances across sectors in civil society

Questions of Substance:

- How to recognise women and their experiences in their diversity?
 - women as secondary victims;
 - women as community or civil society activists;
 - women as (former) combatants; and
 - women killed in the conflict.

- What harms were experienced most routinely by women during the conflict?
- What was the impact of the state's neglect of its protective role for those harms against women? And of the impunity that certain individuals enjoyed due to their (para)military status, on harms such as violence in the family and home?
- What were women's survival strategies in the context of such harms?
- Have these harms ceased in line with the cessation of conflict?
- What different demands and requirements in an official process to deal with the past have been generated by gender-specific experiences of harm?
- To what extent does official and broader civil society work to deal with the past recognise these needs and respond to them?

Panel Member Presentations

Eibhlín Glenholms (Tár Anall)

The background to UN Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace and Security” regarding women and children in post Conflict environments came about when Namibia held the chair of the Security Council of the United Nations for a month. Netumbo Ndaitwah, Minister of Women’s Affairs, strongly advocated that Namibia use the opportunity to address the issue of civilians in Armed Conflict.

The Security Council called for the adoption of a gender perspective that addressed the specific needs of women and girls during repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post conflict reconstruction.

This gave a boost to a conglomerate of 18 NGO’s to form a Women’s Peace Coalition.

The hyper masculine structures of conflict and post conflict scenarios means that those who have the *least* control of the Conflict but suffer the greatest during Conflict, are also the greatest to suffer post Conflict. Let us be clear – UN Resolution 1325 has no teeth – the UN has no way of enforcing it, but its strength lies in how it raised consciousness and focused attention on the issue, and this it has done on a global level.

It is a tool if only the Authorities would pay heed to it and use it to identify and promote women leaders and ensure their voices are heard.

Women are at greatest risk during conflict but post Conflict instability, internal power struggles and a spike in domestic violence calls for gender sensitive training by all parties involved in reconstruction.

Pam de Largy, head of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) has said that “the biggest task - post Conflict - is the reconstruction of the human psyche”.

This clearly illustrates the importance of gender sensitive training with those agencies engaging with women and girls post Conflict.

We have recently seen how, following the instructions of a cleric in Syria in 2013, the ISIS in Iraq have issued a *fatwa* to the parents of young Muslim women instructing them to give their daughters up to the ISIS for the sexual gratification of the (male) ISIS members, yet the world has remained largely silent. This is where 1325 should and could be used effectively to focus global attention on the plight of these women under threat.

I would also point out that whilst the British Government is a permanent member of the Security Council, Britain refuses to include the 6 Counties in its schematic approach as it would be recognition of what we all know – a Conflict took place here.

The post-1968 violence dwarfs any previous conflict in scale, intensity and duration. More people have died during this Conflict – 3,289 by the end of 1998 – than in any similar period in Ireland over the past two centuries, with the possible exception of the 1922–23 Irish Civil War. In addition, over 40,000 people have been injured, representing almost 3 per cent of the population. If we extrapolate these figures to Britain, some 111,000 people would have died, with 1.4 million people injured. This represents just under half of all British deaths (265,000) during the Second World War. Further extrapolating the deaths to the United States, some 526,000 would have died, more than died during the Second World War (405,000) and nine times the American war dead in Vietnam. And yet Britain refuses to accept that a Conflict took place here?

In respect to the Republic of Ireland – during the consultations it held in 2013, it invited guests from Burundi, Syria etc but issued no invitation to any women's group north of the border. When challenged on the exclusion of women who had endured a Conflict less than 90 miles away, it stated that there were Constitutional issues and that the North should be included in the British Consultations. So we here, in a post Conflict situation, which saw an International Agreement, the GFA - addressing how we move forward from Conflict – we apparently had no Conflict.

Teena Patrick (PUP)

Women's Full and Equal Political Participation

In the Good Friday/ Belfast agreement all political parties affirmed their commitment to the mutual respect, civil rights and religious liberties of everyone in the community. They set out eight 'key areas' under 'rights, safeguards and equality of opportunity.'

As I and other women in my community see and feel this, they have undelivered their commitment which is the 'right to women's full and equal political participation'. Reneging on this commitment to women has become common place as it is yet to be meaningfully addressed by either party.

Let's have a look at how different N.I would be today if this had been implemented. Women wouldn't be struggling to have their voice heard at a political level. We would have more than 19% of female MLAs representation of females which is 21 out of 108. Recent calculations by Bronagh Hinds shows that at the current rate of female representation it would take 16 election cycles and 65 years before MLAs in N.I. have 50% female representation. N.I is lacking behind countries such as Ruanda where their parliamentary election saw women win 45 of the 80 seats. Now in a society where we claim equality for all that is a ridiculous situation.

