# GENDER AT THE INTERFACE

A report compiled for

Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium

By

Laurence McKeown

May 2011

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European Union
European Regional
Development Fund
Investing in your future

*"If I can't dance I don't want to be part of your revolution"*

Emma Goldman

(1869 – 1940)

*"The first problem for all of us, men and women, is not to learn, but to unlearn."*

Gloria Steinem

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

*"Something which we think is impossible now is not impossible in another decade."*

Constance Baker Motley
(First Black Woman in the U.S. to become a Federal Judge)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

In conducting this research I spoke with a very broad range of individuals across north, south, east, and west Belfast, all of them women with the exception of one man who was part of a group interview. All of them work in and with communities in one capacity or another.

When I initially made contact with them I described not only what the research was about but also told them of my own personal background as a former republican political prisoner. I felt in this instance, given the subject matter, that it could have some bearing on their decision to participate or not in the research. All of us carry 'baggage' and I think it best to be upfront about that from the beginning and then let others decide if they still want to engage. No one refused to speak to me.

Some of those interviewed would be close, in terms of political perspective, to one or other of the constituencies that make up the Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium (BCRC); others less so. Some had a very detailed knowledge of the work of BCRC and have engaged with the organization, know individual staff or management, and/or attended workshops or discussions hosted by BCRC, whilst others had a vague notion of what the organization does. Nevertheless, all agreed to engage with the research. In fact I was humbled by the welcome I received in all areas, the honesty and openness displayed, the trust placed in me to treat their input with integrity, and the very apparent commitment each and every one of them has to better their communities through the work they do whether on a paid or voluntary basis. A very big thanks to you all.

I promised all those I interviewed that their comments would remain anonymous. I would, however, like to include a list of contributors at the front of the report but only after they have had a chance to read it once the BCRC staff and management have agreed the final document.

The other researcher involved in this project was Joanna McMinn. Joanna's contribution was in terms of setting the broad historical and socio-economic context of women's issues, providing a working definition of gender, assisting in compiling a programme of work for a focus group meeting, and facilitating that meeting. All other aspects of this report, including any errors, failings and/or omissions are my responsibility alone.

Finally, thanks to the staff and management of BCRC who facilitated all my requests for information and interviews.

**Laurence McKeown**

May 2011

*"I asked a Burmese why women, after centuries of following their men, now walk ahead. He said there were many unexploded land mines since the war."*

Robert Mueller

# INTRODUCTION

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

I stated in my application for the tender to carry out the research that I start from the position that 'gender matters' and that my approach to the research would focus on the conditions – the structural inequalities - that inhibit active and meaningful participation by women in conflict resolution work at the interfaces and what could be done to promote and support their participation.

Structural inequalities influence the extent to which women can engage in social/communal/political processes on the basis of: relative poverty; gender-based and socially prescribed obligations (child care; family support; domestic duties/commitments); and the distinct socio-economic, political and social inequalities between men and women in post-conflict societies, where structures, systems and processes are often created and dominated by men and where women only find room for engagement as 'token women' or through dogged perseverance.

The challenge is therefore to ensure that the development, interpretation, and implementation of any programme regarding gender awareness and creating gender equality addresses these structural inequalities. Those (women) who have not

previously engaged with conflict resolution work at interface areas will be unlikely to participate in the future unless there is a clear understanding of the daily-life realities and obstacles they experience and research conducted without that awareness would serve only to reinforce the current (oppressive) status quo. In other words it a "systems problem", not a "women's problem" and this research should not add to the latter.

*"I ask no favors for my sex .... All I ask of our brethren is that they will take their feet from off our necks."*

Sarah Moore

# METHODOLOGY

### *Theoretical underpinnings*

My approach to research is very much influenced by life history, action research, and feminist methodologies. These are theoretical approaches which are very much concerned with the 'role of the researcher in the research process' and 'the role of the researched' in the formulation of the findings and outcome of that research. Such theories give more authority to those 'being researched'; making them subjects of the research rather than the objects of it. What is crucial is the rapport the researcher has with the participants in the research; the greater that rapport the more relaxed and willing the interviewees will be to speak openly and the information gathered will be much richer. It will also be much more genuine as the interviewee will not be saying what they think the researcher wants to hear but what it is they want to say. It does not mean that the views they express are accurate, will not be contradicted by the facts or by the opinions of others, or open to different interpretations, but it will be their 'truth'.

The role of the researcher is to then make some sense of it all and in that regard I see her/his role, in the main, as being very much that of a 'facilitator' - in the gathering of information (facts, opinions, fears, hopes, perspectives and so forth), the processing of that information, and then assisting in the flow of it between the participants in the research and those interested in the outcome of the research. That exchange of information in itself changes the nature and outcome of the report and is why I regard research and research reports as being very much a process rather than a once-off, static, investigation into a topic. The findings of such reports are there to be engaged with and that engagement, if positive and pro-active and, most importantly, involving the subjects of the research, leads to a new awareness and new set of social relations.

## *The Research Process*

The methodology adopted in this research was qualitative.

At the commencement of the study a group meeting was held with the project manager and 4 of BCRC staff to: get a fuller understanding of how BCRC originated; what form its organisational structures take; what challenges it faces in its day to day operation; and, why the organisation was looking at issues of gender and what had prompted that.

That meeting with BCRC personnel was supplemented by a reading of the appropriate literature including BCRC reports from public events and workshops they had organised.

On the basis of those conversations and desk research I formulated my overall approach to the research. I believed that what would be most productive would be to locate gender in a broader context of; women working on the interface, women in community development, and the interactions and experience those women have of working with BCRC.

A series of interviews was then carried out with female[1] community activists in interface areas in north, south, east, and west Belfast. The interviewees were selected on the basis of:

- suggestions made by BCRC staff,
- knowledge of the subject; including the women's sector, community development, and interface work,
- individuals I already knew who I believed were well-placed to offer constructive but critical comments on the issues being researched, and,
- thereafter through a 'snow-balling'[2] approach

A total of 27 people, external to BCRC staff and management, were interviewed.

The majority of interviews were conducted on a 1-1 basis. In two instances two interviewees were present together, one interview where three interviewees were

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[1]   Given the nature of the research I sought to interview only women but on one occasion one man was interviewed as part of a group interview. In terms of those selected as interviewees there are many others involved in similar type projects who could have been chosen but I believe would have produced the same findings.

[2]   A 'snow-balling' approach in research terminology refers to the process whereby in the course of the interview process you ask interviewees to suggest others who they feel would also be able to offer an insight, view, or alternative perspective, on the topic being researched.

together, and one interview where 6 members of an interface group were interviewed together.

The 1-1 interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and those containing two or more interviewees, from between 60 – 75 minutes. The interviews were recorded and later partially transcribed. Whilst this process is much more labour-intensive than other approaches that could have been adopted I felt that in this instance it was called for as it provides a much higher quality and depth of engagement.

I initially made contact with the interviewees either by phone or email but before meeting for interview forwarded them the details from both the tender for the research and my application to it so that they would be fully aware of the nature of the research, the areas for discussion, my approach to the research, and my background (both academic and historically). No one I contacted refused to take part in the research.

I also had a 1-1 interview with the project manager, one of the staff, and one of the Management Committee during this period.

Interviews took place between December 2010 and February 2011.

The interviews were semi-structured but based around the 4 objectives as outlined by BCRC in its terms of reference for the research;

- • To analyse the gendered dimensions of interface conflict resolution work.

- • To assess the strengths and limitations of current conflict resolution work from a gender perspective taking a number of projects including BCRC as case studies.

- • To examine the opportunities for BCRC to be more effective by taking account of gender in its work.

- • To make recommendations for a gender strategy for the organisation if the findings support the need for this.

In early February 2011 a progress report was presented to BCRC staff.

In late March a focus group meeting, consisting of 17 or those interviewed earlier on a 1-1 basis, was held (see Appendices A & B).

In early April a summary of the findings was presented to BCRC staff.

On the 10 May a final report was presented to BCRC staff and management.

*"There are very few jobs that actually require a penis or vagina. All other jobs should be open to everybody."*

Florynce Kennedy

# BELFAST CONFLICT RESOLUTION CONSORTIUM: ORIGINS, STRUCTURE, MISSION, OBJECTIVES

"Promoting a citywide and inclusive approach to conflict transformation"

### The BCRC Mission

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

- To provide an integrated response to tensions at interfaces and to prevent outbreaks of violence through fostering and expanding cross-community strategic alliances.
- 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.

The Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium (BCRC) was set up in April 2007 to provide a strategic citywide approach to conflict transformation. The project aims to assist and complement existing grassroots organisations, provide practical assistance and training opportunities and enable the sharing of best practice. BCRC has developed a citywide practitioner network to provide an integrated response to tension at interfaces and to develop best practice for conflict intervention. One of the project's overarching aims is to build cross community strategic alliances to address disadvantage and social problems in interface communities

### BCRC background

The need for the BCRC project was initially identified by local activists from loyalist and republican backgrounds engaged in direct conflict management at interfaces across Belfast. Their contacts began through intermediaries and developed over time into mobile phone networks and then face to face meetings. After more than a year

of dialogue they came together to form the BCRC in April 2007 to ensure that interface communities were not left out of the ongoing peace process.

During its initial phase, the project went through a process of relationship building and the development of guidelines and strategies for future working. This also involved extensive consultation with local communities living in interface areas across Belfast, something which has been key in enabling BCRC in its continued work.

The needs of communities at Belfast's interfaces were clarified in a series of geographic workshops carried out by BCRC in February 2008. The workshops confirmed that residents citywide want support to develop strategies for shared actions on social and economic issues as well as on safety and security issues. They also indicated the desire for ongoing cross-community contacts and conversations. One further emerging theme was the need to engage with statutory providers on a cross-community and citywide basis in order to strengthen the position of local communities.

There was also recognition of the need for actions to support social inclusion of women, young people and minority ethnic communities. BCRC aims to address the issues identified through its ongoing community engagement by enabling local community activists engaged in conflict management to move towards shared strategic actions across communities and across the city.

BCRC recognises that good community relations constitute an essential building block in securing an improved social and economic future for all.  It also recognises that good community relations will not develop overnight and will require a collaborative, interagency and intercommunity approach.

### *Project focus*

The BCRC project is primarily focused on interface areas across Belfast. These are disadvantaged areas that are classified as areas of greatest need in the Noble indices and are experiencing high levels of multiple deprivations. These are also areas that are likely to be characterised by high levels of sectarian and racial crimes and tensions. The communities in which BCRC is working have been deeply affected by the conflict and many of the areas have suffered physical dereliction as a result of the conflict. On-going tension and violence and the lack of inward investment continues to impair the communities' economic, social, and physical progress.

## BCRC aims

The project operates on the basis of a two-pronged approach, i.e. by complementing direct conflict resolution and interface interventions with broader conflict transformation and community development measures. BCRC has identified the following 5 primary aims:

- To prevent interface tensions and violence through empowerment of local community leaders and residents from diverse backgrounds.
- To improve the quality of life for all of Belfast's interface communities.
- To assist in the process of transforming Belfast into a post conflict society.
- To work with communities to ensure participation and endorsement of a citywide community development approach to conflict transformation.
- To internationalise Belfast's experience and expertise, establishing it is an exemplar of best practice in the field of conflict resolution and conflict transformation.

## BCRC objectives

Along with the aims above, the following six objectives guide the work of the project:

- To proactively strengthen and enhance the sustained support and participation of skilled individuals in a steering committee representative of Belfast's different political and religious communities.
- To facilitate and support participative engagement in a conflict resolution/transformation process on a citywide basis through the involvement in networks and the development of new networks and fora if required.
- To develop and deliver training and capacity building programmes which address the needs of interface communities, community activists and local conflict resolution practitioners across Belfast.
- To approach conflict transformation from a social justice and equality framework which integrates cultural diversity, gender, and youth issues throughout the programme.
- To influence policies and strategies that impact on interface communities and forge sustainable interagency approaches to interface issues citywide through advocacy and lobbying.

- To document, analyse and communicate our work and draw out best practice through experience and learning locally, nationally and internationally.

## Project structure

The BCRC staff team is given operational direction by the lead agency, Falls Community Council, and its Project Manager. Strategic direction is provided by Falls Community Council along with the other partner organisations, Charter NI, EPIC and Intercomm as well as by the BCRC steering group. In addition, BCRC's practical interface work is supported by its cross-community and citywide Key Area Contact network.

## Key Area Contacts

The BCRC has developed a Key Area Contact structure to provide a strategic response to interface tension and violence. An early warning system and mobile phone network have been put in place citywide which enables a joined up approach to dealing with interface incidents. There are currently 20 primary Key Area Contacts, covering South, East, North and West Belfast. However, at times of crisis and disputed parades, the BCRC, through its constituent groups, can mobilise up to 200 local volunteer practitioners to manage potentially violent situations.

## BCRC Staff

The project currently employees a team of 8 staff which is given operational direction from the project manager and the lead agency, Falls Community Council, as well as strategic direction from its steering group and partner organisations Charter NI, EPIC and Intercomm. The vast majority of BCRC's staff and steering group, and its Key Area Contact volunteers, live in interface areas and are also extensively involved in local groups as members of committees and as volunteers.

Project Manager - **Joe Marley**
Administrator - **Jessica Blomkvist**
Financial Administrator - **Breige Murphy**
Development Officers - **Seamus Corr, Mark Vinton, Brian Watson,**
**Sam White, Claire Hackett** (Policy & Research)

*BCRC Steering Group*

John Bunting, Frankie Gallagher, Deirdre Hargey, Winston Irvine, Conor Keenan, Liam Maskey, Robert McCartney, Gerry McConville, Billy McQuiston, Sean Murray, Gerry O'Reilly, Tom Roberts and Jim Wilson. The role of Chairperson of the Steering Group rotates periodically.

*Project funding*

The current phase of the BCRC project is supported by the Peace III Programme, managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by the Community Relations Council/Pobal Consortium. The project builds upon the successful pilot that was delivered April 2007-June 2009, supported under the Peace II funding stream.

*"How good does a female athlete have to be before we just call her an athlete?"*

Author Unknown

# GENDER AND GENDER RELATIONS

Sometimes it is hard to understand exactly what is meant by the term "gender", and how it differs from the closely related term "sex". To put it simply, 'sex' refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women whereas 'gender' refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. In other words, 'male' and 'female' are sex categories while 'masculine' and 'feminine' are gender categories. And as gender is socially constructed we have the ability to alter it – if we wish.

### Gender:

"... is determined socially; it is the societal meaning assigned to male and female. Each society emphasizes particular roles that each sex should play, although there is wide latitude in acceptable behaviours for each gender." (Hesse-Biber, S. and Carger, G. L., 2000, p. 91).


"... is used to describe those characteristics of women and men, which are socially constructed, while sex refers to those which are biologically determined. People are born female or male but learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men. This learned behaviour makes up gender identity and determines gender roles" (World Health Organization, 2002, p. 4).


"... is the division of people into two categories, "men" and "women." Through interaction with caretakers, socialization in childhood, peer pressure in adolescence, and gendered work and family roles women and men are socially constructed to be different in behavior, attitudes, and emotions. The gendered social order is based on and maintains these differences" (Borgatta, E.F. and Montgomery, R.J.V, 2000, p. 1057).

*Gender Relations:*

"... refer to a complex system of personal and social relations of domination and power through which women and men are socially created and maintained and through which they gain access to power and material resources or are allocated status within society" (IFAD, 2000, p. 4).

"..... although our sex is the result of a biological lottery, the inequality gaps are not. Rather, they are constructed by society and assigned to us at birth. 'Gender', and all that word implies today, is … what it means to be a boy/man or girl/woman in today's society: what constitutes 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. But - crucially - the two genders are not alike in value or status. Throughout the world, men still hold a higher status in society than women. In fact, gender itself pivots on a power relation: the height of masculinity - a 'real man' - is when it is furthest away from the 'depths' of femininity. While the level and forms vary, women and girls in every society on earth have less access to opportunities, resources, and political power than men and boys - not because of sex, but because of gender - something that we create." (Kat Banyard p.3)

**Sources:**

Banyard, Kat (2010), The Equality Illusion: The Truth About Women and Men Today', London, Faber and Faber.