What effect is this actually having on women of N. I.?

Gender neutral policies are being developed frequently such as the new shared future document Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) and the Victims Strategy, both of which had no mention of women in them.

Were women not part of the past conflict and are they not needed to contribute towards the future of peace?

Margaret Ward Director of WRDA believes: *"this gender neutral approach fails to acknowledge the factors that prevent women from being able to compete on equal terms with men and fails to consider the use of positive action measures to redress inequalities."*

The report of the Consultative Group on the Past failed to acknowledge women. Their report on the Past failed to acknowledge women by having a gender neutral approach, yet women's role within conflict and then in peace building and conflict resolution is very different to that of men.

The women of Northern Ireland feel they have no voice and are invisible. Etain O'Kane in response to the dealing with the past in Northern Ireland wrote; *'Women were not recognised for their roles and experiences throughout the conflict and therefore their invisibility cannot be mirrored in the post conflict structures. We expect the structures proposed to deal with the legacy of the past take this as their starting point and seek to address this gross inequality.'*

At a recent seminar Avila Kilmurray, Director of the Community Foundation for North Ireland, put it precisely that, *"decision making needs stripped back and opened up."* If we did have more women in

political life there would be more gender perspectives and input into policies with less ignorance as to the role women play in their communities, families and in public life.

Women are also mentioned under 'economic cultural and social rights' within the Agreement. There was a commitment that there would be policies promoting social inclusion, in particular community development and the advancement of women in public life. Again this promise has not been kept instead the old community jobs that the women did for free now with peace money from Europe have a wage attached to them and guess what men have moved in to do the community work previously done by women. And why is this? There is no provision built into the positions to allow for the social factors that may occur for a woman around family life. I'm not saying men shouldn't be applying for the posts but why can't the women work alongside them.

Another example of the role women should be having in the community is in allocating the Social Investment Fund, a fund for supporting communities in increasing employment, tackling mental health, increasing services and facilities and addressing problem areas. In North Belfast the steering group has got eight men and no women making decisions on the funding for that community even though women did apply. The Bill of Rights and the Single Equality Bill were to be implemented in Northern Ireland to further protect these socio economic and cultural rights but these have never come to pass, with no clear political will for it to ever become a reality.

16 years on and women's socio economic rights are being chipped away even further with the current welfare reform bill. The proposal is that payment of child benefit will go straight to the head of the household, in many cases the man. A woman will have to prove her husband or partner is abusive before the payment will be split or moved, not an option for a lot of women in the cycle of abuse.

The recession has also put a halt to improvement in the gender balance of the workforce. The female employment rate in Great Britain registered a slight increase in 2011-04, the trend in Northern Ireland was in the opposite direction, with a decrease of 0.5 per cent cited in the recent Community Relations Council Peace Monitoring Report. But how can the government fulfil their commitments to women? There are many mechanisms that could be used to ensure women's inclusion; quotas, women only candidate lists, composition of women on boards and committees such as the forthcoming review of public administration in local councils.

There are also international mechanisms that can be used such as the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 Women, Peace and security. UNSCR 1325 was adopted in 2000 and is an important watershed marking the unique and disproportionate impact of conflict on women. It highlights the critical role of women in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peace building and post conflict reconstruction and governance. UNSCR 1325 makes use of the four Ps:

- Participation
- Prevention
- Perspectives
- Promotion

Although it was adopted two years after the 1998 peace agreement in Northern Ireland there are instruments that could be implemented regardless and there have been further peace talks where UNSCR 1325 could have been adopted since such as the subsequent St Andrews and Hillsborough agreements.

UNSCR 1325 does not apply to Northern Ireland at the present time due to a disagreement over the definition of 'conflict'. Regardless of this opinion there are still safeguards within UNSCR 1325 that would benefit the women of Northern Ireland. Government would have to take into account the perspectives of women and promote Sec 75, this would have brought women more into line in public life and positions. It also would have helped prevent women being used, and omitted from a conflict that we all suffered from in one way or another by having them fully participate in the country's future.

Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and current Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region of Africa (a job never held by a woman before) declares, *"We have seen first-hand in countries from every region the critical role women play as peace builders, as community organisers, as voices for those who are marginalised. We are convinced that strengthening women's leadership at every level is key to advancing peace, sustainable development and human rights in the 21st Century."*

In conclusion, the main issues for me are:

- 1) That Northern Ireland had a conflict and is coming out of a conflict that has a legacy which needs to be dealt with. UNSCR 1325 does not rely on recognition of an 'armed conflict' which seems to be the opt out clause for non-implementation of UNSCR 1325. This needs to be recognised by the UK Government
- 2) The most important provision is participation of women in post-conflict settings. This is an added tool to recognize what women went through during the period of protracted conflict as well as the need and right for full and equal participation in the post-conflict setting.
- 3) This is particularly relevant in relation to communities which are still struggling with the legacy of the conflict, poverty, education, resources, cultural identity and also with gender inequality.

Dawn Purvis (HTR)

Women met and continue to meet across the divide women and often talk about the things we have in common; the struggles faced on a daily basis in terms of having enough money to feed the family; trying to get work that fits around minding the kids; ensuring your kids are safe getting to and from school; feeling safe and secure in the community; domestic violence and sexual abuse; worrying about partners' or husbands' safety. Women have built alliances across communities based on shared experiences of hardship and struggle. Many of those relationships have endured to this day and have been acknowledged as sowing the seeds for the peace that we now take for granted.

Now we are in the process of building peace and that would seem to be proving much more difficult than many of us ever expected it to be. The single biggest issue impacting our lives is dealing with our past. Many of us talk about it. But really do not want to deal with it. Why? It is too difficult. Draw a line in the sand. Move on. Pull the shutter down the shops shut. But it isn't our past really? You can't open a paper or turn on the news every day without hearing about something. It is our present and for those most affected by loss or hurt it is the daily reality of life. And the more difficult something is to deal with then the more we need to talk about it.

When anyone mentions 'dealing with the past', most of us usually think about the victims and survivors of the conflict. What is dealing with the past? Is it to create some form of truth commission so that victims and survivors find out the truth about what happened to them or their loved ones? Is it a memorial, a museum to the troubles? Is it a forum where people can tell their stories, their experience of the conflict?

I think it is all of those things yes. But it is also much more. The flags dispute and the parades issue are symptoms of our failure as a society to deal with our past. Rioting at an interface is another symptom; ongoing sectarianism, violence, feeling intimidated or unable to speak out in your own community; feeling unsafe in your own home; punishment beatings; getting put out of your home or the country; rape; sexual abuse.

That is what dealing with the past is about – let's face it, there is no single shared view of what happened here and there is no consensus on how the violence started or how it ended; nor does it matter; we are not all Irish or all British and neither are we going to be – but we all want to live in a peaceful better future and that is why we need to deal with it. And deal with it in a way that addresses all of those issues.

Let's look at interfaces for just a minute...they are the mental and physical barriers of our society's failure to deal with the past.

A recent government commissioned report (*Attitudes to Peace Walls*, UU, June 2012) highlighted the difference in attitude to those with choices, i.e. the general population, who avoid the walls and those who live in the shadow. Some of the key findings included, three quarters of the general population would like to see the walls come down now or at some point in the future compared with just over half of those who live beside the walls. A third of the general population thought the walls were necessary because of the potential for violence compared with two thirds of residents.

Generally the residents framed the issue of peace walls in relation to violence with many thinking more police and CCTV would be necessary should the walls come down. The walls were a solution to a security problem. The general population on the other hand framed the issue in terms of segregation where the walls were the problem and bringing them down was the solution to ending the division that was a causal factor of conflict.

For residents, small things like shops, where they are situated, how people access them, how people go to work or school, which side of the wall the library is on, where the doctors surgery is are all defined by these daily battles, the small victory of one over the other - as long as everything belongs either to them or to us and never to all of us these battles for territory matter more than anything else. Asserting community identity through the use of flags to mark territory or display communal strength can cause tensions and undermine social cohesion. Similarly in denying opportunities to display community identity can erode a sense of belonging (as seen recently with our flag protests). Sectarianism is nurtured as segregation reinforces difference, ignorance, lack of understanding and simply not knowing one another. To suggest a shared future on an interface may be to invite ridicule, and certainly to be reminded that it can only happen in the long term. In reality that means it is put on the long finger. While fear is the main issue, no matter how deeply hidden, anyone talking about putting the hand out across the divide is accused of putting the community at risk. Those who do take the step to cross the divide often take the long way round. Driving a circuitous route rather than walking through an open gate.

People who have choices tend to avoid the walls and the surrounding areas, for those without choices the chances of poverty are always greater. In the context of health and social well-being, each of the neighbourhoods with peace walls in Belfast, are in the top 10% of the most socially and economically deprived electoral wards in Northern Ireland.