Borgatta, E.F. & Montgomery, R.J.V. (2000). Encyclopaedia of Sociology (2nd ed., Vol. 2). New York: Macmillan Reference, USA.

Hesse-Biber, S. & Carger, G. L. (2000). Working women in America: Split dreams. New York: Oxford University Press.

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). (2000) An IFAD approach to: Gender mainstreaming: The experience of the Latin America and the Caribbean division. Rome, Italy: U. Quintily S.p. A.

World Health Organization. (2002). Integrating gender perspectives into the work of WHO. Switzerland: Author.

*"The emotional, sexual, and psychological stereotyping of females begins when the doctor says, 'It's a girl.'"*

Shirley Chisholm

# GENDER: STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES AND THE IMPACT OF THE PEACE PROCESS, POLICY-MAKING AND FUNDING

To change gender inequality requires an understanding that there is more to it than an individual experiencing discrimination; we also have to understand structural inequalities, and how they impact on women in different contexts, in order to see what policies are needed to bring about substantive equality.

## Examples of structural inequalities

### Economic Inequality

Trade unions established a 'family wage' in the early 20th century to protect male workers' wages from the threat of lower paid women workers. This led to the 'male breadwinner' model that has persisted over a century despite changed times. Similarly women during the Second World War in Britain were a 'reserve army of labour' forced back into the home after the war, so that men could have jobs. Segregation in the labour market, where gender is a structuring principle, means that there are men's jobs and women's jobs, and still to this day women are paid less. The unpaid caring work in the home and the community, which women provide is part of the sexual division of labour, unpaid work done out of love and care for others. Paid work in community development posts, which during the conflict would have been held largely by women, are now more likely to be held by men. Looked at as a structural issue, gender inequality precedes, justifies, and maintains, the economic and financial differences between women and men.

*Educational inequalities*

Where you were born, how well educated your parents were, their connections and wealth, the environment you grew up in – all these things, sometimes referred to as cultural capital, contribute to educational achievements of children and adults, irrespective of intelligence and natural talents. The impact of class and socio-economic status on educational opportunities, for both boys and girls, is often overlooked as a structural inequality. Yet young women from working class areas, even when they perform well at school, still face gender inequalities in the labour market, where there is a marked concentration of women in low-paid and part-time work.

### *Gender policy-making*

The concept of bringing gender issues into the mainstream of society was clearly established as a global strategy for promoting gender equality in the Platform for Action adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing, in 1995. Gender mainstreaming was conceived as a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. However, in practice, governments have tended to move towards gender-neutral policies, which mask gender inequality and maintain the status quo.

The OFMDFM gender strategy 'Gender Matters' illustrates this approach. Early versions of the Gender Equality Strategy tended towards this gender-neutral approach, as it focused on equal opportunities for both sexes, and confined its scope to 'men and women, those with dependents and those without and the transgendered'. The approach failed to acknowledge the factors that prevent women from being able to compete on equal terms with men and failed to consider the use of positive action measures to redress inequalities in the workplace and in public life.

(Margaret Ward, Women's Resource and Development Agency, in briefing notes to OFM/DFM, 2007). Whether this was from a mistaken belief that women are now equal to men and therefore do not require special treatment, or from a mistaken reading of Section 75 to the effect that women and men have to be treated the same in all respects, or some other reason is not clear. But in effect, the 'Gender Strategy'

used the concept of gender to depoliticise and mask the unequal power relations between women and men.

### *The Peace Process and funding*

It is widely recognized that women bear disproportionately the consequences of wars around the world, and while the political conflict in the north of Ireland has been small by global comparisons, it remains true that women deeply affected by the conflict, endure lifelong social and psychological traumas.

A vibrant women's community sector in Belfast, Derry and in rural areas, has worked for the empowerment of women and communities through the many years of political conflict, drawing on philanthropic bodies, government funding and funding associated with the peace process.   However, mainstream funding for promoting women's equality has diminished significantly since the Good Friday Agreement, placing the infrastructure of the community and women's sector under considerable strain, and marginalising the issue of women's equality.   From 1996 onwards, government departments side-lined the women's sector and have ignored the impact and importance of recognising why gender matters, whereas a gendered analysis of the impact of political conflict on women reveals hidden issues, for example, the mental health needs of women and their increased use of prescription drugs. There is evidence that living in a society in transition from conflict contributes towards women's mental ill-health and over- use of prescription drugs, yet such subjects are rarely raised by researchers or by statutory agencies. The British Household Panel Survey (2002-2004) assessment of those in N.I. developing a risk of mental illness found women to score higher in all categories in the employed, unemployed and long-term sick. Women were often the sole providers for their families during the conflict, leading to an increasing number of female heads of households, which in turn further impoverished women (Women's Resource and Development Agency Report). In addition, women are under-represented in many areas of the workforce, concentrated in part-time and low-paid employment and may need special training to enable them to access the labour market.

*Peace-Building and Post-Conflict*

The under-representation of women in public life and more particularly in bodies concerned with post-conflict reconstruction means that the official discourse surrounding representations of the Troubles ignores the varying roles played by women and discounts the important role that women within families have played in maintaining community cohesion. The under-representation of women in decision-making processes and structures throughout the island of Ireland 'severely limits the potential role of women in peace building and reconciliation work' (Crawley and O'Meara: Gender Issues in the Peace and Reconciliation Programme (Peace II): NDP Gender Equality Unit, 2002).

The effects of demilitarization on women and men are different and this needs to be taken into account. The release of prisoners has had an unacknowledged impact upon families and much of the strain involved in adjustment has been borne by women as wives and mothers. There has been pressure on women's resources exerted by men in local areas and a need to protect women's spaces and work for women.  In particular, the question of who has power, who is seen to have power, and how power is exercised in this context is often not addressed.

Evidence from many conflict zones reveal an increase in domestic violence as paramilitary and military structures are stood down and former combatants demobilised. There has been a 36% increase in domestic violence levels in 2005-2006 from 2004-2005 and rape statistics, while under-reported, reveal yearly increases since 2000/01 (PSNI Central Statistics Unit). A gendered understanding of the nature of violence is important, as is the inclusion of gender-based violence within Peace III.

It is now also widely recognized that women need to play an equal part in securing and maintaining peace. To that end, they must be empowered politically and economically, and be represented adequately at all levels of decision-making. This has been reaffirmed by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Security Council resolution 1325 (See Appendix C), which requests Member States to increase the political representation of women; include them in decision-making, peace negotiations and conflict-resolution mechanisms.

*"'I hate discussions of feminism that end up with, who does the dishes,' she said. So do I. But at the end, there are always the damned dishes."*

Marilyn French

# FINDINGS

As outlined in the Methodology chapter my approach to research gives a much more central role to the 'researched'. In more conventional research reports the opinions and views expressed by the interviewees would be confined to selected quotes used to back up the conclusions of the researcher who had 'interpreted' what the participants had told him/her. I believe that hands a lot of power to the researcher; s/he becomes the 'authority' rather than the subjects of the research. I therefore include below the words of the interviewees themselves. I could have placed them as an appendix but that would be again to relegate them to something subsidiary or peripheral to the research rather than being the central plank of it. In the Summary and Conclusions chapter I then look at the interviewees' comments in a more concise form and offer my analysis and conclusions.

In this manner the participants in the research, if given the opportunity to read the report, will see that their views were fully reflected. They may wish at that point to add to them, qualify them, or challenge the views of others contained in the report. They may wish to challenge me or add to my understanding. They would hopefully want to engage with the other subjects of the research – the management and staff of BCRC. And that is the richness of research if it is regarded as a process rather than a once-off investigation.

The quotes below have been divided into broad categories and as stated in the Methodology Chapter are anonymous. They are also randomly intermingled between the various interviewees.

### The Women's Sector

I understand why people have criticised OFMDFM's gender strategy – it's an appalling, dreadful document – but whilst I can see how some would come forward and say we need to talk about women well yes, but we can't just replace gender with

women. We've got to look at how that operates in terms of equality. If you've got limited resources and you're going to put them towards women, which women are they going to benefit? Do an impact assessment and use Section 75 categories because what then comes in to play is political affiliation, religious background and so on. Whenever you bring those into play with gender then you're looking at the deprivation that continues unabated and will cause huge social problems ahead. So keep in mind equality. Human rights as well, of course, is another concept to keep in mind when we think about these things in terms of economic inequalities and impoverishment and what that does to our communities and how women have to carry the heaviest burden of that which is the case.

I think that gender has come in because it's seen as more politically correct in terms of the equality discourse in that if you're talking about women someone pipes up and says, oh what about men? But the problem is that it then becomes how that new narrative affects people's perceptions. Arguably gender covers men and women but if we're looking at pay for instance women would still show up as being underpaid in comparison to men. But the term gender seems to underpin the premise that there's an equal playing field unless you prove there isn't. The women's movement focused on the inequities for women in a patriarchal society and I think the use of gender almost depoliticises that and certainly in policy terms it has been used to depoliticise those issues.

I wrote years ago about the women's sector and basically how, like the voluntary sector generally, its architecture is in place because of the nature of funding over time. At each point of releases of funding the groups applying had to be 'cross-community' to be favoured. The women's sector was seen as apolitical and promoted as such and that was its strength as far as funders were concerned. It kept itself out of politics until of course the Women's Coalition was created. The grass roots women's sector enabled the coalition's election. But the coalition envisioned a strategic woman free of sectarian inequalities, a figure that doesn't exist. Or maybe she appeared to exist in the coalition because of its mainly nationalist, middle-class public face. An unintended consequence of all this was that feminists around the world thought, 'oh the answer in the north – and in any conflict is to get a women's party'.

Some women's sector organizations gained some benefit during the war because they accepted much needed resources and, with notable exceptions, stayed away from political issues in the process. What did organizations do with that benefit? In what way was equality promoted? I think that the answer that local groups would

give is that they benefited the neighbourhoods they worked in and the women who used them. This is true enough but questions about the wider sector remain, as they do for the voluntary sector in general. In what way did it take on the state in any way to advance greater equality? I think that some developments in the sector are a legacy of the war and of the state's management of it. So when I hear of the women's sector being disadvantaged and I support campaigns for stronger funding I'm also aware that the sector does not have the political function it once had. A problem for the sector now is that it has to deal with an administration led by parties involved in politics which many previously steered clear of. So organizations have got to sort themselves out in relation to that. Meanwhile, the small women's groups in working class republican and unionist communities suffer whilst it appears that ex-prisoner organizations are better placed when it comes to funding criteria. All of this, of course, is about the share-out of pennies from the public purse whilst billions go to the bankers.

The women's sector was very clearly sidelined from about '96 on by the ongoing politics because the focus was on all-party talks so gender and general social issues weren't looked at but Making Belfast Work and quasi-government agencies, looking at who had the power and who they needed to target, overlooked women. Women generally weren't there and weren't really at the negotiating table on behalf of women when some of these things were being decided.

I think that some people think that because we (in the women's sector) got so much government money that we were completely depoliticised. I don't think that is the case. I feel we battle many social justice issues but there aren't many allies out there. We've got to make more headway in terms of politicians understanding the significance of the work of women's groups.

There's a strategic call to keep a focus on the absence of women from political representation and there's an anxiety about using gender as that seem to erase that absence and weaken the strategy. I can see the advantage of wanting to keep the word, women, retained in as many places as possible. I also see the value, both theoretically and practically, of gender because gender includes both masculinity and femininity and as a construct gives us all hope to understand better how these relations manifest and operate in society. So if anyone wants to retain 'women' then by all means go ahead, there's not enough awareness of women's inequalities. On the other hand if gender makes people feel more comfortable and it facilitates debate then that's useful too.

There are deep-rooted intersectional inequalities in our society but in the women's sector it may be difficult to say that as it can seem you have taken up a position, a political position. This is unfortunate because issues such as poverty are social justice issues.

But if you look at the international NGO scene the talk is all about investing in women at the grassroots. The whole United Nation's 1325 is about investing in women and looking at an analysis of conflict and how it can be resolved by including women in peace negotiations. If you go to the likes of Liberia and they're talking about women on the ground and women's peace huts and Northern Ireland is seen as a model but it isn't a model when it comes to gender issues because they see the Women's Coalition and there's the assumption that that trickles down whereas the coalition came from that but there's been huge difficulties in the political realm and the grassroots as well are very different. And Roisin McGlone spoke at a conference I was at in Liberia and she was very passionate about it but I said yes, but she's not typical of the role of women in conflict resolution. But they wouldn't have seen that because what they will have seen is this woman who does an awful lot of work negotiating parades every year and will transpose that to women around whereas I don't see the evidence of that.

Money has got less in general but Peace has been difficult for women because women have been doing a lot of that work for a long time but the demands of Peace 3 make it very difficult for them to fit their work into that and tend not to go for it and that's been the largest source of money. The women's sector is very heavily dependent upon government funds. In terms of Peace the grants are either too big or too small; it's hard to get a salary to employ someone to do work on the ground.

We use the word gender, but we still use the word women. We met with a Junior Minister from OFM/DFM some years ago and he said he liked the term gender as it seemed to imply an equality between men and women and I said, no it doesn't, and I wrote a briefing paper and sent it to him because I had wanted OFM/DFM to commission research on the difficulties but the Equality Commission then said they were going to give guidance and their report was meant to be launched last March but hasn't been.

I would go back to UN resolution 1325 and what it says about gender balance. We're not saying women have to do it all because we're better at it but what we are saying is women have to be there in equal numbers. And if you're looking at community development work or interface work or whatever a distribution of where women are, it might be on the board, it might be the paid workers, it might be the volunteers

but it cuts from the top down and women have to be in those decision-making roles as well. They can't just be the foot-soldiers. I think 1325 could be a powerful tool and we've spent years lobbying to have it applied to Northern Ireland.

My aim is to get away from the notion that talking about gender equality is a way to blame someone – the 'someone' being men. Masculinity of itself is not a bad thing or to blame for inequalities between women and men. It's a value-free term. It is the enactment of masculinity as a set of values and practices that needs to be looked at. It can be difficult to see that it does not have to carry moral opprobrium. Where I start with is that masculinity doesn't refer to the same thing for all men. For working class men, for instance, loyalist or republican, other social identities come in to the fore at different times as well. There are questions for women there too though. Why is it, for instance, that loyalist female ex-combatants appear to be invisible? And what's going on within loyalist communities that some people feel got at or undermined by the current political situation? What would improve relations and build common ground on issues relating to social need? What's going on in republican communities that the debates about equality and social need aren't happening?

Masculinity influences how the past is construed and dealt with. This is about what lens you are using with which to view the past. It's important to be conscious of what lens is used, what it allows you to see and what it excludes. The masculinity lens makes women disappear. There are dominant masculinities vested in state institutions and the state reproduces those masculinities. There are alternative masculinities, subversive masculinities, hyper masculinities and gay masculinities amongst others. Dominant masculinities exist within subversive groups too. The standard definition of masculinity means that which is 'not female' and 'not gay'. Ideals of masculinity are always shaky constructs that have to be reinforced and asserted. In war and post-conflict situations perhaps the word 'subversive' isn't strong enough to describe masculinity practices that involve armed opposition to the state. Perhaps dominant masculinity isn't a strong enough term either for militarily upholding the state. This is all for thinking about another day.