If you live or work in the area the impact of educational disadvantage is tangible – high unemployment, particularly youth unemployment; high levels of ill-health including mental ill-health and dependency on prescription drugs and anti-depressants; higher rates of teen pregnancy; high rates of dental decay in children under 5; high levels of alcohol and drug misuse; higher incidence of crime and criminal activity. The impact on the individual in terms of lifetime opportunities is devastating, the impact on the community is destructive and the impact on society is fragmented, increasing inequality and very expensive.

Our failure to deal with the past is in actual fact our failure, to recognise and respect our neighbours' right to co-exist; to live with us; to celebrate their culture; to remember their dead; to acknowledge that their experience of the conflict *is* not the same as mine but *is* equally valid; to explore what we did to each other and resolve ourselves never to repeat it. That is what peace building is all about and it is not easy. Having difficult conversations *between* communities and, I think, having difficult conversations *within* communities are some of the toughest challenges we still face in the way ahead.

And importantly the voices of women need to be included in these difficult conversations. Women's experience of the conflict and the uniqueness of that experience needs to be included.

I have heard from many women, and their experience of the conflict all have one thing in common – it is different from how men experience conflict.

In one example, a young girl was kept off school by her mum to go and do the washing in the launderette. This meant walking by an interface area. There were two other girls in the launderette who knew she was from a different community. One of the girls went out and didn't come back in. When the young girl had finished her washing and heading home across the interface she was chased by six girls who ripped her bag of washing apart, threw it all over the road and gave her a kicking.

In another example, a woman was at a house party one night and one of the local paramilitaries arrived. He made a play for her and she turned him down. He followed her home talked his way into her house and forced himself on her. He did it again and again. Weekend after weekend. The woman was forced to hide in her own home with all the lights out or in friends' homes at the weekend knowing he was on the prowl. She approached one of his colleagues for help and the next weekend was forced out of her home with rumours spread that she was a police tout.

A group of kids were building a bonfire near a row of houses. Two of the women living in the houses asked them to move it as the fire was too close and it might damage the houses. Paramilitaries arrived at the women's homes and told them to shut up or move out.

Some of you may recognise these stories. I think they emphasise the way women's experiences are different. They also beg the question - where are women's voices when it comes to making decisions about the community or the future?

I think women are uniquely placed to address some of these difficult questions and have those difficult conversations around dealing with the past. Where the peace process tends to be top-down in terms of the political agreement, the actual peace-building has tended to be bottom-up and that is where women have created the space and been actively contributing in the community, in voluntary roles and through community organisations and women's groups.

We talk a lot about dealing with the past but the current political 'talks' are exclusive and will not lead to any comprehensive way to resolve the issues. Politicians cannot deal with the issues on their own. Victims and survivors cannot deal with the past alone. Security forces and other ex-combatants can't resolve this alone. We all need to be involved in the discussions as to how we deal with the past.

Listening to another person's experience of the conflict and how that impacted their life is something we do in Healing through Remembering. We have been in existence now for over ten years and we have produced lots of research and reports on our experience of how we deal with the past. We know that when people from many diverse backgrounds come together to discuss very difficult issues in a safe space that good things come from that. Building relationships is building the peace. One of the key lessons from our work is that dealing with the past is a process which must be informed by core principles.

From our learning we produced our core values and principles for dealing with the past and they have guided and informed us in maintaining an inclusive process and reaching consensus between different groups while addressing some very difficult issues. I don't propose to go into them all but just to highlight that when a process is inclusive, open and transparent and where the participants are diverse and committed to the future, setting realistic and hopeful goals, then anything is possible.

Participation is key. Just to touch on finally and I hope we get an opportunity to explore this further...

Participation, although in itself one of the four pillars of UNSCR1325, it is a theme that runs through the core of the resolution and crucial, I believe, to the realisation of the others. Without women in positions to influence and shape policy and make decisions on rehabilitation and post-conflict reconstruction, including new governance, economic and social structures and in political and public life generally then progress on the others will be slow if at all. As I said previously women experience conflict differently than men. These experiences are valuable in ensuring that the kinds of repression and violence women often experience during conflict are not perpetuated by the structures of peace.

To quote Christine Chinkin, Professor of International Law at LSE, "On the one hand, inclusion of women's concerns emphasizes their relevance to the restructuring of social order and the role of women in making it effective. On the other hand, silence in a peace process on the position of women, perpetuates and institutionalizes their marginalization... It means women have to work...in a post-conflict world defined and sustained through the parameters of men."