More broadly, on all of this, if you look historically at much of the social policy research, many of the funded studies conducted by academics adopted a middle-class (often pro unionist) perspective. There are notable exceptions. Academics have strongly influenced how policy understanding was built throughout the conflict. A lot of high profile initiatives in the past were funded on the basis of building a discourse that was about building a community relations narrative. This helped to exclude

those people who were most affected by the war, who lived in districts blighted by the awful costs paid in the most impoverished areas. It was about building a picture of dysfunctional men – of 'thugs', 'terrorists' and the like. A lot of this was produced as part of a state-sponsored narrative by researchers who don't live in the areas they described and didn't see themselves as belonging to or a part of the problems they described. It's time to rewrite the narrative – action first and women to the fore.

*"We ask justice, we ask equality, we ask that all the civil and political rights that belong to citizens of the United States, be guaranteed to us and our daughters forever."*

Susan B. Anthony, Declaration of Rights for Women, July 1876

# WOMEN AND PERSONAL AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

I looked at a picture in the Irish News the other day of new people appointed to the Water Board and they're all men. And I thought, do they not even try any more (to get women). Do they not even tick boxes any longer?

Prior to the peace agreement there seemed to be more activism and more acknowledgement of women's inequality. More on the agenda of Sinn Fein and others about women's inequality but those issues have really dropped off the agenda since then. We're still a patriarchal society, still male-dominated. That patriarchal bias is expressed through our culture, through our religion; it still comes out in everything. In the community and in military, in parties that respected and encouraged women, certainly the likes of Sinn Fein and others, it was about the emancipation of women as well but I think from 1998 women's issues have went downhill including within Sinn Fein. It's about comrades, it's not about what sex you are, it's about the struggle, it's about we're equal in this struggle and when we get there everybody will be the same but it's not when you get there. When you get the peace agreement not everyone is the same. It's then the inequality is evident and the gap between male and female is evident. You look at women's pay, women's employment. You have a First and Deputy First Minister, Sinn Fein and the DUP, and you imagine Sinn Fein would be fighting all those equality issues around women, around other under-represented groups within society, former prisoners etc etc and where are they? And actually if you look at other areas around the world where men and women have fought together and it's all about women's equality when the peace sets in they're gone which is why the UN Security Council came up with Resolution 1325, Women, Peace & Security and subsequently strengthened that with other resolutions because they realised that when peace agreements come in and countries are in post-conflict women disappear. So it's about promoting women into the peace building work, it's about promoting women into participation, it's about

addressing the nature of gender violence which is mostly directed at women. You can't have a stable, peaceful society if you don't include women in that work. We have failed miserably here. So you ask yourself is it sustainable? I don't think it is. People talk about dissatisfaction with the political system, young people more detached from it. Increasingly women are more and more detached from it. There was two women for every man voted for the Good Friday Agreement; it's not reflected in the voter turn-out since then.

I don't believe in gender strategies because we should be treated equally and on merit. We shouldn't need a strategy and women should be there in their own right but we have a very male-dominated society and the conflict was very male-dominated and as a result women had to fight for their place and to be taken seriously.

I never set out consciously to employ women but our ratio of staff is more women than men and there are more female managers than male. Away back 14 years or so ago employment procedures weren't so strict and because we work in loyalist working class areas and we recognise the poor levels of education we always said three years experience or a qualification so it was never a barrier to women.

One thing that talks to men or people who have been involved in conflict is results so if you can produce the results that's where you'll get your authority from. Men are given their authority because of their position in organisations or their status but women aren't given authority; they have to fight for it.

When we were growing up we didn't do history at school and all we got from our parents was that the taigs were out to take our six counties. And my father would have been involved with paramilitaries and you would have seen him with guns out the back and you would have helped out but women didn't do the deed. And I remember asking someone in leadership why we (women) didn't get doing some of this work and he said, because you've children and if you were arrested you would break and I said it would make us all the more determined not to break and go to jail – because we had kids.

The women on the republican side had a cause. We didn't know anything. I mean Mairead Farrell got out after doing 12 years and went straight back onto active service again. And she was very educated and intelligent. She made her own choices.

What I found working with them (young girls in the area) was that they knew nothing about politics, and any sectarianism they had was an inherited sectarian; it wasn't based on any facts or anything. But the young women show great promise. But

there's so much apathy (regarding voting). I started a programme GIGS – Girls Into Government, building up their skills, numeracy, literacy, making it fun learning but maybe leading into GCSE in politics and that they would be mentored by an MLA or a councillor one day and a study visit to Brussels but they wouldn't fund me. I even went to the DUP and asked them if they'd any money in their training budget!

I used to feel like the token Prod at some meetings and now I feel like the token woman. I'm always going, 'Where's the other women?' The women need an input into this.

I would say that women are more staunch than what men are. When they get something into their head they do it.

On the republican side the women were more to the fore whereas on the loyalist side they were kept more to the back, keep the home fires burning. Republican women got their hands dirty and they were prominent in it. And they were listened to as well, if they were in command. Loyalist women were held back. But whether they were to the forefront or in the background they kept the whole industries going, some of them ended up single-parents because their husbands were in jail.

But women have been written out of loyalist history. Back in 1912 at the formation of Carson's army, the UVF, we were told there were no female volunteers but we got the photos, active, most of them were gun-runners. So you read about the nurses in the Somme, and the dignitaries, but there were female volunteers there. And they actually had a badge for the women in the Ulster Volunteer Force, and do you know, they banned the badge but we've seen an original. Even top loyalist men were gob-smacked when we brought this to them. And we've put it forward about women being part of the commemorations, of the Somme and World War 1 and World War 2 and that's what we're doing. It used to be it wasn't the case but now it is.

We're bringing young people with us now because they're our future, and especially young women.

I think women are more trusting by nature and if women built up trust with women on the other side, even during conflict, that's a major plus. That's a major relationship building, whereas men are cagey, they're looking for alternative motives. I'm not saying men can't do it; I just think it takes them longer.

I don't think we (women) were side-lined; I think we assisted any side-lining ourselves because we took that step back. 'Our men's out now and maybe we'll take a rest.' But I still think there's an important role for women around conflict

resolution and conflict transformation because there's natural skills there and there's some very smart women out there doing it and maybe it would be better if women were those mediators or facilitators initially.

I'm lucky that I work in an organisation that has a large number of women in it and women in high positions within it and I think that's just an acknowledgement (of their role in the community). I'm 29 years working in the community, in paid jobs or voluntary, and I think there was a recognition there – it's not that we're better than men but also seen as equals. When men were in prison the women were the breadwinners, they were the educators and they didn't just do it for their families; they actually became active in their own communities, bringing community education in. And women are marvellous bridge-builders. They do it within a family context and they also do it brilliantly within a community context. I don't know if it's inherent; it just seems to come naturally to the majority of women.

I'm not a big fan of bringing women together to talk about women's issues but I recognise that sometimes there's a need for something like that to kick-start a process and I'm part of a group of 5-6 women that manage organisations and we get together every so often because it can be isolating and to just talk about how did you do this, how did you do that. For me it's not about being separatist, it's about self-care to be honest.

Groups supportive of the state tend to be more conservative and less supportive of gender equality.

Sinn Fein have done more than most I think but sometimes I think their gender policies are a bit tokenistic. I remember one male republican referring to a female member of Sinn Fein and saying that she hadn't really been involved during the war and that she was only where she was because of her family and this was despite the enormous achievements I knew this woman had made. So I suppose there's a certain amount of cynicism. There are women there and involved and have huge responsibility but they don't be given the leadership positions. Name me women who are in charge of conflict resolution organisations?

It's taken me 15 years of fight to be recognised because I'm a woman; it wouldn't take you that long.

Community development is about how issues impact upon your life, so bonfires, or riots impact on your life and the quality of life you and your kids and your community can have so it's a community issue.

Boys aren't born bullies but they were expected to fit in. 'You will follow in your father's footsteps.' It's learned behaviour and I think a lot of families are more open now. You know, you'll have chores to do even though you're a boy because you'll have a home of your own one day. You'll have chores as a girl; you'll have to learn how to paper and paint. It does you no harm; in fact it stands you in good stead whenever you have a home of your own. I have a grand-son, he's 15 months old and he loves the vacuum cleaner. And his father says, 'Don't be giving him that.' And I says, 'Why? Do you think he's going to turn ...?' 'No, no.' And I says, 'There'll come a time when he's a big lad and you'll be coming in and saying about the dirt of his room and does he not know how to use a vacuum cleaner.' But I says, 'He'll know how to.' So you see, you can't use conflicting things.

One of the things I discovered working with women was the level of domestic violence in the area and we tried to do something about it because it was being sanitised and we arranged to have a day where we would bring in people from Women's Aid and others to talk about the issue but before it took place the women were pressurised to cancel it from the men in the area. They were told they do not have a domestic violence issue. So if you're going to take on those issues you're either very foolhardy or braver than I could ever be.

You can't simply look at women in terms of gender equality but need to bring in class and social identity and other dimensions of their lived reality – there are intercepting inequalities.

Years ago one of the big unions advertised a post and because of the equality legislation they couldn't openly say they were looking for a woman but it was to work with women and they didn't get one woman applying and they went to occupational psychologists and asked why the thought they were not getting women and they were told, 'Drop the salary ten grand.'

Most marginalised people here, there's a silence about them. If you're admitted into being talked about in terms of women's equality you're admitted as a woman without an investment in politics and a woman who doesn't experience discriminations. If you look at inequalities now they are worsening for the poorest people, the poorest Protestant people and the poorest Catholic people and that's going to increase. So when you are trying to get people on board to even think about women's inequality in a way that can seem like an attractive and soft issue because it's uncontentious; there's a certain paternalism about it.

I've found more freedom to express my opinions in the West than I have been in North Belfast. I'm given a lot more leeway. And the big factor in it is leadership. And for me it's about people who are brave and not afraid to take a risk, to take a chance and maybe look at things differently and that's why there's always been space for me I think.

Republicans can't believe about the way the (British) army and the peelers treated us. About watching the paras pulling people out and beating them. They believed we had this great rapport with them.

They're (men) scared of hearing women speak the truth because women have a good habit of speaking the truth, speaking what's on their mind.

If you look at coming up to the hunger strike and women involved in Relatives Action Committees and subsequently outside, women and families directly affected, kept mobilising campaigns and flying in the eyes of maybe some people even in the Movement.

You don't want to put women in (to positions) if they're not appropriate but when there's women there why not encourage them and support them?

I know when I'm being invited to speak somewhere because I'm a woman rather than being the right person to speak and I turn those down. And you have these events where maybe it's a man just introducing something or say two sentences and surely even the stupidest woman in the world could manage that. But no.

The most frustrating thing about it is there are some great women out there and they do a lot for the community and they are so passionate; they are so in the background yet their roles are pivotal so why don't they come forward? Even those whose husbands are involved.

People don't recognise their own skills. Women saying they don't have confidence – to go for jobs – or don't have skills, yet they do all this work. You're looking for a Treasurer, who do you get? A woman whose been running a home. Women put themselves down and that's a difficulty. I think even for confident women there's issues. I mean if you seen a job advertised for £40, 000 you wouldn't even think of applying but if the same job was advertised for £20,000 you would.

West Belfast at one time, a lot of the community organisations would have been dominated by women and I think that's one of the things always drew me to the nationalist community; there's so much opportunity created for women. Whereas

here, it wouldn't be the first meeting I went to years ago where it was, 'sit down, you're only a woman.' My response was always, 'that's no excuse for being a man.' I think there's vast differences between loyalism and republicans around that.

I think these days more and more women are going out and getting the qualifications that they need and that's building their confidence. There were years there I wouldn't apply for jobs as I didn't have the qualifications. There would have been higher paid jobs such as project coordinators, capacity building coordinators and I couldn't go for those jobs as maybe I didn't have a degree or the qualifications or maybe I couldn't work full-time and they were full-time posts. Whereas men with the qualifications and no childcare issues could go for the job. It's that perception that a woman's place is in the house with the kids. Child-minding is one of the biggest barriers for women. If you haven't got that ... even if you have a job you're not focused properly on it if you don't feel your kids are being properly looked after so the issue does come up does it really benefit women to go full time? And there's a lot of single parents in this area.

*"Women are not inherently passive or peaceful. We're not inherently anything but human."*

Robin Morgan

# WOMEN, INTERFACE WORK, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

I think that by learning about one another and questioning it can only be good but unfortunately you still have that sectarian element going on. We had a discussion the other week about inviting some over to our area and someone opposed it, said we'd have to knock every door in the estate to get their agreement because we don't want them over here.

Generally the cops worked with us. You would get one or two who'd tell you to "f off" so you had to go a wee bit higher up. And the thing is that when they're sitting there it's like bees to honey (young ones coming to riot) and then our big fear is that once they start firing those plastic bullets

Where I live the women came out on the streets and organised at the interface as they had kids. There would be stone-throwing, Drumcree and that, and the women started doing a lot of community work, especially voluntary work. We have built this interface up but it was mainly women who were out on the streets playing a voluntary role and thinking we need to do something more structured. But the (paid) interface workers are all men. Because it's men's work isn't it? It's war (laughs).

Our job in our project is to empower local people and I know our workers are very conscious of the gender thing because they work with women locally and they have also been able to involve young men, which is a good thing. But we need to be careful our women voluntary workers don't pull back now that we have paid workers. You're trying to build that capacity without losing those core people who've been there for so long.

I came under death threat three times because of my involvement on issues around parades and that sort of thing over times mentally wears you down. And it was my kids I was particularly worried about.

We discovered that a lot of the incidents and displacements arose from rumours but they spiralled and led to outbreaks of violence. And when you analyse conflict you

discover sometimes it's about incompetence. Like the police who sometimes inflame situations. So sometimes a rumour, sometimes incompetence, but mainly it's fear. And I remember thinking at the time if there was some way we could address that fear and the loads of good people in the community who wanted to address the situation but there was no mechanisms for dialogue so that's where we started and the mobile network was set up. And we had resistance from everywhere but it became a big success story.

Initially people saw any talk about interface areas as betrayal; we 'have what we hold' sort of mentality. 'We're defending our areas.' But we had to start somewhere and eventually after about 3 years we got some money to set up a small project.

Bottom line for us in our project is about community empowerment. We say it at every meeting, this is not about us, this is not about workers, this is about building the capacity of local people because what we want to do is we want to transform our interface. We want to make it a shared space. We want to make it a normalised space and to do that we must have our people on board. We must have regular people willing to make that happen.

Going back to basics and the significance of gender and conflict resolution I think it hinges on your definition of the conflict that the conflict resolution is taking place around. If the conflict is seen as the interface antagonisms and the potential to overcome them – murals, emblems, management if you like within communities – the role of political ex-prisoners and the role of victims, what's not actually articulated is questions of power. Who has power and who is seen to have power and even do people within those contexts see themselves as having power. So whether they use the power or not at least be conscious that they have power. And in that case there are very few women who carry that power

and even those who have been through the same experiences they are not as well known as the men in those situations. If you're being pragmatic about conflict resolution and using the people who can either open the doors or close the doors then they're men. Then the question is are there some strategies that women can deal with more effectively. So where are women going to be more effective? Probably in some of the back channel communications in terms of the interactions. Can be effective in terms of talking out things rather than the more upfront formal negotiation of things. Can be more effective in terms of having a more inclusive view of how you move forward.

I said years ago that there are two main issues we need to address to improve people's lives, parades and policing because these are the issues that keep coming up time after time.

The Shinners are 20 years ahead of us but it doesn't take us 20 years to catch up. But I've went to Community Dialogue and to various things and went to a meeting down South with Shinners and IRSP and it was the first time I realised the difficulties there and two guys actually left during the night so I think the Shinners are better at papering over the cracks  than us but they have the fractures within their own community and as you go further down the line you can see it so when that gave me a wee bit of heart because I thought, well, we've all got problems. And I've come to see that there's more that unites us than divides us but we had these myths about one another like we were supposed to have good relations with the police and army.

We've told the Housing Executive they need to be careful who they allocate houses to on the interface because if you put a problem family on the interface then you're going to have trouble. They shouldn't be living there.

Women can't be bothered with the willy-waving. Men will talk for hours and come up with no decision – women are very much hands-on and practical. And I'm not saying women don't have egos; of course women have egos, but when it's survival, when it's to the benefit of your child, to your family, your community you can see what needs to be done and you know the relationships that need to be built in order to do it. Yes, you can be militant. Yes, you can be as tough, you can wave your ego about and

grandstand but at the end of the day I think because women are more empathetic than men they know they can step outside themselves and put themselves in someone else's shoes and see the bigger picture and then say, 'Now what do we need to do to get this done?'And it's not about being confident; it's about being confident that you can get things done but in a different way.

There would have been a lot of women over the years who were community workers in the area but again they were unpaid. There are women who have worked tirelessly in this community, and still are workers.

I think women show a lot of bravery and a lot of courage. I don't know to be honest with you if that's because they don't feel as much of a threat as men do. Maybe we say we're courageous and we step over the line to do things however. I think sometimes if I was a man they'd probably shoot me quicker. So maybe I wouldn't be as cocky. And maybe that's not true either. Maybe regardless of your gender if

you're controversial enough ...I suppose you can use it to your advantage. And I do think that if you were to come up with controversial enough stuff or really rock the boat then it wouldn't matter (what gender you were).

We as women take the responsibility off men.

In the absence of good services in the area, or good political leadership, or political interest really, this is what we get, young people will look up to the paramilitaries.

Politicians will fall over themselves to come to public meetings and issue press statements but will not get involved in the nitty gritty, will not get off their asses and get into the areas. They have access to information, they have influence, but they're not interested.

You need a joined-up working approach within communities. We have multi-agency meetings here. It would be the police, all the stats, Sinn Fein and ourselves and the SDLP and we'd meet on a monthly basis.

Women are more proactive and you could say they just get on with it; just go in and do the work they have to do. That's the end of it. I just thinkwomen are better at it. They're better at multi-tasking and maybe more approachable for others in the community

There is a lack of younger women now involved in community centres

Sometimes it's about just stepping over that line and supporting one another (women) if women get into a male-dominated environment.

Sometimes it has been the women calling the men (paramilitaries) to action (over something in the community) and the men respond.

I'm not convinced it's about the Troubles any more. I think it's about alpha-males and alpha-females and them wanting to be community leaders and assert their power. There's a blurring about whether it's about self-interest and self-importance or whether it's about the Troubles any more.

We've more in common than what separates us.

We do need to build those links; we do need to build those bridges.

They're not political women but they do really good work in our community.

It's (the forum) very male-dominated. We find it very difficult to get women involved. There's 3 women on the committee and 7 men. We had our AGM last night and I'm

glad to see there were more women there than had been in the last couple of years but again trying to get them to step up and actually join the committee is difficult although it's small steps for a lot of people. I've had wee chats with them and they've agreed to do wee things locally but not to come to the committee meetings or that.

I think there's still a lot of our women lacking in confidence. They're not aware of the strength they have. These are women who've brought up families, maybe on their own, trying to make ends meet. People don't realise that they're stronger than they think, and have skills, managing budgets, raising a family.

And it was women who stood on the interface (when men were in prison). It was women who kept young kids and youths away from the interface – and sometimes that's all it takes. I don't think there's as many women involved in it today. In 1992 we had the North Belfast Protestant Interface Group and that was made up of quite a number of Protestant groups from North Belfast. It's where the mobile phone network actually started. The North Belfast Interface would have been about 50/50 in gender. The catholic side would have had more women than men but today that seems to be more men.

I'm the only woman in our cumann of 15 and I'm crying out to get more to join. There is the confidence thing. There's a woman I know who would be brilliant to have in the cumann but I know she's not getting that wee push from her husband.

I see myself as a community worker rather than community leader. I don't live in the area but come into it and work in it and I think that's good as I don't have any biases. I work with people on programmes who are not hand-picked whereas people in their own area can form cliques. And what we try to do is respond positively to suggestions and when I work with the paramilitaries it's always for the greater good, like in involving them in re-imaging the area and removing murals and them having a say in what replaces them. So we try to respond positively but in a wider community setting so that it is not just to please them (the paramilitaries).

Initially I got the impression that I was like the token woman brought along to these meetings (cross community) but over time either you're there to do the job or you're not. If it's to the benefit of the community I don't have a problem going anywhere.

She (woman in other community) would be the most vocal. The men would often sit there and say nothing. And it would be her and me who would be in contact with one another when there would be trouble. And even at times when the men in our area would have the phones they'd come to me and say will you phone (her).

In our area I'd love to see more women involved. At one stage last year when the trouble was on and all the men were up at the other end it was me and two other women that went down and tackled them (youth) and took the petrol bombs off them and one of the Peelers came over and said Ican't believe you three just did that. And the other two women wouldn't see themselves as the type to go out and do things like that and I was saying to them, 'look at what you can do. Youse live here.' And it's brilliant that those women are actually coming to more and more things. It's just giving people that wee bit of confidence and sometimes it takes a wee episode like that to get their hump up, or open their eyes a bit to get involved in other things.

I feel that interface work at its front line is very male-dominated but you do have a lot of women involved. In our area at one time we would have had a lot of women who were the phone holders for the mobile phone network. Women were always there. Up in the middle of the night, out on the street resolving things but I think that when it comes to positions of public power they're just not visible or maybe they don't have the confidence or the skills or whatever to be at that front line. So we've always had women involved but the players have always been men.

We appointed two workers to our group; both are men. On the interview panel there were 3 men and myself. Now we had to appoint the best candidates and the two were men but where's the women? There's skills issues, there's confidence issues, even for the women to apply.

I think that women just get on with it. I think that maybe because of their experience in the home they're always going to be the primary care-takers of things, because they are the nurturers of the community, of the families. Maybe they just think we got to get this sorted for our children, for our future. There is this drive to do that and maybe we do things differently, let's just do it, let's try to get this done. I'm not sure they're as concerned about the power they may wield; there's always exceptions. I think there's an urgency with women. Women want things resolved earlier. We would do things differently. We're willing to sit down. But in the formal power structures women are not there. We need to get them there so that they can promote that change that will be a different way of working.

Our community is going through a transformation process. The police are also going through a transformation process. When we contact the police we expect a response immediately because we're ignorant of the law and when we're critical of the police it's often because it's not happening quick enough to suit us. I think we use a lot for excuses. Don't get me wrong, yes, there are problems but I think the only way to

solve those problems is in small chunks and we need to start doing it. And again I think that could be a woman's role because women can say things that men can't. We can empathise and throw things in that are emotional where men find it hard to do; facilitators.

We vote to keep people out rather that to put people in. We don't look at mandates but I think that's changing and the funny thing is that the DUP and Sinn Fein are now making decisions that affect divided community but where was the biggest divide? Between the DUP and Sinn Fein. But the thing is some of our communities are now more empowered than they ever were and they're saying, 'we don't need an MLA to do our political thinking because we're able to do our political thinking. We know we have to do this and this and this but we need to be influencers to try and change that.' And the same with churches. Churches have power and now in this community people have open and frank discussions when we formed a church and community group and what the community was saying to the church was, 'you don't need to do our spiritual thinking for us because we can find it with us. What we're saying to you is you have a resource, make it available to us. What we have learned is you have established practice which we should be looking to; we don't need to look outside our community but you don't only have a spiritual responsibility you have a community responsibility. You walked from us; we didn't walk from you. Prove your use. Share the resources you have, the middle class people you have who could come in and give our community an arm up.' It worked for us. We've the keys of the church. If there's overspill here we go over and use the church.  We use the church mini-bus. And our churches were very male-oriented but that has also changed.

I'm not only based here; I live here, and we all learned together. There was never one leader; we learnt together. And at different times leaders emerged but it wasn't one leader for everything because we were bringing everyone with us. It was like Chef Guevara imparted his knowledge not just to one or to a couple but to the group and after that group he brought the next tranche forward. And you probably think it's funny coming from a Prod, talking about Chef Guevara, but that's the way it should be because that way it creates an all-round leadership. That's how it worked for us. Even regards the church. We just didn't talk to their committee; we went and did presentations to any of their congregations who wanted to hear. We took part in their social witness programmes. We weren't standing up and giving testimony about how we came to God. We were standing up and giving testimony about how we were making our community a better place. I may not be a church attender but recognise the importance of the church within the community.

I think there needs to be more shared knowledge. We would say inter-generational work. What I've found out through inter-generational work is there's a lost generation that nobody bothers about and that's between the ages of 56-62. We need our young people to be skilled young people. And that's across the divide and there's skills that that age group need to pass down to our young people; bring them up to a par with others in the community. That's skill-share. I think it needs to be done at all levels. And we don't get it right all the time. You don't get knowledge by acquiring the answers – you acquire knowledge by asking questions; and making mistakes. There needs to be sharing between those older people who did it – and you know, it was quite basic when we were doing it at interfaces but it dispelled a lot of the rumours and a lot of the time it was just about breaking down those rumours. I think there needs to be that sharing, even if it should be three times a year, but to me it's not sharing, is that not some form of critical analysis? Where maybe those BCRC workers are holding up some sort of piece of work and they have those critical friends round that table listening, not criticising but listening and maybe suggesting ways to do it better.

Peacebuilding for me is not about giving people money for doing nothing. It's about saying we actually value you more than that and we want to skill you up so that you can feel good about taking that money.

I see the work we do as a way to empower working class loyalists, whether male or female. A lot of people shout and scream about how disadvantaged loyalism is but in terms of social justice, human rights etc we have made a very concerted effort to take a leading role in all of that. And we would do the same with young females coming up now. If we were working with a

new group of young people I would be asking how many young women are in that group and why are there so few so you need a concerted, deliberate effort to get women into it.

I never thought anything of going down to (person in other community across the interface) house during the Troubles and him coming up here. And yes of course there was fear but it never stopped us. And that's about relationships that are built up and when you get to know people you can feel secure that they're not going to let anything happen to you and I think that's what brought a lot of people through that. And we're talking too about people who had relatives killed in the conflict. I think there's a  lot of good will and we've even built up great relations with the paramilitary groupings because community consultations go on and some members of those groupings are actually committee members on some of the (community)

organisations here because we're saying. 'this is how we operate within the community here, here's the structures we follow, why not come along and be educated with us?' It's not an 'us' and 'them' any more, which is what Protestants communities did, using them whenever it suited them, it's 'us'. We've partnerships across North Belfast and that's with everybody. That's big society for us. And the majority of the committee are women.

Probably my frustration with this whole sector is that I think that in the '80s and '90s women were doing a lot of the good work and then when men came out of prison in their droves the women stepped aside and let them take the roles and I understand the need to reintegrate people back into the community but I say time and time again, 'why did you step aside?' There was room for everyone. What happened in our communities that the woman felt she had to step back and all the skills and expertise she had? And sometimes people walked into those jobs who didn't have the experience, didn't have the life skills and made the whole situation worse. Whereas I think a female approach to conflict transformation is more mediated, more conciliatory, more facilitatory and is a much better approach.

I think women are encouraged into volunteer positions and men into paid employment.

When you get down into the training or parades management or interface dialogue you begin to see more women but it has never changed at the management group level, never.

The key area contacts are all male as well. When you get to a layer below that there's more women; in fact there's more women than men but in terms of the decision-making or strategic planning it's all male.

When you look at community development on the ground there's a vast number of women involved in it in terms of hands-on implementing of it yet when it comes to decision-making there's very few women about and for me it was about asking why is that. What are the reasons for it? Is it attitudinal reasons or structural reasons?

Loyalist women ex-combatants feel excluded.

And I think it very interesting how some people during the war to some extent were protected by the state, were co-opted by the state in certain ways, and now seem ... and even worse than that the HET are going into loyalist neighbourhoods, cases in the '70s, the immediate impact of that seems to be, what's going to happen there? Or what's going to happen to those communities who seem to be abandoned by a

state so how far that is going to be worked out down the road or how it fuel alliances with republicans.

In terms of benefits of the peace for women, materially, they are not there, if you think in that narrow sense of the term materially in terms of food on your table.

What is not changing in the way it should be changing is the structural inequalities and people are growing up in a poverty that is entirely unacceptable. And Sinn Fein is in power with a party that doesn't have that as part of its agenda so how far can you move? And how do you build in the space for critique?

The only way we could bring money into the area and regenerate it was if we were to work with the other community on the interface. We held a number of public meetings and we understood people's fears because cross-community work was unheard of at that stage. The paramilitaries were very much opposed to it but we also understood why the local people themselves would have fears. Our position was that you don't have a voice in the community because you're a member of the UDA, or a member of the Boys Brigade, but because you live in the community. So if you live in the area your opinion is as legitimate as anyone else's. We were very transparent in our approach. We addressed any concerns people had and we said we were not asking them to trust the ones on the other side of the road but to trust us. We said, look around you at the bricked up houses. The place is dying on its feet. We said we would never do anything that we couldn't stand in a public meeting and account for and we would hold regular public meetings. I remember people standing up and saying, "You're asking me to welcome in those people we've been trying to keep out for the last 25 years. Over my dead body."

Most of us were women. I don't think men could have done it. I was very frightened. I was intimidated but I believed in it. The police wanted to put in security cameras but I wouldn't allow it. I wouldn't live my life like that. I've always believed in not sitting back and saying, 'why doesn't someone do something about this?' I've had family members who were involved (in paramilitaries) and were in prison so I understand but I was quite open in what I had to say that at times they terrorised the community and there's no excuse for it.

I think our success was that it was the community did it. There were no others involved. Everything we did we did legitimately and we sent out copies of our Articles of Association just to show that everything was transparent and what we were trying to do. I think they (paramilitaries) came to see that we achieved what we had set out to achieve, which was to ensure the well-being of our community.

If it hadn't been local people who lived in the community then it wouldn't have worked.

Everyone in this community is welcomed to become involved and there are lots of people now on our group who previously wouldn't have been and many are now attending joint residentials with the other community on the interface. And some would say they still have problems but that's fine.

And it's now expanded out and we have a committee made up of representatives from both communities on the interface.

In our own area we set up a forum to bring all the groups together because we recognised we would be stronger if we had everyone together and we set up a 5-year development plan for the area. It was about accountability. Agencies had responsibility for providing various services within the area but they weren't being provided. So there was a lot of lobbying done. The first development plan for the area had no mention of the interface; it was a place to avoid. I lived here, I had young children, I wanted to make a difference to where they lived and how they lived and then later when it became a joint project across the interface it was to make a better future for my grandchildren.

In producing a development plan and interacting with the other community it helped dispel the myths.

The people who suffered most were those who lived right on the interface. It was ok the further away you were from the interface. You could make any suggestions but you didn't live there, on the interface. And the view was that we could either continue to live like this or we could change it. It was like no-man's land at the time, deserted, run-down. Our community wasn't dying, we had a big population, but there were no resources, nothing; huge housing estate and no community infrastructure.

I never had any intimidation from within my community; stormy meetings but never any intimidation.

You can't ignore that there are contentious issues and if you start out on that foot then you're doomed to failure.

We had issues in common across the interface; lack of employment, education, ill-health, all those practical things that have a big negative impact upon your community.

We have been successful because there was no outside interference and we're still very strong about that because it's about ownership.

Our view is that talking about issues doesn't mean agreeing. It's about dispelling fears and getting it out there. It's an opportunity to express your opinions and also an opportunity to hear others' opinions. Even the commander of the local paramilitary group attended and thought it a great meeting. One of our big contentious issues at the moment is relations between the loyalist community and police and when we tried to organise a meeting with the police a lot of the residents said they wouldn't attend and our approach was, well, we can't answer your questions, the only ones who can answer them are the police, so tomorrow we're having another meeting with the police and people are coming along.

We say we might not have an answer to your problem, we can't solve all problems, but what we can do is create a space.

An interface area has the potential to be volatile at any time. It's only through the work that people do and the commitment of the people that makes it peaceful. The mobile phone network is still there if there is an issue but the people round here have seen what it has been like and what has been achieved. The work that we began has transformed the community because it has created a much more feeling of stability. It has taken us 15 years to get here. And now we have more men involved than women which is a huge turnaround – which is because it's not threatening for anyone anymore and men aren't as much at risk now. It was quite risky for men in the early days. One old man was visited at his home and asked why he was involved with us and he left the group after that because he had children and all but he joined again in later years. The paramilitaries are also involved now too and come on residentials and all.

We've a troubled history between our two communities and we've got to where we are through acknowledging that history and acknowledging our faults and I think that needs to be applied not only to inter-community stuff but intra-community stuff. Transparency and accountability is absolutely crucial. I always say to staff here not to say anything privately that they will not be prepared to stand up publicly and say because sooner or later it will come back and bite you and all you have in this work is your own integrity and your credibility.

It's about projects that sustain this community but also serve the much wider community as well and that has taken time for people in the community to get their heads around.

The only way you're going to sustain your own community is to work in cooperation with the communities around you.

It's encouraging to see people getting involved now who wouldn't have got involved in the past or wouldn't even have considered it.

There's a lot of emphasis on people on the interface areas to make them integrate yet they're the hardest lot in the world and yet the rest of us continue to live our segregated lives, children in segregated schools; we live in segregated areas.

It's the old story; women always do the work.

All the women who work in here it's unpaid; all voluntary work whereas all the other jobs, it's all men. I don't know why but it is.

We're trying to get the women focused on the strategic issues in the community. It's early days yet but hopefully it will be the case where women will go in and have the confidence to speak up about things in their community and things that's needed. For instance I think there's a big need for a women's centre and when I proposed it I was almost laughed out of the room because they were all men. And I was saying, 'You're going to ask me where's the need? Do I have to explain myself? I'm not going to explain myself.' You leave the room and you're about to pull your hair out.

I know that in the past maybe if women went up to young lads to tell them to move on they'd tell them to fuck off whereas if they men went up to them they'd be treated with more respect but that's all changed now as well. Even if the boys go up to the interface now they're told to fuck off too. So I think we as a community as a whole have to look at how to address that. But it's also about moving on. It's not about anyone standing at the interface fire-fighting. I think the contacts need to be made but it's also about passing on to the PSNI. That's where it needs to be going.

We actually set up our own network of women in 2002. It was all parents. We tried to contact as many parents as possible so that we could contact one another as soon as it would arise so we were able to mobilise ourselves as quickly as the kids were able to mobilise. We also set ourselves up a rota for each night and we found that that was more successful because the young lads were listening to the women as some of their own parents were there or there were friends of their parents. So women do have an influential role to play when it comes to violence at the interfaces. We've probably one of the most peaceful interfaces now because of the relationships that have been built up. Once we were able to tackle the violence of the youth and once the youth were aware that their parents were becoming more

involved in workshops and meetings that was having a knock-on effect on the kids. Most of the violence is recreational. They use Bebo and other sites to organise. One of the kids even went to an integrated school.

It's not just BCRC where there is an issue about women. It's all over; historically. People came from certain backgrounds, republican and loyalist organisations and it was all male leaders as well.

During the interface violence I was doing all the donkey work and I remember the fire service coming in and calling over the men to talk about the situation but I knew the men were then going to come to me about advice on how to take it forward.

We were so used to fighting. If the men were involved in the war women were the backbone behind it all, backing the men up in everything that they did so women always had a fighting role no matter what that role might have been but in loyalist areas I don't think that they had it. You know, it was always their men who made the decisions.

Some people think there are all sorts of paid interface workers and there isn't. And what is an interface worker? Is that someone who stands up there and chases the kids home or is it someone who indirectly brings something else to a community by accessing funding for it or accessing resources?

The thing for me that's driving the women is that they want their families to have a better way of life so they get up and actually do it. And the thing they feared was what would the paramilitaries think of it?

I've enjoyed going to all these meetings. I've learned a lot because I have kids and grandkids and I want them to grow up and enjoy things and not be bitter.

In our community group out of 15 in it 12 are women. They work on a voluntary basis, they keep the centre open, they deal with all the receipts and do everything that needs to be done. And women say it as it is.

For a whole year we had been looking after everything and then coming up to the 12th a couple of paramilitaries came in to see us – this was about 2001 - and told us not to worry about the corner come the 12th as they would sort it out and we said, 'No, sorry, you won't.' If it had been a man he probably would have said nothing but I was able to do that because I was a woman and knew they probably wouldn't hit me. You have less fear. It's an age thing too. As you get older you feel you can say or do those things. We sent letters round the door and we decided on what would happen

round the bonfire on the 11th night and when the paramilitaries came back we told them they were not needed. We had a children's party in the cul-de-sac and it was over for 10.00 and there was no music or nothing and then there was a public meeting about flags and where they should go and the paramilitaries agreed that the flags would stop at a particular point so that they were not flying up against catholic neighbours.

One of the difficulties for women working on the interface is that people then think they have to solve everything and that everything that happens is their fault and people put pressure on them and whenever I started working with them I said it was not their responsibility and they shouldn't take responsibility for the interface because you cannot put anybody in the community in responsibility if you don't give them the support. It's alright having women doing all this work but unless we support them and say we're putting them in that position and we're supporting them, it doesn't work.

You can't have community development if you don't have community involvement and participatory democracy. It's about reconnecting with communities and if you're going to be saying to people that the last 40 years you've been fighting a war then you're going to have to show people (what you're about). If you walk in and tell people what to do they won't do it. You have to work with people.

We always worked from the grassroots and it was all women. Women are more stable. And they rear children and they know that there are personalities and sometimes that you need to take a deep breath and you'll get over that.

What are the potential conflict parameters for the next 5 years and one of them clearly is young people in working class areas and in empowering women to have some sort of an impact there is I think quite important because, and it's a generalisation, but relationships between fathers and sons can be much more abrasive and enabling women to challenge what teenagers are saying perhaps in terms of some of the gains of the peace process. And I don't know if there's the same sense of ability amongst women to do that within local communities partly because some of that politicised discussion has gone and also because the community infrastructure generally is that it has become so infrastructural that it is up here and busy negotiating with government departments and politicians and is not talking to its own grassroots.

Women were much more evident in community groups in the '80s and '90s and '00s when there wasn't great money in it but when European money came in and it became much more professionalised men came into it.

The very organised way of working often doesn't work for women. I think women tend to have a broader way of organising.

Women were always very good at taking direct action but then there was a battle over that as they were seen as being out of control. So it's basically about looking at a range of ways of organising and saying where do people feel comfortable.

You do get women who work on the interface who feel like they're wheeled out. And then you get a few other individual women who are very strong women who work there.

There's been money for interface work that has just been about jolly holidays down to Dublin or wherever.

I think that a lot of parents round here can't see around corners and can't think what a university education would mean to their children or good vocational qualifications and stuff.

I think that the norms in this area are not gender-specific; the attitudes to life, to the police, the attitudes to education, the roles between the men going to the front lines and the women standing behind them agitating and gossiping and all, I think you'd find those anywhere in the world.

I think some of the jobs it takes a woman to do them as they're more patient and more compassionate. And I think women can be more responsive to situations whereas men are more fixed in what they're doing. Maybe women are just more attracted to this type (community) work.

*"Being a woman is a terribly difficult task, since it consists principally in dealing with men."*

Joseph Conrad

# WORKING WITH MEN

I find from my experience that I'm usually the token woman. I'm asked to go along to these things and I basically go along to a room full of men who to put it bluntly are a pain in the ass and a lot of the times I pull out because I just think it's going nowhere. I think I can give input. Some males I've worked with closely and very well and they do really value my input and there's others who see me as the token woman and others who I feel actually dislike me because I am a woman.

Or people will say to me on the phone, we've an all-male panel and we're wondering if you would come along and balance it out. And I would say, do you want to hear about my work or do you just want me to talk about me being a woman? What is it you want?

Sometimes I think it's a case of yes, we're looking at you and listening to you but not really hearing what you're saying so we'll go ahead and do it this way. There's certain meetings I've been in and felt very comfortable and listened to and all you would need would be for three other males to be there and I'd feel extremely intimidated. And that's because of my experience on a one-to-one with them.

There are men who I can sit with and have a good conversation with, and have arguments with and say a lot of stuff to and I'll know he'll take it as it is, as a really good debate, whereas they are some males in this community who I just wouldn't even go there with because I'd be frightened to. I think some men have proved themselves to be there through what they've done (in the community) but there are others who you feel are shipped in, you don't know who they are; all of a sudden they're a community worker.

Men seem to see power in terms of I'm giving up this amount to you and I expect this amount from you, like it's a piece of cake. I think women are more fluid in terms of how you get round it and when do you push issues and when do you not push issues. So it can be a less macho type of negotiation. If you think back to how the women's centres operated during the conflict they still managed to get a platform of common

demands and almost did that by agreeing to not upfront things in certain ways. It may be that there's not the same need now for that type of approach or arguably there maybe are aspects of conflict resolution where it is more useful. Women also tend to be better at humour and almost ridicule as a way of bringing issues out. We had a meeting here the other day, it was three women and three men and it was like Venus and Mars the thinking was so different. You could see it.

I suppose I've decided I'm just going to do what I can do best and just get on with the stuff I can do. And I'll do work with the men that I can do work with and give good feedback to them. Maybe it's about long-term relationship-building because the men I do get on well with I've known for a really long time – and maybe that's not totally right because some of them I don't for so long but they are the ones who recognise I can deliver to the point where they've even recommended me for things because they know I can do it.

I think men waffle; they love to let you know what they know. They'll say in a meeting when a date is set for something, "Yes put me down for that." They don't give it a second thought whereas women will go, "Will I get child-minding that night?" Women have to think before they can put their name down.

I worked on a project where I had a male colleague but I was in charge of the project and the gender dynamics were absolutely amazing. Going in to meetings and someone asking could you get them tea and I really don't mind getting people tea but that wasn't the point. It was the aggression towards me and the, "You wouldn't understand. Let me talk to your male colleague." It was like I was invisible for the first time in my life.

There are some men who can work well with women and will encourage them and bring them along and put them to the fore because they recognise their ability.

Sometimes I'm invited into projects because it's thought I'll write it up. It happened here the other week. We had a meeting and at the end I asked, "Who's going to write this up?" And the two men said they weren't and I said, "Well each of you has more time than me and I'm not writing it up. I'm sick of being the woman who writes everything up so if you want it done pay for someone to do it." And their response was, "Sure you're good at it." And I said, "You know something, the more you do it the better you would be at it too."

I find it very hard to fight my corner in some meetings because they're very male-dominated. Sometimes they go off on ... I don't know, have you ever sat in a room with a group of fellas and one's trying to run the show basically and half the time I'm

sitting in the meeting saying, "Is there any chance of you coming back here to what we're to discuss, never mind about all that." And even in terms of what you think is needed in the community for women it's very hard to get that across as it's very male-dominated.

Sometimes the men want to run off and do the work themselves rather than it being tackled as a group and you have to tell them they're not here to do the work, they're here to facilitate the work happening.

*"George W. Bush will protect your unborn fetus, then send your grown child to die in war."*

Rick Claro

# EX-PRISONERS AND EX-COMBATANTS

I have an issue with ex-prisoners who want to become community workers. I'm not saying they can't be community workers – by no means – but the bone of contention is that they arrive all of a sudden as if they've come from another planet and they know how to solve everything and it's like you've never done all this before. It's stupid and just makes me angry. Certainly I don't think we've (women) got our place for the work we've done over the years. They arrive and they're going to do all this community work and solve all the problems. I've sat at meetings with them and said you need to do such and such and they've said, "Oh no, we don't need to do that. We can do it this way and we can do this and we can do that." And even the daftest things, like we do everything straight down the line and I walked into a committee and said, no, I wasn't going to be part of it because it was a nod and a wink and I just couldn't do that anymore. We get public money but they get a good service from us and good monitoring and we've built on our integrity and I'm not going to be part of something where they keep a lot of notes in their pockets. You've also got the thing where they have drugs courses going on but then the selling also goes on. I can't take that kind of two-faced thing. And that would be a male sort of thing.

I think to get women involved – and the interface thing is seen as sort of ex-prisoners – to crack any of those things in terms of women who are not from the organisations involved there has to be a very conscious pro-active invite. I don't think that people will feel that without that they will have the permission to get involved or necessarily want to.

I think some people assume that paramilitary leaders have brains; they don't. They've maybe got a wee bit more oratory skills or a bit more aggression or something but in terms of their capacity it's zilch. I'm not sure if this is across the board but in this area you are not dealing with people of high intellect so you have to deal with them at a level – that's very derogatory – but to make the assumption that these guys are very intelligent and strategic, they're not. They don't understand how structures work, how the broader legislation and employment and all works and

that's what you're up against all the time, people who are aggressive but it's because of their own lack of understanding and because they only talk to one another and not to others. It's not healthy.

I don't see them and people don't see them as community workers. I see them as paramilitaries being community workers. That's where you get this nod and the wink bit, "Aye sure such and such a one will get that done." That's what makes me mad. That's not what community work's about. You get the same four or five wee lads who are told to go in and sit at a table and do a drug's course and then they're going out and smoking their joints afterwards. And they're not really doing anything and I don't even know if it's about money or getting money to pay people's salaries, or some of the kudos that's around it, because for me they don't have it as an ex-paramilitary or ex-combatant any more. I think people are beginning to look on them as 'you're just ordinary people now'. I just wonder when do people stop being an 'ex' something. When are they going to move on to be just whatever? Just a member of this community, not an ex-prisoner, or ex-combatant. Maybe things have to change so that they can think that. I don't know. I know I just get a bit fed up with things surrounding them. I think there are other groups within this society who could be more helped – mental health issues, the fallout from the conflict.

Women would trust women quicker than they would trust men and they would probably trust women on the ground rather than ex-combatants.

Some women said to me that when the prisoners got out they were thrown to the side and I asked them why and they said it's just the way things are and I said, gone are the days when boys followed in their fathers' footsteps and girls followed in their mothers'. I think that was a major thing back at the prison releases. I think there was a fear, which in some communities never materialised because a lot of the women were involved in the resettlement of those prisoners back into their own homes. Because the women had been doing it all and now someone was coming back into the family. It was a different set of circumstances altogether. He didn't come back to a compliant woman; which brings its own conflict.

My personal experience of the majority of ex-prisoners and former combatants is that they sometimes can bring good analysis, they can sometimes bring good insight, but what they're best at is running to meetings and talking over the same shite time and time again. And why they love that is there's no responsibility involved, there's no deadlines to meet, because they don't have anything to write up but they can say, "I'm doing the job because I'm going from that meeting to that meeting to that

meeting." It's busy-ness. And I think part of it is to make them feel good about themselves for taking the wage.

I think it's brilliant that ex-combatants are doing this in the community and some people run them down but they don't know the work these ex-combatants are doing. And I'm all for moving forward, we want better, we want better for our kids, and grand-children, we want equal opportunities and policing and all, but you see these guys, IRA, UVF, UDA, they earned their place in this community.

I welcome money coming in to ex-combatants and ex-prisoners. I always feel that the money is there to help reintegrate them but no money seems to go to the women who also went through that reintegration process because her standing within the family changed; her standing within the community changed. Women developed great coping mechanisms during the war. When the war ended that maybe disappeared a bit, 'I'm tired now, let him do it.' But maybe more money should have come in to them. How can you be in a position of power for 10 or 15 years and someone comes back and it all changes?

They *are* jobs for the boys; you can't deny that. And there are some really good people who have proved themselves when they come out (of jail) and the amount of work they've done extra over and beyond what they did and who work very well with women and recognise the role of women and they'll tell you it's women who helps them get things done.

There's been a few cases where the 'new kids on the block' are going to tell their granny how to suck eggs. You've got these guys coming in saying they're going to do this and do that and you say, ok, because you know they're going to fail.

Generally the men I meet in both the loyalist and republican areas are about reinforcing themselves. Obviously there's the odd individual who isn't like that, and there's no one really to push them and probe them and if my role is anything it's to challenge that and because I'm a woman I get away with it.

The ones that were ok with me would be completely honest with me and upfront with me because they respected me – for the others it would have been, 'What would she know not coming from a military background?'

I think armed organisations at the minute are being run by tired men who have done their bit and they don't want the conflict anymore. On our side they don't want to face it, don't want to tackle the hard issues. They're tired; they're grandfathers and they want an easier life.

It's such a powerful force, the allure of paramilitarism, because they're the quintessential best clothes, holidays in Spain, drinking up in the bar three to four times a week so it's that pack mentality that we're trying to fight against. If you can get them on a 1-1 basis they're fine, or if they have good role models in the community.

I think within loyalism some of those guys are struggling with their own self-esteem and own self-confidence. They need to forge out ways where they have status and in that at times they forget or there's a lack of acknowledgement about the women who held things together while they were inside. Those positions don't have to be competing. It's about for me creating healthier communities and that's about cohesion, integration, collaboration, all of that and I'm very much a person who says ex-prisoners must have a central role in how we build communities but so do women, so do young people, so do single parents – everyone together. That for me is what it's about. Nobody should have status over the other.

You hear anecdotally all the time about women feeling increasingly marginalised and sidelined, partly since prisoners came back and nobody's saying that prisoners shouldn't be involved in community work – it's great if that's the way they're going – but it's a bit about funded posts as well. I don't see women having that role any more whereas women were doing a lot of that grassroots work for years and years.

We got funding to take kids away over trouble times during the summer and it was paramilitaries who said that if the kids were not taken away from the interface over the summer there would be trouble so we got the money from OFMDFM and when we saw the photos later we said, 'They're not kids!' They're the adults. Men in their 50s. So it was almost as if the leadership were getting away. And people in the community see that. They say, they're always away.

And generally the problems we've faced have been because of paramilitary influence and in particular since they became involved in community work. It's about control.

There were guys (paramilitaries) who I know were funded and I don't know at all what they did. They may have gone to management meetings or conflict resolution, they may be involved in private meetings with their counterparts, I don't know if that was more about their relationship with other ex-combatants but in terms of contribution to this community it was absolutely minimal.

I think while Peace money funded a lot of projects in our communities I think it destroyed a lot of communities because Peace 1 funded anything and whilst you had had people for years who had done loads of voluntary work all of a sudden there

were groups who got money and I think it was particularly related to the ex-prisoner groups and where people seen it as jobs for the boys and I was one of the ones involved in the ex-prisoner group here but when people seen people getting jobs, not just ex-prisoners, they walked away, people who had done voluntary work for years. And when Peace 2 came it was harder to get money the second time round so some of the groups were no longer there and the volunteers were no longer there either so it didn't do the community any good. People never came back to community development.

You don't give people jobs if they don't have the skills. They can get the skills. You can help them get the skills but they don't get the job until they have the skills. We have to be clear. There has to be value in this for the community and giving a job to a UVF man or a UDA man or an IRA man doesn't help the community if they don't have the proper skills. The number of ex-prisoners who are around who have degrees and qualifications they had to work for them and they've put themselves in the position to get any jobs and I don't have a problem with that but you have to get yourself into that position.

This is what would scare me, the jobs for the boys, the commander being paid; I think we'd end up a Mafia state. And we see it on a regular basis and communities are being left behind because commanders are getting paid posts. They do not know how to work with people, they bully people, they are not doing consultations in their area. I think it's an utter disgrace and the areas are being left behind.

*"You don't have to signal a social conscience by looking like a frump. Lace knickers won't hasten the holocaust, you can ban the bomb in a feather boa just as well as without, and a mild interest in the length of hemlines doesn't necessarily disqualify you from reading Das Kapital and agreeing with every word."*

Elizabeth Bibesco

# EXPERIENCE OF WORKING WITH BCRC

I think BCRC focuses way too much on the constituencies, the republican constituency and the two strands of loyalism, and if they want to move forward and to be taken seriously it needs to be a lot broader than that, it needs to be sitting in the room with groups from a community development background critiquing some of the stuff that they're (BCRC) doing and I don't think BCRC is ready to hear that.

I admire BCRC but strategically I'm not too sure where they're going.

You have to look at how the BCRC came about and where it came from which is effectively representatives of the three armed groups. It was an attempt at 'de-militarisation' and using these groups to manage conflict at interface areas and then to expand beyond that including people's quality of life etc but in doing that they've moved paramilitary structures with them. So there's still a paramilitary structures hierarchy there and they have effectively pushed women out of those roles, not in any structured joined-up fashion, but if you look at where women have been over the years of conflict they've been prominent in community groups and at a community grass-roots level. They are the ones that have been dealing with interface stuff, not really having the influence to stop the violence but dealing with the after-effects of it, doing the outreach stuff, doing the cross-community work. Women would have been dealing with the after-effects rather than fire-fighting and you can understand why because if you go out and stand in the middle of a riot what are you going to do? Whereas the BCRC, these were people with influence, leaders within the community if you like, and some would say, giving off a threat of their own violence in order to stop more violence, whereas you have that network of women who are working across the community, working with young people but that is the preventative stuff as well as the after-effects of it. So with BCRC becoming effectively established they claimed that as their work and in hindsight maybe there wasn't

enough coordination of what was there in the first place. The women are still there, the community groups are still there, and I know that some of them feel they have been set aside which is why this piece of research is very, very important.

No one can count in the last 10 years how many buses were not burnt, how many windows weren't broken because of the mobile network, how many people were not killed, through the work we've done on parades, the work we've done on policing, no one can count it and the powers that be don't want to know. But I feel very privileged to have been able to be involved and to make a difference. But there's no value given to the work, to the unsung heroes, the ordinary people struggling to bring their kids up through all the shite that goes on.

People have come a long way and things that would have been set in stone 20 years ago are no longer regarded in that way. And I think BCRC has to go to the fore of what they're about and what republicanism is about and it's about socialism and those core values.

The nature of interface violence has changed over the years so BCRC needs to go beyond gender and look at generational and look at children and young people as well and how they work with young people and women. If they are about evolving, if they are about enhancing people's quality of life, if they are about complete de-militarisation then they have to draw in all strands of the community. They can't operate as a hierarchical, stand-alone, male-dominated structure.

I think the structure of BCRC is wrong. There should be more women on it. And I'm a supporter of BCRC. But it's about interfaces and they need to get out there and challenge these people who are bitter and bring them along. We need to sort out our own area before we start to try to sort out others. It has to be a community thing. It won't work without the community. And the two key contact workers we had weren't from our area but I live in the area but I wasn't asked to be a key contact. If I'd been a male I would have been asked, certainly. I have no difficulty with who was made the contact but they lived outside the area and if anything happened it was me who was on the ground and me who was phoning them. I was doing the work but didn't have the title.  I think maybe they thought a man would have more clout if trouble broke out or if I wasn't listened to but I would have had no problem phoning men if I needed that.

There's mixed feelings about the success of BCRC within the community – some key area contacts seem to work with community groups and other representatives and statutory agencies such as the police but others don't seem to do anything. When

there have been meetings called with the police and community groups to discuss interface issues the BCRC reps didn't attend. Their response was, "This is our area (of work). We deal with the interface not youse."  That hasn't been resolved yet.

We've engaged with these guys and they're all brilliant guys. We went along to the workshops.

Communities have a problem when they see people doing interface work (BCRC) when they're not even from the area. And they're saying, what right have these ones to come and tell us what to do.

Some people have a problem with BCRC but it's to do with personalities.

When BCRC was being set up we were asked if we would be on their partnership and as such that we would go along and contribute to the meeting and get some training into the area. We never got invited to a meeting but they had us on their application, never seen minutes, never got any resources. We didn't want money for office costs but wanted training. We went over and met them, we followed it up but we never got one benefit out of it. Even when we had a specific project, with a specific set of men in mind who we felt could be benefiting from this conflict resolution training they never got back to us but from the start of the project to the end we were seen as a partner organisation. So when they approached us recently to get involved in some other research, residentials and things like that, we just said, sorry, we're not interested because we thought this would just be another opportunity for them to say, oh, we consulted with this organisation. I don't have a problem with going into partnership consortiums and people having a different role but we felt that was just them ticking a box.

Part of the problem is you have key workers not coming out and doing what they're supposed to be doing then you have others (in the community) saying, we need to respond to this, we're going to call a meeting, we're going to get all the groups together because that's how you need to tackle this, and BCRC saying, 'that's out job, it's none of your business, you shouldn't be dealing with this.' So BCRC has to fit within the tapestry of network of statutory organisations and community organisations that are there because they can't resolve it on their own and they can't be precious of what they do and say clear off. And that's why in many respects you don't see the women from the other organisations that are there. That's only one small example; there are other examples where they work very well with community groups and agencies and maybe there's more training for those individuals required to say community development is about developing community relationships,

identifying needs in the community and what part can BCRC play in that. Is it more about maintaining jobs for the boys? Is it about maintaining paramilitary-type structures in a civilian theatre? That's what some people think it's about because when there's not successes – and you know you're only as good as your last job - people are very scathing about it.

I've been to quite a few conferences the BCRC have organised and found them very, very interesting and felt that if there had been a follow up. I think there's a lot of initiative there and I think maybe if that was developed, not just one-off conferences but maybe coming into the communities to do some small programmes, should it be around transformation or even breaking down some of the myths that people have. And maybe after an initial workshop if people have ideas as to how that workshop could benefit the community – it's not always down to the organiser, it's maybe up to those who attended to say, 'We believe this is something could work in our community but it needs to be developed into a 4-6 week programme and long-term it will feed into a BCRC programme that you can roll out to other communities.'

The BCRC should make themselves more known to the community. They should interact more with the community.

I know more about what's happening than a man would. And that's the same for other women so if women were on BCRC they would know far more about what's going on. Because women also come to us to tell us things because they believe we are close to the paramilitaries whereas they would not go direct to them.

I don't think women have been side-lined. In certain occupations, jobs, I still believe that BCRC and that, men, they're the ones that want to do it. Even bands; how many women's bands are there? The Orange Order; the Orange Order has the majority men. Yes, there's a few women's lodges but it's hierarchic. How do you break down that? I think that's what every community should be looking at.

And you've a bit of hypocrisy about it too. You've these people in BCRC set up to deal with the violence at interfaces but meanwhile they're also intimidating and threatening young ones for anti-social behaviour when there are structures in place to deal with that. So there's that tension within the community. They're not integrating. They're not helping to address the problems and issues that exist within the community by peaceful, civilianised means; they're resorting to the paramilitary structures.

You need the leadership bought into it or else it's a nod and a wink to whatever else goes on and that's the difficulty with de-militarisation and if it is understood as only

moving your paramilitary structures into a structure that exists within the community then it's not going to work.

For BCRC to evolve into community development it has to be about integration rather than takeover, rather than pushing out other groups. I think it's about not having an understanding of the power of relationships and the strength in having the network of relationships and that's what community development is about, it's about using the resources that are there to make things better. There are some people (in BCRC) who totally get that and the others, maybe it's lack of confidence, maybe it's about status, about power, but the attitude is, "This is ours, clear off."

I would like to ask the BCRC, if they are evolving into a community development group, where are the women in this? Where are the young people involved in this? Where are the elderly people involved in this? Because community development is about identifying and meeting the needs of the community. What are the needs? Can you identify the needs? Are you going to duplicate what's already there? Or are you bringing something different and if not why are you not just integrating into the other groups that are there? Is there still a need for BCRC? Can that interface be dealt with by other agencies working together? I think it can. Because when you see some of the stuff that's happening on the interface BCRC are having less and less influence. Is it about the continued existence of BCRC or what the community needs?

In the loyalist community the difficulties lie in the unaddressed, underlying issues between the UDA and the UVF. They're segregated. They drink in separate pubs. Every now and again it spills over into violence though not so much today because of what happened during the loyalist feud. But they're still controlling their own areas. That historical stuff between those two organisations still needs to be addressed. It has restricted community development because if you speak to any of the statutory agencies, or funders, or whatever, they feel it so difficult to work in loyalist areas because they're having to deal with localism all the time, big issues, issues of intimidation and punishment beatings. These are ones that are under the radar. Young people being exiled; it's still going on. Even though you have organisations like Alternatives, you get the crap beat out of you and then told to go to Alternatives. Those issues still need to be dealt with because they still haven't fully transformed and there's issues around women. Where are the women? And the attitudes towards women. Why are the women not involved? Why are they not valued and respected? So whilst BCRC might look outwardly in terms of community development they also need to look internally and ask what can they as former combatants do for their

community because there's a certain hypocrisy of, "Oh, we're going to go out and develop the community."

BCRC doesn't have widespread support within the paramilitary groups so if it doesn't have widespread support how successful can it be? And I think there's an awful lot of internal work needs to be done because there are difficulties with some of the key contacts and they're really the ambassadors of BCRC and if they're not doing what they should be doing, or their friends are not doing what they should be doing, it reflects on the BCRC.

I do think BCRC's jobs for the boys but I don't think that's a bad thing in that context. I think it was a necessary thing but I think they as an organisation need to find their role, where they sit, either comfortably or uncomfortably beside other organisations within the community and I don't think that has necessarily happened. I don't think interface work should be necessarily the domain of only BCRC and that has been problematic in communities where ordinary community workers have been doing that work for years and suddenly the heavies come in and, "You bugger off, we're going to do this," but without the appropriate training and skill. For instance on one interface our people, both male and female, engage with young people using a youth work approach to try and work with them but the impression is that the BCRC workers then come in with an implicit threat and there's no engagement with young people because that skill is not there and that's the situation dealt with but there's been no positive engagement with the young people; it doesn't change their behaviour or attitudes. I think that's only true of some of the workers of BCRC because I'm a big supporter of BCRC.

I do think there's a job for BCRC especially in loyalist communities, maybe not so much in republican areas, but in loyalist areas some of the ex-prisoners or ex-combatants ... there's a job of work as to how we integrate those men into normal community structures and especially some of them who might have a reputation for punishing young people. And all of that takes time; someone cannot change their persona overnight. Communities cannot begin to see someone differently overnight but I would be a big believer in we need to start that process and I think BCRC is shying away from the really hard work that needs to be done there with communities.

There's the whole systemic discrimination and the things we just take for granted that are part of the system and women's roles within communities and I think that for many men within organisations like the BCRC that's going to be very difficult.

My sense is of what I'm getting now is that was grand, youse did a good job there for 30 years but, like the end of the war, away you go because we're back and we're now into community development. But you can't force the people off the pitch who were the only ones who had any ball to play with. That's the sense that I've got over the past couple of years. I'm certainly not ready to go away to just let anyone else come in.

BCRC's primary focus is about pulling loyalists and republicans together but some (in the community) then see that as they are only paramilitaries so the community development stuff has nothing to do with them, doesn't affect them. And I think they BCRC) need to be very careful; are they the people who are continually seen as the ones who come out and trouble-shoot when the shit hits the fan or do they need to make a more conscious decision that they have more to bring to the table?

Why are there not young people involved at (BCRC) staff level or steering group level? And why's there no women? And I think that flagging it up as an issue is ok but you can pay lip-service to it and not really want to do anything about it. So I would love to see something coming out of this research that challenges BCRC.

I think BCRC gives out mixed messages. I think there are so many dynamics at work within BCRC.

You don't have to exist forever. The future is not dependent upon a party or whatever existing. You organise not just for the moment but for social change.

BCRC doesn't have all the answers and I think they should be upfront and say that but there's almost a reluctance to admit they don't have answers to all the problems. With the best will in the world no one can cure all the ailments in an area. I think it great that people gravitate towards republicans because they see them as having leadership and able to give advice, guidance, direction but they need to be real about what it is they can actually deliver in terms of people's expectations. I think we are faced with all sorts of challenges and I don't think we discuss enough about how we deal with all of this.

I think BCRC could be a lot more proactive in terms of getting loyalism to look at itself and where it is with its own communities because if loyalism and loyalist reps aren't engaging with their own communities at street level and if they are seen as the muscle men and republicans are in partnership with them, that must be seen by working class loyalist people that republicans must be the exact same. BCRC needs to put its money where its mouth is and stop paying lip-service to these issues.

If you look at the age of people on interface work, especially coming from the constituencies that make up BCRC, you're talking about 35-50 years on average and in terms of engaging some of the young people on the interface what relevance would someone in their 40s have with someone in their teens?

I don't know about their (BCRC) management committee or anything but anything I've been involved in I'm nearly always the only woman. In terms of that strategic level it's all men. Very male-dominated and God, it's like that throughout. It's as if you have to fight to be there. There'd be things I'd go to and not be invited but would turn up anyway.

I was critical of BCRC when it was being set up because I couldn't see what was different from what community groups have been doing over the past 25 years. They did sell it in the way that they said they were going to complement a lot of what was being done and I said I would be fearful that they would come in and duplicate work and they assured us as community organisations that they would only complement the work and not take over projects. I also think from the outset the management structure was wrong because they didn't have any females on it and it was like the old-boys network that we had throughout the whole conflict here. If anything went wrong you went to see the boys. That's who you went to see, the boys. The statutory agencies also took that approach. If there was conflict coming up at the interface they'd come in and see the boys. They wouldn't see the other people in the community who were doing work behind the scenes.

The key area contacts meet with the PSNI and people in the community who work on the interface then see them as fire-fighters and they wonder why aren't they meeting the PSNI? Why don't the PSNI meet with the rest of the people rather than just the BCRC and the key area contacts? And then there's a bit of frustration round that whole phone network thing and things not being done and for many years the local community had the networks and they're the ones who phoned each other on either side of the communities and now BCRC seems to have taken over that role going back to what was said about taking over structures that were already working there for many years. So BCRC from a community perspective doesn't seem to have – now I have a clear perception of what they want to do but other people who work in the community don't see the role of BCRC in terms of what they do different from other community interface groups working on the ground at the minute. And in terms of female representation on the groups I was at a meeting last week and I was the only woman there. So there does need to be change and I think women have a big role to play.

I think what happens is you get BCRC attending things as an organisation, they've worked on some projects within the community, but I don't think there's a clear enough role to say this is what we do, this is what we do different. What do key area contacts do? I think there needs to be more awareness of what they do and what they do different.

Contacts have strengthened between the loyalist and nationalist areas even in terms of lifting the phone and I think those contacts would be there even if BCRC didn't exist so what is BCRC bringing? I think BCRC developed because there were funds available.

The problem with BCRC, and I'm not saying this is the fault of the workers, is some of the people working in BCRC are either based in the organisation where they came from or they already had a certain alignment to an organisation and through no fault of their own they probably get pulled both ways. So maybe it's about where the BCRC staff is placed. At our interface group the BCRC rep hasn't been at in for the last four meetings.

I'm not saying put a woman in just because she's a woman but because she has the skills but I know women out there who have the skills, more so than a lot of ones in the BCRC, but the ones in BCRC are there because they came from a certain perspective.

It would free up work from us if it was clear what BCRC was doing. I mean, is BCRC just an interface group? Are they just tasked to do work at interfaces? Is that what they were set up for? Because now you have the Belfast Interface Trust which is citywide and has a good reputation all over the city and then you have these community interface practitioners so is BCRC an interface group or what is it? Certainly it would be perceived within the community as being an interface group.

I don't think the BCRC has proved itself to be totally successful yet. Their literature is totally different to how they're perceived. They say they're taking a grassroots approach to how they're tackling conflict resolution throughout, not just interfaces, and I don't think that's actually to be seen yet so I don't know if it would matter if there were more women on it or not. Until they can prove what their mission statement was I don't think that's what's been seen. I think the work would go on anyway (if BCRC wasn't there). I think it was just another organisation set up.

We have been doing interface work and will continue to do it and will pull in any resources we need if the time and need arrives for it no matter who we need to

approach. We wouldn't have a problem with that. Would you go to contact BCRC as an organisation? No. But you'd probably contact individuals within BCRC.

They (BCRC) would contact us if they wanted something done, if they wanted people pulled together or whatever. And that's the way it's been. We've never went to them, they've come to us to ask for certain things, can we hire a hall, can we get residents together. We're doing their work. They come in and tell us what they want done and we go and do it. And we've done it because it's probably the work we're involved in anyway so it's no big deal but I still do think they've to prove themselves.

If you were a funder it made sense to give funding to BCRC at the time because it brought people together but in 2-3 years time and hopefully things moved on it might not make sense to fund them.

When I ask (the BCRC) what do youse do I rarely get an answer. I know people who sit on it (management) and I have high regard for them but do people know what they do? And how are they connected into the communities because I don't see how they're connected into them. My understanding of them up until six months ago was that they look after parades and contentious issues like flags and I didn't think they had any other role and the only way I found out was that someone put me on their email list and I got all this stuff which was great stuff, like conferences and workshops on tourism and all that and I'm thinking, this is not what I understand BCRC to be doing. Not that they shouldn't be doing it but I didn't understand them to be doing it. So they maybe have, in my opinion, an identity crisis which they need to sort out. They need to tell people what their role is and what they do. I don't want to be standing at parades and stuff but there is a piece of work that needs to be done around peacebuilding and interfaces and for me it's not about community safety, it's about community development and if you develop the right things in your community then you create that safety.

The perception is it's jobs for the boys. I was asked the other week what they did and I said I didn't know and I actually went and asked one of them and I came away scratching my head because I still don't know what he does. And my concern about all this is that when the funny money comes, the Social Investment Fund, we need to be very careful that communities don't get left behind. I've no problem with paramilitaries but it has to come through the community. We need to show where people are tied into the community and show where the community principles and values are.

Is it possible to bring women onto BCRC? Women with a community background? In equal numbers to the men? But the problem is that sometimes the men are not the right men. It's the ones they can get to go on it rather than quality people. I mean there's no interview, no criterion for the person you're looking for. It's just who's available.

I think the problem is you don't get the same quality round the table. The republicans have thought this out. The conversation with the republicans is a very quality thing but with the loyalists it's not. Now it depends on who you talk to. But you need to put quality people in. The people with the skills.

*"I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a door mat or a prostitute."*

Rebecca West

# SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

BCRC has achieved a lot. To conceive of and then create an organization with management and staff representing three very different constituencies, each with their own inter and intra-communal tensions and conflicts, and to get recognition and subsequently a considerable amount of Peace funding is a very credible achievement. To have been able to continue in its work, despite the many major challenges that this particular type of work inevitably throws up, is a reflection of the trust that has been built up, the structures in place to deal with tensions and conflicts once they do arise, and, most importantly the very positive personal relationships that have developed and in some instances sustained the organization through its most troubled times. Highlighting these successes, however, is not to take away from the very real practical challenges that exist for BCRC as an organization; challenges in terms of how the organization itself functions, how it is perceived by others, and, how as an organization it carries out its work.

As a body BCRC has sought to implement equal representation to each of its constituent groups but equality in this respect does not negate the very real 'inequalities' or uneven development that exists within the organization in terms of experience, political support, and community involvement. This is not in itself the fault of BCRC as an organization, or the people who staff or manage it, but a reflection of the politics, history, and culture of the constituent groupings that it attempts to engage in a common endeavour. It was not the purpose of this piece of research to examine the internal day-to-day workings of BCRC staff, key area contacts, the role of management, or the interconnectedness and working relationships of all three of those, but it is critically important to flag up this uneven development as it impacts considerably on our understanding of BCRC and what is achievable in terms of the objectives set for this study, namely:

> ❖ to analyse the significance of gender in conflict resolution work in interface areas of Belfast

❖ to examine if gender matters and in what way it is important
❖ to make recommendations for a gender strategy for the organization

- There appears to be a gap in understanding of the role of BCRC (or how its work is implemented on the ground) between staff and management which may arise from the latter being made up of representatives of three different constituencies which only meet occasionally, whereas the former, though reflecting those three constituencies, interact on a daily basis and according to an agreed work programme.

- Everyone I spoke to in the course of my research agreed that, apart from occasional flare-ups such as the one at Broadway in 2010 and (annually) in Ardoyne following the 12th July parade, that there is a marked reduction in interface violence and that this has greatly improved community life. It is impossible, however, to gauge (from this or any other study) to what extent BCRC has influenced that decrease in violence as that is the peculiarity of the work it does – the quieter interface areas are (as a result of the work carried out by BCRC and others) the less 'evidence' exists that there was ever a problem to begin with.

- In a general sense interviewees felt that bringing interface residents together and building relationships on the back of that face-to-face contact works well. It helps to dispel myths and perceptions of the other community and builds confidence within the wider community to take risks and show by example. Involving local people on interface issues was also spoken of as being a catalyst for other work in the community. There was an identification of common issues affecting all and a lessening of fear which means people now feel they can go to places where they wouldn't have gone previously and that real conversations can now be had. That the city has opened up through increased access and taking ownership of the space has led to a changing of the 'them and us' mindset to an 'all of us' mindset.

- In the course of the research the following questions were often posed to me; 'What defines an interface worker?' 'What defines an interface?' 'What should interface work entail?' There were different views about what actually constitutes an interface but widespread agreement that;

❖ Work on the interface must be seen as integral to community development and vice versa, that it could not and should not be reduced to firefighting

❖ it is a long-term project

❖ it is about working with young people in particular

❖ it is about empowering people and communities, not organizations or political parties

❖ it is about identifying issues and assisting communities to deal with these

❖ about fostering and building positive relations both inter-community and intra-community as all have suffered

❖ about creating spaces to share ideas, about breaking down walls within minds, not just divides of a physical nature

❖ prioritising 'quality of life' issues

- Those I spoke with seen the current situation regarding interface work in a much larger context of poverty and the link between poverty and anti-social behavior, of the need for better education, the need for a better relationship and engagement between communities and statutory agencies, and in particular a need for community policing in interface areas. Drugs were also referred to as a major problem. The more personal or community issues were also raised such as, the ongoing fear of other areas due to lack of contact or understanding, fear on behalf of their children and their children's future, the risks of cross-community friendships, and a fear of 'ongoing paramilitary control'. One interviewee referred to the legacy of the UDA/UVF feud as being one of the biggest impediments to community development in loyalist working class areas and that it was probably easier for either of those groups to work with republicans than with one another.

- The view was also expressed that in attempting to bring community groups together there is the need to recognize that there is a rivalry between groups for the limited resources available and the fact that BCRC is perceived by many as being currently the 'flavour of the month' in terms of funders (though several thought that would be a short-lived arrangement not least because of Peace funding ending shortly, the current severe economic conditions, and as society moves further away from the conflict and local institutions become more established) can help foster this sense of rivalry, envy, or, in some instances, outright opposition. One comment made was, "How can community work be supported if groups and in particular women have been pushed to one side by 'these newly funded interface workers (i.e. BCRC)?"

- There was a general view expressed that women don't be accorded the same respect as men and that their contribution to local communities is not valued and yet they take risks to go to other areas and engage in work that men will often not take up as women are 'seen to bring calmness to tense interface situations'. It was strongly argued that there are many women working on the ground in interface areas but that it is men getting the paid jobs and asked is it because women will accept less or that they 'just get on with the work?' More significantly, it was stated that female community workers at the interfaces are frequently looked to and listened to - but yet not really heard – and in some instances are being pushed to take on an even bigger role even though they already have too much on their plate 'as women tend to be too busy juggling everything else'. And:

  - ❖ Women's work is always there but is generally unrecognised and not valued sufficiently.
  - ❖ Men remain the spokespeople while women stay in the background.
  - ❖ There is still a perception that women should take on the 'make the tea' role. Women are seen as 'less powerful' in interface work.
  - ❖ The value placed on women's groups/projects is often reflected in the (little) amount of funding/support given to these.
  - ❖ Men get the paid jobs; women do the unpaid work.
  - ❖ Youth frequently challenge male interface workers' authority and legitimacy and women could/should take on a more prominent role.
  - ❖ What of (the lack of) women's representation on BCRC?
  - ❖ Childcare limits women's participation. Structure times to suit/accommodate women.
  - ❖ And one interviewee expressed the view that, "Men caused the violence – women picked up the pieces".

- It was frequently stated that women-only work must be supported, that the displacement of women and female community activists by men must be looked at, and additional areas to be addressed include issues of; suicide, mental health, education, caring responsibilities for children, addiction, the aged and infirm trapped in homes, those isolated/fearful, the sexualisation of young girls, the lack of jobs and job opportunities, the need for flexible working opportunities for women (who also have domestic and child-minding responsibilities), and the need for an increase in community safety.

- Some women experienced very real difficulties working with male interface workers as they felt they are reluctant to work with women's groups and yet,

in their (interviewees') view more input from women and a challenge to the male-dominated power structures, was what was essential to organizations such as BCRC. They felt that women did not have a voice especially when it came to raising issues like domestic violence and have them taken seriously and acted upon and asked, in light of the topic of my research, 'Can such gender-specific issues even be considered by BCRC?'

- The perception on the ground is often that those involved with BCRC are primarily concerned with representing, protecting, and maintaining specific constituencies (paramilitary organizations) rather than the needs of their community and that this often conflicts with what others in the community are trying to do in terms of community development and working with youth and other sectors.

- There was the view that it is 'jobs for the boys' and that interface workers 'with paramilitary backgrounds' are being funded without qualifications, not receiving proper training in youth work or community development, not engaging in any meaningful manner with long-established community organizations, not challenging real issues in the community, and that they are not positive role models for young people as some appear to regard their role (as interface workers) as a continuation of their 'paramilitary involvement and position' rather than in a community development context. However, others felt that there are former prisoners and combatants who have played a very positive role in moving things forward within their communities but they were spoken of in terms of individuals rather than as representatives of organizations, or ex-prisoners, or ex-combatants.

- Overall there was a sense of confusion about the actual role of BCRC with most seeing it as dealing with violence at the interface and negotiating issues around parades and flags.

- There was the view of the organization being almost exclusively male, if not entirely male, and that the approach adopted by some key area contacts reflects a 'male' and paramilitary way of dealing with issues rather than a community development model.

- People want to see more women involved in BCRC, on management and on the ground. They also want young people more involved and to the fore. They

want BCRC to engage with community organizations, to host 'workshops that work', to hold the PSNI accountable for their actions, to see good working practice on the ground from their staff and key area contacts with proper, transparent, and accountable processes, to include residents, to get information out to people about what the organization is about, to include representatives from all areas.

- Several interviewees stated that BCRC should adopt and apply UN resolution 1325 to its work.

- Some felt that loyalists need BCRC in a way that republicans don't as republicans have their own organization (Belfast Reconciliation Network) and that loyalists need to bring on board the experience and talent that exists within their own areas (in community organizations) but that when the objective is about maintaining paramilitary structures and status, and about rivalry and suspicion between the UDA and UVF, then the needs of their community will always be underplayed and suffer as a result.

- There are men in the community, including former prisoners and combatants, who women feel very comfortable to work with because they feel that they respect and value their contribution.

The main conclusion to be drawn from this study is that that people on interface areas across Belfast want a better life for themselves, their families and community. They want a peaceful future, opportunities for their children, proper facilities and a high standard of service from statutory agencies. They are ready and willing to work with anyone, including BCRC, to achieve that as long as everyone is there on an equal basis, that all views are listened to, their communal experience is recognized, and that they have an equal say in decision-making. It would take very little effort on the part of BCRC to vastly improve relations with those community groups.

A lot of opportunities exist to enhance the work of all in the community, if the will exists, the leadership given, and example shown.

There are some very good examples of work on the interface. One project I looked at has very good inter-community relations, responds quickly and well when trouble arises, and displays a high level of shared trust. Another has gone much further than that and is jointly working on community development projects which straddle the

interface. Both were examples of good practice, good organization, and good communication.

Any gender strategy for BCRC will only be effective if located within a broader understanding of the role of the organisation within the context of de-militarisation, peacebuilding, and community development.

A programme of gender awareness raising for staff would be easier to accomplish than with the organization as a whole as staff interact on a daily basis and to a common work programme.

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."*

Margaret Mead

# RECOMMENDATIONS

As outlined in the methodology and displayed through the findings of this research, the issue of gender was looked at in the broader context of women working on the interface, women in community development, and the interactions and experience those women have of working with men in general, former combatants and ex-prisoners in particular, and BCRC. Many of the comments contained in the Findings Chapter therefore go well outside the terms of reference for this research. I have included them, however, so that BCRC staff and management can formulate a view of what wider considerations need to be taken into consideration if a gender strategy for the organisation is to be implemented and what obstacles they are likely to encounter. Based on the findings of this research, however, my view is that a gender strategy for BCRC will only be effective if located within a broader understanding of the role of the organisation within the context of de-militarisation, peacebuilding, and community development.

1. That this report be studied in detail by management and staff.

2. That an agreed response from management and staff be arrived at, ideally following discussion facilitated by someone(s) external to BCRC.

3. That response does not have to be a detailed one dealing with the range of issues raised but more an overall indication of how the BCRC management and staff regard the content of the report and their willingness (or otherwise) to engage with the participants in the research.

4. That if there is a willingness to engage with the participants in the research that the report is then circulated to the interviewees seeking their permission to list them as contributors but still retaining anonymity regarding their comments made during the course of the research.

5. That a focus group meeting made up of those who took part in the original research be convened to discuss the report, the response from BCRC, and to offer practical suggestions for taking it forward.

6. That the report then be published and widely distributed to interested parties.

7. That a programme for gender awareness raising within BCRC be devised in consultation with BCRC staff and management, taking cognisance of the make-up of the organisation and its current stage of development.

8. That BCRC should work towards equal female/male representation on its Management.

9. That BCRC should include both female and male community representatives on its management who have many years experience of community development and not necessarily reflective of the three constituencies.

10. That those community representatives advise on how best BCRC can operate with a community development strategy.

11. That BCRC should include on its management those who have experience of youth work.

12. That those with the experience of youth work advise on how best BCRC staff and key stake holders engage with youth.

13. That BCRC examine those interface community projects that reflect models of good practice, engagement, and communication.

# APPENDIX A

# GENDER AT THE INTERFACE
Programme for focus group meeting - 23 February 2011

2.00 p.m. **Welcome and introductions – Joanna McMinn**

Purpose of the focus group, methodology and desired outcomes, ground rules

2.15 p.m. **Broad context of the BCRC research**

Observations from interviews – Laurence McKeown

2.30 p.m. **Session 1: Broad Interface Work**
- What has been most successful for you in terms of working at interface areas? What are the good things that come out of this work?
- What  are the challenges for you in this work?
- How do you see interface projects fitting within a community development context?

3.00 p.m. **Session 2: Gender at the Interface**
- What are the experiences specific to women living in interface areas that need to be addressed?
- How is the work you do given value?  In terms of recognition, jobs in the community, involvement in decision making, relationships of solidarity?
- Do  men and women address the challenges of interface work differently, if at all?
- What support from men do you get in carrying out your work?

3.30 p.m. **Session 3: Actions and Recommendations**

- What do you know about the work of BCRC?
- What suggestions would you make to BCRC in terms of assisting you in your work?
- What suggestions would you make to men within your community that would support your work?

4.00 p.m. **Feedback and Next Steps**

4.30 p.m. **Finish**

# APPENDIX B

# GENDER AT THE INTERFACE
### Notes from focus group meeting - 23 February 2011

## Welcome, Introductions,
## Purpose

- to bring together women activists from different parts of the city and different experiences
- to focus on questions that have arisen from one to one interviews
- to help in the drawing up of recommendations for BCRC

## Ground Rules

Switch mobiles off/silent

Speak for oneself

Give everyone time to speak

Listen actively

Don't make assumptions; rather, ask clarifying questions

Confidentiality

## Delta exercise (at conclusion)

### What worked well?
World cafe format

Questions

Conversations

Sharing experiences

Openness/honesty

Felt comfortable

Tables

### What could be improved?
Spoons for tea!

Agreed format for taking notes

Like to see men's response

# Notes from Session 1

**Broad Interface Work**

What has been most successful for you in terms of working at interface areas?  What are the good things that come out of this work?

- What are the challenges for you in this work?
- How do you see interface projects fitting within a community development context?

**Most successful:**

Rebuilding positive relations

Interface on both sides

Reduction in interface violence

Bringing interface residents together, relationships built on the back of face-to-face contact

Involving local people has been a catalyst for other work

Reduction in interface violence

Bring residents together – cross community contact and build relationships

Lessening of fear

Opening up of dialogue – increased contact

Creating space to share ideas

Issues of common concern

Increased access to the city

A lessening of fear means people can go places where they couldn't go previously and real conversations can be had – the city has opened up through increased access and taking ownership of the space

Identification of common issues

Bring community groups together –

Break down walls within minds – not just physical divides

Rural aspirations far higher than interface areas

Increased contact and building personal relationships has helped to dispel myths/perceptions of the other community - building confidence within the wider community by taking risks and show by example

Changing of the 'them and us' mindset to a 'all of us' mindset

**Challenges:**

How do we manage integration?

How do we involve/engage those who resist change?

Male-dominated power structures

Narrow view of what an interface is and what interface work should entail (i.e. prioritising quality of life issues rather than fire fighting)

Power structures (male dominated)

Interface workers being funded without qualifications, not receiving training, with paramilitary background – evidence in loyalist areas of continued paramilitary involvement – not positive role models or influence in the area. Not challenging issues like racism.

Difficulties for women working with these interface workers – they are reluctant to work with women's groups.

How can women in the area have a voice – can they raise issues like domestic violence and have them taken seriously and acted upon by community representatives?

Can these gender-specific issues be considered by BCRC?

More input from women

Different perspective of what an 'interface' is

Move away from fire-fighting

Better education – link between poverty – rioting – low esteem

Make councils responsible to local communities – jobs/new projects etc

Rivalry between groups for resources

Lack of relationship with stats

Lack of community policing

Relationship with statutory agencies, such as PSNI and the housing executive and their lack of communication with local communities – there is a clear need for community policing in interface areas as well as general partnership working between stats and local communities

**Community development context:**

Community development should be/is an integral part of interface work

Focus on empowering people

Community relations related

What defines an interface worker?

Identify tensions and developing communities to deal with these

How can this be supported if groups and in particular women have been pushed to one side by these newly funded interface workers?

Women-only work must be supported.

Displacement of women has to be looked at – situation in danger of deteriorating.

Capacity and vision – is this there within BCRC?

Community safety – where is the community? Why should this be part of paramilitary work?

# Notes from Session 2

**Gender at the Interface**
- What are the experiences specific to women living in interface areas that need to be addressed?
- How is the work you do given value? In terms of recognition, jobs in the community, involvement in decision making, relationships of solidarity?
- Do men and women address the challenges of interface work differently, if at all?
- What support from men do you get in carrying out your work?

Some women's interface work is not recorded but enables women to come from different areas and meet.

Some women are being pushed to take on a bigger role but already have too much on their plate ('if I don't do it, who is?') as women tend to be too busy juggling everything

Women's work is always there but is generally unrecognised and not valued sufficiently

Men remain the spokespeople while women stay in the background

Female interface workers are frequently looked at and listened to but not really heard

Women don't have the same respect as men

Women take risks to go to other areas that men will not (police centre)

Women can bring calmness to tense interface situations.

Men caused the violence – women picked up the pieces

Women are too busy 'getting on with it'

Women don't speak up enough

There is still a perception that women should take on the 'make the tea' role

Some differences between communities/areas could be noted

The gender balance often reflect the gender balance within government and the structures you know/support

Women are seen as 'less powerful' in interface work

The value placed on women's groups/projects is often reflected in amount of funding/support given to these

Men tend to view the role of interface workers as 'policing the interface' rather than being community workers

Youth frequently challenge male interface workers' authority and legitimacy and women could/should take on a more prominent role

Areas that need to be addressed: domestic violence, suicide, mental health, education, caring responsibilities for children, addiction, trapped in homes, isolated/fearful, sexualisation of girls, lack of job and job opportunities, flexible working opportunities, increase in crime/community safety, lack of support

Fear of other areas – fear on behalf of children – risks of cross community friendships

Gated enclosed communities – increases risk and fear – paramilitary control

Very frustrating to not be able to build on work – endless pilots/lack of support

Also can be hard to get women to engage in cross-community work

Community work and interface work – how connected are they?

Is it artificial or organic?

Is some cross community interface work forced?

One very successful area of work is through residents' groups where women are active.

Women on the ground but men getting jobs. Is it because women will accept less or get on with it? Job share?

Can we advertise women's jobs?

Issue of ex-combatant partners – left in limbo?

Recognition for unpaid workers

Cultural differences

'no class system' – no jobs, no education, no support

Drugs a major problem

The Troubles are responsible for today's society

No fear among young ones

No role models within the home

# Notes from Session 3

**Actions and Recommendations**
- What do you know about the work of BCRC?
- What suggestions would you make to BCRC in terms of assisting you in your work?
- What suggestions would you make to men within your community that would support your work?

Not much knowledge about what BCRC is or does

Women representation in BCRC

Childcare limits women's participation

Structure times to suit/accommodate women

Domestic violence

Did anyone ask community?

BCRC – legitimacy to ex-combatants and get buy-in and manage dissent – threat of not this way what would be consequences? But what about women's groups, who were they all along? Did they not have clout of male ex-combatants?

Message about who is most important and who needs to be bought off?

Interface work/community work

How ex-combatants regarded differently in different communities – loyalist/republican

Women's groups different relationship to state – groups during and post-conflict – funding during and post-conflict

How has funding changed?

BCRC work includes work on interface. They work with ex-combatants on both sides of the divide

Make police accountable for their actions

Workshops that work

On the ground good working practice

Bring more people on board (young)

What can work better?

Include more residents/information to all community groups

Small steps

More women to be included – male top heavy

The basic concept works

Must include representatives from all areas

Heard of it but don't know a lot

Perceived to not work with existing groups who already deal with community development and quality of life issues

Paramilitary background, male, use of threats to get things done

Perception: jobs for the boys

Different opinions of BCRC reps in different areas – relevant in some areas but not in others

Abuse of power and position in some areas

Many groups fear being 'taken over' by BCRC

BCRC has to prove that they're worth working with

Should BCRC go away - Yes

BCRC needs to work better with existing groups and networks

Not relevant to community development – should focus on conflict transformation

BCRC needs to 'police' its Key Area Contacts to ensure they add value rather than being a cause of the problem in areas

The military baggage and the corresponding dynamics need to be addressed

A gender balance is required and BCRC should ensure it applies UN resolution 1325 in its work

BCRC needs to revisit the true meaning of community development and act accordingly

Recognise the value of the contribution made by women in local communities

# APPENDIX C

United Nations S/RES/1325 (2000)

# Security Council Distr.: General
31 October 2000
00-72018 (E)

**Resolution 1325 (2000)**
**Adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th meeting, on**
**31 October 2000**

*The Security Council,*

*Recalling* its resolutions 1261 (1999) of 25 August 1999, 1265 (1999) of 17
September 1999, 1296 (2000) of 19 April 2000 and 1314 (2000) of 11 August 2000,
as well as relevant statements of its President, and *recalling also* the statement of its
President to the press on the occasion of the United Nations Day for Women's
Rights and International Peace (International Women's Day) of 8 March 2000
(SC/6816),

*Recalling also* the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for
Action (A/52/231) as well as those contained in the outcome document of the
twenty-third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly entitled
"Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First
Century" (A/S-23/10/Rev.1), in particular those concerning women and armed
conflict,

*Bearing in mind* the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United
Nations and the primary responsibility of the Security Council under the Charter for
the maintenance of international peace and security,

*Expressing* concern that civilians, particularly women and children, account
for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as

refugees and internally displaced persons, and increasingly are targeted by combatants and armed elements, and *recognizing* the consequent impact this has on durable peace and reconciliation,

*Reaffirming* the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and *stressing* the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution,

*Reaffirming also* the need to implement fully international humanitarian and human rights law that protects the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts,

*Emphasizing* the need for all parties to ensure that mine clearance and mine awareness programmes take into account the special needs of women and girls,

*Recognizing* the urgent need to mainstream a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations, and in this regard *noting* the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations (S/2000/693),

*Recognizing also* the importance of the recommendation contained in the statement of its President to the press of 8 March 2000 for specialized training for all peacekeeping personnel on the protection, special needs and human rights of women and children in conflict situations,

*Recognizing* that an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security,

*Noting* the need to consolidate data on the impact of armed conflict on women

and girls,

1. *Urges* Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict;

2. *Encourages* the Secretary-General to implement his strategic plan of action (A/49/587) calling for an increase in the participation of women at decisionmaking levels in conflict resolution and peace processes;

3. *Urges* the Secretary-General to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys to pursue good offices on his behalf, and in this regard *calls on* Member States to provide candidates to the Secretary-General, for inclusion in a regularly updated centralized roster;

4. *Further urges* the Secretary-General to seek to expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel;

5. *Expresses* its willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations, and *urges* the Secretary-General to ensure that, where appropriate, field operations include a gender component;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide to Member States training guidelines and materials on the protection, rights and the particular needs of women, as well as on the importance of involving women in all peacekeeping and peacebuilding measures, *invites* Member States to incorporate these elements as well as HIV/AIDS awareness training into their national training programmes for military and civilian police personnel in preparation for deployment, and *further requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that civilian personnel of peacekeeping operations receive similar training;

7. *Urges* Member States to increase their voluntary financial, technical and

logistical support for gender-sensitive training efforts, including those undertaken by relevant funds and programmes, inter alia, the United Nations Fund for Women and United Nations Children's Fund, and by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other relevant bodies;

8. *Calls on* all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including, inter alia:
(a) The special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction;
(b) Measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements;
(c) Measures that ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary;

9. *Calls upon* all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls, especially as civilians, in particular the obligations applicable to them under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Refugee Convention of 1951 and the Protocol thereto of 1967, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 and the Optional Protocol thereto of 1999 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the two Optional Protocols thereto of 25 May 2000, and to bear in mind the relevant provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;

10. *Calls on* all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict;

11. *Emphasizes* the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and

girls, and in this regard *stresses* the need to exclude these crimes, where feasible
from amnesty provisions;

12. *Calls upon* all parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian and
humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, and to take into account
the particular needs of women and girls, including in their design, and recalls its
resolutions 1208 (1998) of 19 November 1998 and 1296 (2000) of 19 April 2000;

13. *Encourages* all those involved in the planning for disarmament,
demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male
ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants;

14. *Reaffirms* its readiness, whenever measures are adopted under Article 41
of the Charter of the United Nations, to give consideration to their potential impact
on the civilian population, bearing in mind the special needs of women and girls, in
order to consider appropriate humanitarian exemptions;

15. *Expresses* its willingness to ensure that Security Council missions take
into account gender considerations and the rights of women, including through
consultation with local and international women's groups;

16. *Invites* the Secretary-General to carry out a study on the impact of armed
conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building and the gender
dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution, and *further invites* him to
submit a report to the Security Council on the results of this study and to make this
available to all Member States of the United Nations;

17. *Requests* the Secretary-General, where appropriate, to include in his
reporting to the Security Council progress on gender mainstreaming throughout
peacekeeping missions and all other aspects relating to women and girls;

18. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.

**For further information, please contact:**

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